

WELS Historical Institute

# Journal

Volume 28, Number 2

Fall 2010



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JAN 24 1908

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## Cover picture

Students and faculty of the Michigan Synod's seminary, ca. 1890.  
Back row, left to right: Karl Binhammer, Friedrich Krauss, Emil Wenk, George Wacker, William Bodamer, George Ehnis.  
Front row, left to right: John Westendorf, Pastor Christoph Eberhardt, Director Ferdinand Huber.

## Looking Back

### 475 years ago – 1535

- Henry VIII (1491–1547) declared himself the head of the English Church on January 15 as the Anglican Church separated from the Roman Catholic Church.

### 450 years ago – 1560

- Philipp Melanchthon, German reformer and humanist, Luther's co-worker and one of the original leaders of the Reformation, author of the Augsburg Confession and Apology, died. Melanchthon's later doctrinal deviations sparked controversies in the Lutheran Church in Germany after Luther's death. These controversies were resolved with the acceptance of the Formula of Concord in 1577 by most Lutherans in Germany.

### 400 years ago – 1610

- Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci, the first Catholic missionary to China, died (b. 6 October 1552). Ricci's mission methods which were followed by his Jesuit successors helped spark the lengthy Chinese Rites Controversy in the Roman Catholic Church.

### 375 years ago – 1635

- Philip Jakob Spener, the "Father" of Lutheran Pietism, was born in Alsace on January 13. Spener's *Pia Desideria*, published in 1675, has been called the most influential book ever to appear in the evangelical church after the writings of the Reformation.

### 325 years ago – 1685

- Johann Sebastian Bach was born on March 21 (d. 28 July 1750). His musical compositions rank him among the best composers of all time. He has been called "one of the most outstanding geniuses of Lutheranism, and his work, like that of Luther, is universal and timeless."
- George Friedrich Handel musician and composer, was born at Halle on February 23 (d. 14 April 1759). His greatest musical composition, *Messiah*, remains a Christian classic.

### 250 years ago – 1760

- Richard Allen, black American church leader, was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on February 14. He helped found the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1816, a predominantly African-American organization formed because of segregation in the Methodist Church.

- Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, pietist hymnist, religious and social reformer and bishop of the Moravian Church died in Herrnhut (b. 26 May 1700). His unionistic activities caused confusion among Lutherans in and around Philadelphia in the early 1740s. When Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, "the Father of Lutheranism in America," arrived in 1742, he quickly won over the Lutheran congregations and Zinzendorf left the area.

### 200 years ago – 1810

- Birth of F.C.D. Wyneken, pioneer Lutheran pastor. His *Notruf* published in Germany brought attention to the serious spiritual plight of German Lutherans on the American frontier.

### 175 years ago – 1835

- Adolf Hoenecke was born in Brandenburg on Feb 25 (d. 3 January 1908). Hoenecke became the premier theologian of the Wisconsin Synod after his arrival in America in 1863. Together with men like John Bading and Philipp Koehler he helped make the Wisconsin Synod a truly confessional Lutheran Church.

### 150 years ago – 1860

- Wheaton College, formerly Illinois Institute, was chartered in Wheaton, Illinois, under Methodist sponsorship. This school has become one of the premier educational institutions of American Evangelicalism.
- The name *Seventh Day Adventist* was adopted by the remnant of William Miller's followers under the leadership of James and Ellen White.
- Several members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints who refused to follow the leadership of Brigham Young founded the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints with Joseph Smith III at its head. Today this group is called the Community of Christ.

### 100 years ago – 1910

- The World Missionary Conference was held in Edinburgh, Scotland, under the leadership of Methodist layman, John R. Mott (1865-1955). This conference is considered by many to be the start of the modern ecumenical movement.

### 50 years ago – 1960

- The Christian Broadcasting Network was founded by Virginia-born evangelist-businessman Pat Robertson, whose father, Absalom, served in Congress for years. Robertson was ordained a Southern Baptist minister in 1961. He began broadcasting from Portsmouth, Va., launching what would become a powerful cultural and political voice for the religious right.

The history of church bodies moves in fits and starts. The visible church is the church militant and is plagued by human mistakes, human sin, problems, and personality clashes. Yet the Lord of the Church accomplishes his purposes in spite of human frailty and mistakes. Those who study church history can learn much from the problems and successes of the past. In the story of the Michigan Synod separation and reunion we can seem some of the worst and best in churchmanship in conflict and reconciliation.

2010 marks the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding the Michigan Synod and the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the reunion of the Michigan Synod and the Michigan District Synod as well as the reopening of Michigan Lutheran Seminary as a prep school for the Ev. Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, and other States. It's fitting then that we give some attention to a controversy in our past that was resolved in a most Christian way.

## The Michigan Synod Separation and Reunion<sup>1</sup>

### I. The Proposal for Federation

Congregations form or join synods in order to train workers, send out missionaries, and carry out other aspects of the Lord's work which they would have difficulty doing by themselves. Joining with other congregations also offers opportunities for mutual encouragement and admonition. Small synods merge with other synods or form federations for the same reasons.

In the spring of 1892 representatives of the Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota Synods adopted the following articles of federation. These articles were to be presented to the individual synods that summer for their consideration and approval.

1. The three Synods of Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan will become one under the name of: "The Joint Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan and other States."
2. The three Synods will for the present form three Districts, that of Michigan, that of Wisconsin and that of Minnesota.
3. The Joint Synod is to have its own printing office and bookstore.
4. The Joint Synod is to publish a common parish paper, a theological journal, a school gazette and a yearbook. She is also to edit books for church and school. All official announcements, reports of ordinations and installations, notices referring to conferences, receipts and so forth are to be publicized in this common parish paper. The titles of the existing parish papers of the individual Synods are to be changed in this manner instead of being called PUBLICATION OF THE SYNOD OF \_\_\_\_ the name will be EDITED BY THE \_\_\_\_ DISTRICT OF THE JOINT SYNOD OF WISCONSIN, MINNESOTA, MICHIGAN AND OTHER STATES.

5. Home missions for the present are to be the responsibility of the Districts. They are, however, to be under the supervision of the Joint Synod, which is to supervise the manpower and the funds available for this purpose.
6. All rights and privileges not expressly assigned to the Joint Synod continue as those belonging to the Districts.
7. The government of the institutions now existing, or those still to be established, is to be the prerogative of the Joint Synod. Such institutions are to be the following: (a) a theological seminary in Wisconsin. (b) a joint academy and a common teacher's seminary. (c) an academy or a pre-seminary in Minnesota and in Michigan.
8. The institutions presently existing shall remain the property of the districts who now hold title to them, until they are voluntarily transferred to the general body.<sup>2</sup>

The Michigan Synod unanimously resolved to adopt these eight points at the synod convention in June 1892. Michigan's reasons for entering the Federation as stated at the Michigan Pastoral Conference in the fall of 1891 were:

We would gain a promising mission field in the west which would be required by us if the Seminary should offer us further blessings; the strengthening which we thereby anticipate, both inwardly and outwardly; the opportunity in that way of a better training of pastors and teachers; and the more effective carrying on of the church's charitable work.<sup>3</sup>

A look at the history of the Michigan Synod will help us understand why joining the Federation seemed so beneficial.

## II. Historical Background

### Friedrich Schmid & The First Michigan Synod

The story of the Michigan Synod begins with a group of Germans from Württemberg who settled in Washtenaw County near Ann Arbor in 1831. Since they had no pastor, they requested help from the Basel Mission Society in Europe. Their prayers were answered when Pastor Friedrich Schmid (1807-1883) arrived in August of 1833. Schmid has the distinction of being the first Lutheran pastor in Michigan and of founding the first Lutheran congregation in the state (Salem in Scio near Ann Arbor).

Schmid was an indefatigable missionary. He preached throughout southern Michigan, organizing nearly 20 congregations.<sup>4</sup> He not only worked among the German immigrants, but also had a strong interest in mission work among

the Indians in Michigan. He helped to found New Salem Lutheran Church in Sebawaing for that very purpose. His interest in reaching out to native Americans is evident in a letter he wrote to the authorities in Basel.

Last summer a mission of Indians came some 300 miles over the hills in order to get a Christian teacher. A Methodist missionary went along, but he is only one among so many. The Indian world is ripe for harvest, and I believe German missionaries would be particularly successful because the English language, and particularly the English people, are somewhat despised in that they, and rightly so, are constantly driving the Indians farther and farther out of their land.

I have already started to learn one of the Indian tongues which is still used by many. They do not have an "R" in their language, but have many poly-syllabic words. Dear elders, I am prepared to preach the Gospel to the heathens as soon as the Lord wills it.<sup>5</sup>



*Friedrich Schmid*

Schmid's letters to Basel reveal his pastoral heart, his love for souls, and his zeal to proclaim the gospel. But they also reveal his lack of a clear understanding of the scriptural principles of church fellowship. He wanted to be a Lutheran but really didn't know how. He understood the need for a sound Lutheran confession in sectarian America. He particularly deplored the teachings and practices of the Methodists (and the "Albright Brethren" who called themselves evangelicals).<sup>6</sup> However, since he was raised in the "mild" Lutheranism of Württemberg and trained by the unionistic mission society of Basel, his practice did not always conform to sound Lutheran principles. Like John Muehlhaeuser (1804-1867), the founder and first president of the Wisconsin Synod, he did not like doctrinal controversy because he thought it hindered mission work. As he wrote in regard to a new co-worker:

Inwardly he is stiffly Lutheran, which is not desirable for effective work in a community of Lutheran and Reformed Germans, most of whom do not know the meaning of Lutheran or Reformed. For the precious Gospel embraces all, and there is but one Savior for all, and we preachers will not find it necessary to concern ourselves with questions, judgments, etc.; we need only to stand firm and teach in the conviction of the Lutheran Symbolical Scriptures, without asking whether this person is Lutheran or Reformed.<sup>7</sup>

In the early 1840s Pastors Schmid, Metzger, and Kronenwett formed the first Evangelical Lutheran Synod in Michigan. They named it, "The Mission Synod." They were soon joined by four missionaries sent to America by Wilhelm Loehe (1808-1872) with the Franconian colonists (these colonists eventually founded Frankenmuth, Frankentrost, Frankenlust and Frankenhilf in the Saginaw Valley). The four missionaries, Friedrich August Craemer (1812-1891) of Frankenmuth, Friedrich Lochner (1822-1902) of Toledo, Philipp Trautmann (1815-1900) of Adrian, and Wilhelm Hattstaedt (1811-1884) of Monroe, were strongly confessional Lutherans. They joined the synod "because Pastor Schmid expressly declared that 'no missionary is to be sent to the heathen who does not subscribe to the Book of Concord of the Lutheran Church.' He also gave the assurance that 'the members of our Synod are firmly committed to the Symbols of our church and pledge their missionaries to them!'"<sup>8</sup>

But Schmid did not put his confession into practice. He accepted as a member of the synod a Basel missionary who refused to subscribe to the Lutheran Confessions. He also permitted congregations to administer the Lord's Supper according to Reformed practice. The four Loehe men felt compelled to leave the synod for confessional reasons and became founding members of the Missouri Synod. We can only speculate how the course of the Lutheran Church in Michigan (and even in America) might have been different if Schmid had not alienated them.<sup>9</sup> When these four men broke with the Mission Synod, the Mission Synod's ties with Wilhelm Loehe and his Neuendettelsau mission enterprise were also broken. What might the young synod have become if the money and manpower that Loehe could have supplied would not have been cut off? The first Michigan Synod disbanded shortly after their departure.

#### Schmid, Eberhardt, Klingmann & the Second Michigan Synod

Schmid joined the Ohio Synod for a short time, but then became independent, gathering congregations in southern Michigan. He continued to hope to establish another synod. In the fall of 1860 two missionaries arrived from Basel to help him. These two men, Christoph Eberhardt (1831-1893) and Stephan Klingmann (1833-1891), would be the prime movers in making the new Michigan Synod a confessional Lutheran synod.

The new Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Michigan and Other States was born in December of 1860 in the study of the Detroit pastor, P. Mueller. The eight pastors (Schmid of Scio, Klingmann of Adrian, Eberhardt of Hopkins, Steinicke of Freedom, Hennicke of Marshall, Mueller of Detroit, Mutschel of Monroe, and Volz of Saginaw) and their lay delegates chose Schmid as their first president (he would serve until 1867). Schmid, Eberhardt, and Klingmann remained in the synod until their deaths. The other pastors soon disappeared from the synod's clergy roster. The history of the Michigan Synod written in 1910 credits Eberhardt and Klingmann with the sound confessional article

included in the constitution:

The Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Michigan and Other States pledges itself to all the canonical books of the Holy Scripture as the sole rule and norm of its faith and life; also to all the symbolical books of our Evangelical Lutheran Church as the true interpretation of Holy Scripture.<sup>10</sup>

It would be some time, however, before the Michigan Synod's practice would match its confession.

#### Mission Work

The second Michigan Synod was every bit as mission-minded as the first. Eberhardt's zeal matched Schmid's. Using Hopkins in Allegan County as his base the young missionary began to visit German settlements in the western part of the state. He arrived in Hopkins in October of 1860.

By December he had already established 16 different locations, covering a circuit of 360 miles, at which he preached regularly. His travels were made mostly on foot, and he served those 16 locations at regular three-week intervals. Whenever he heard that there was a settlement of Germans, including even only one Lutheran family, he made it a point to go there. He carried with him a parcel of Bibles and prayer books, either selling them, or giving them to people who were very poor.<sup>11</sup>

He covered Allegan, Van Buren, Ottawa, Muskegon and Clinton counties, traveling as far east as Owosso. He also undertook a trip to the Upper Peninsula, preaching in several places and baptizing children. When illness forced him to give up his work as *Reiseprediger* (traveling missionary), he accepted a call to serve St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Saginaw. From there he founded St. John's in Bay City, did mission work in St. Charles, Chesaning, Frankentrost, and other places in the area, as well as serving some of his former congregations and preaching stations.

But there were not many lasting results from his mission endeavors. For the Michigan Synod simply did not have the manpower to supply these fledgling congregations with pastors. As Michigan Synod men later lamented:

Justly we ask ourselves: what results and what fruits were produced by the indefatigable efforts of this man, as far as the Synod is concerned? There we are compelled to reply: Little, very little! Of all the places vis-



*Christoph Eberhardt*

ited by him (when he served as a Reisprediger) only the congregations in Allegan County (Hopkins and Allegan) have remained with our Synod. His journey to the Upper Peninsula produced no results at all. We do not even know whether the Synod concerned itself with this matter, or even made an effort to relieve the crying need there. Why did this devoted effort produce such sad results? This brings us to the most serious neglect and the mistake, fraught with serious consequences, committed by the Synod. Indeed, she did attempt to gather those in fellowship in faith. However, she had no pastors who might then serve the little group thus gathered with the means of grace. What she neglected was at that time the most urgent requirement, namely, to call into existence a teaching institution for the training and preparation of preachers.<sup>12</sup>

History records the names of a number of other communities in which the Michigan Synod did mission work: Reed City, Roscommon, Grayling, Grand Rapids, Midland, Caro, Caseville, Port Hope. But these infant congregations were also lost to other synods and denominations.<sup>13</sup> The WELS Michigan District would have been far larger today if the Michigan Synod had solved its problem of the lack of faithful, confessional pastors earlier in its history. As Prof. Edward Fredrich relates,

The essayist in those good old days when he was a member of Michigan's Northern Conference used to like to invite Pastor Oscar Frey to ride with him to conferences. He always found Oscar Frey's Michigan Synod history lessons on the way most interesting. We would drive past an attractive Lutheran property in one of the towns among the thousands of Michigan and Pastor Frey would say, "This was once a planting of the Michigan Synod but it was lost a long time ago when the congregation grew impatient in a long vacancy and switched to another synod." A few miles down the road it would be the same story with new names and dates. The impression was that, if vacancies could have been filled, the Michigan District would own the state's Lutheranism lock, stock, and barrel.<sup>14</sup>

#### Growth Toward Confessionalism

Friedrich Schmid remained loyal to the Basel Mission Society until he died in spite of the unionistic spirit of that organization (Basel was supporting the United Evangelical Church which was robbing members and congregations from the Michigan Synod!). A letter written to Basel for him by his wife in 1879 (four years before he died) contained a gift of \$15.00 for the support of the work of the society.<sup>15</sup> His lack of understanding of true confessionalism



Stephan Klingmann

and the scriptural principles of church fellowship hindered the Michigan Synod during the seven years of his presidency.

The synod elected Stephan Klingmann president in 1867. This proved to be a great blessing. Koehler acknowledges that "under the leadership of Klingmann confessional practice became more and more the rule, over against the laxity and indefiniteness that had gained ground under Schmid's presidium."<sup>16</sup>

1867 also marked Michigan's entrance into the General Council. The General Council came into being as a result of a growing confessionalism among many Lutheran synods in America in the mid 1800s. Dissatisfied with the lack of true Lutheranism in the General Synod, the Pennsylvania Ministerium proposed the establishment of a more confessional organization.<sup>17</sup> Charles Porterfield Krauth (1823-1883), author of the classic *The Conservative Reformation and its Theology*, became the acknowledged leader.

The Michigan Synod saw association with the General Council as a possible answer to its great need for a steady supply of confessional Lutheran pastors.<sup>18</sup> Those hopes would prove to be in vain, but involvement with the General Council would lead the synod to a greater confessionalism.

A controversy developed among the synods of the General Council concerning the so-called Four Points: (1) chiliasm (millennialism); (2) altar fellowship; (3) pulpit fellowship; (4) secret or unchurchly societies (lodges). This controversy forced the Michigan Synod to dig into the Scriptures to find answers. Eberhardt set the course for Michigan with an essay on the four points at his synod's convention in 1868. He clearly demonstrated that chiliasm and the religion of the lodges were contrary to Scripture. Participation with errorists in pulpit and altar fellowship he rightly called unionism and a violation of Scriptural principles.<sup>19</sup> Michigan therefore resolved:

that we reject Chiliasm, as is done by Article 17 of the Augsburg Confession; 2) that we do not permit altar fellowship with those of a different faith; 3) that we do not have nor permit pulpit fellowship with sectarians; 4) that we reject the essence of the secret societies, as opposed to the spirit of genuine Christianity.<sup>20</sup>

The General Council, however, did not give clear answers to the Four Points, particularly regarding altar and pulpit fellowship. For this reason the Missouri and the Ohio Synods never joined. The Wisconsin Synod joined, but left in 1869. Minnesota followed in 1871. These synods formed the Synodical Conference in 1872. This organization became the leading voice of Lutheranism in America, if not the world, for nearly 100 years. If only the Michigan Synod had immediately followed their lead, many subsequent problems could

have been avoided.

Michigan showed patience and perhaps a bit of naiveté in dealing with the General Council. The Council simply could not come to a correct understanding of the scriptural principles of fellowship. At Akron, Ohio, in 1872 the General Council declared:

1. The rule is: Lutheran pulpits are for Lutheran ministers only. Lutheran altars are for Lutheran communicants only. 2. The exceptions to the rule belong the sphere of privilege, not of right. 3. The determination of the exceptions is to be made in consonance with these principles, by the conscientious judgment of pastors, as the cases arise.<sup>21</sup>

These statements are contradictory. If point one is true, there can be no exceptions. At Galesburg in 1875, the Council changed point one to read: "The rule which accords with the Word of God and with the Confessions of our Church is: 'Lutheran pulpits for Lutheran ministers only—Lutheran altars for Lutheran communicants only.'"<sup>22</sup> When a question was asked about the relation of the Galesburg Rule to the Akron rule, Krauth in his "Theses on the Galesburg Declaration on Pulpit and Altar Fellowship" present in 1877 stated, "The principle of 'exceptions' accepted at Akron stood at Galesburg, the principle that there may be exceptions."<sup>23</sup> In other words, the Galesburg rule was merely an addition to point one. Points two and three remained in effect. The problem of correctly understanding the practice of fellowship was going to continue to plague the General Council.

When Krauth presented his theses on fellowship in 1877,<sup>24</sup> he raised hopes in Michigan that the General Council would come to a clear understanding of the scriptural principles and put them into practice. But when the Council met in convention at Monroe in 1884, two Lutheran pastors preached in local Presbyterian churches. Michigan protested, but the Council paid little attention to it. In 1887 the Michigan Synod passed this resolution:

1) We declare that we no longer can feel at home in the General Council and bound to it by the unity of the Spirit, since we cannot discover a serious endeavor on its part to promote Lutheran doctrine and practice, and see that our earnest testimony against un-Lutheran practice, especially against pulpit fellowship with non-Lutherans in the experience of recent years has proved in vain. 2) The attitudes of the General Council toward our pastors constrains our conscience to declare our withdrawal from this church body. 3) May God give the venerable General Council the grace to see that we as a Lutheran synod cannot act otherwise on the basis of our confession. 4) May the time soon come for the General Council to put into execution the principle originally adopted without reservation.<sup>25</sup>



1887 Michigan Synod Pastoral Conference

Michigan's break with the General Council became official in 1888.<sup>26</sup>

During this entire 21 year period Michigan "was playing a gadfly role trying to serve as a sort of confessional conscience of the Council."<sup>27</sup> Koehler offers this evaluation:

That Michigan stuck with the General Council longer than Wisconsin and Minnesota is not necessarily to its discredit. The representatives of the latter synods, after all, were maturer men in age and experience than Michigan's. And in the Council's further developments, the Michigan men always sponsored the right principles. Not only did they do so from the start in regard to the mooted Four Points, but as long as they held membership in the Council stuck to their testimony, while practicing forbearance for the sake of the right-minded men in the Council whom they did not want to desert in their struggle.<sup>28</sup>

Membership in the Council forced Michigan into the Bible to find God's answers to the problems facing American Lutheranism. But the membership also hindered the synod in a number of ways. Michigan never realized its hope to receive pastors through the Council's connections to any appreciable extent. Meanwhile, continuing membership in the Council separated the Synod from the Synodical Conference and the influence of Missouri and Wisconsin. Membership in the Synodical Conference would have allowed Michigan to use the colleges and seminaries of those synods for the training of teachers and pastors.

Because Michigan lacked such a source of well-trained, confessional Lutheran pastors, the synod struggled to gain unity of doctrine in its midst and

to bring congregational practice into line with its public confession. As a Michigan Synod pastor lamented,

Not only was the synod not able to obtain the desired number of workers but, as already mentioned, not a few of those who were obtained, were incompetent, unfaithful. The first 30 years it secured its pastors from almost everywhere, although after 1866 it did cease to apply to Basel on account of the sad experience it had with a number of its candidates. Its hope of obtaining an adequate and satisfactory source of supply by joining the Council was not realized. For a while, during the late '60s and in the '70s it procured a number of pastors from the Pilgermission in Chrischona and later Hermannsburg and Kropp supplied it with most of its new men. In such a conglomerate body, composed of men of such vastly different theological training, unity of doctrine and practice was hardly possible and it was probably only that by the grace of God it had such leaders as Klingmann and Eberhardt in those critical years that orthodox Lutheranism did win out in the synod.<sup>29</sup>

#### Michigan Lutheran Seminary

Nearly every immigrant church body in the United States had to struggle with the problem of supplying pastors for its congregations. Most were dependent on receiving pastors from Europe for a time. Some solved the problem more quickly than others. The Missouri Synod had a seminary from the very beginning.<sup>30</sup> The Wisconsin Synod took thirteen years to start one. Minnesota took twenty-four years and Michigan waited for twenty-five.

Michigan finally passed a resolution in 1884 to consider the training of pastors because it could not depend on others. A golden opportunity soon presented itself. A former professor of the seminary in Buffalo, Pastor Alex Lange, was serving the congregation at Remus. He offered to train young men for the ministry in addition to carrying out his congregational responsibilities. In the spring of 1885 he announced that a few young men were interested in training for the ministry and had, in fact, begun their studies. Pastor Lange then accepted a call to Manchester and a building became available in that community. Founding a seminary was now a real possibility.<sup>31</sup> You can hear the excitement in Eberhardt's presidential report for 1885.

As we now look back over the past Synod year so we must also exclaim with Samuel concerning the new, "Hitherto has the Lord helped us,"— us the pastors and us the congregations and their members. In how many difficulties has the Lord not spread his wings over us! He has helped us out of various troubles, worries and attacks from without and within, or strengthened us according to his fatherly compassion to bear

them even though we were not freed from them. So also he will prove himself faithful to us in the future according to his great grace. He has for nearly six months in our Synod met the difficulty of the need for pastors from an entirely different side than we were accustomed to expect help. He has made a number of young men in our congregations willing to be trained to be preachers of God's Word and has aroused their parents to a readiness to make sacrifices for that purpose. The Lord has also sent us a teacher for them, with whom they already have wholeheartedly begun their study. A member of the congregation in Manchester, Washtenaw County, Mr. Heimerdinger, has presented to us free of charge his large brick house on his farm. To be sure the room will not be completely sufficient for the students, however, he has promised to compensate for these needs in his own residence which is nearby and to find a few other congregation members ready to do the same.<sup>32</sup>

The synod resolved to accept the offer. That August the seminary opened with an enrollment of six students. Since the building was going to be available for only two years, the synod needed to find a permanent home. Six offers were made at the 1886 convention, but only the offers from Adrian and Saginaw were seriously considered. By a vote of 24 to 18 the delegates chose Adrian as the new site.<sup>33</sup>

However, Pres. Eberhardt called a special convention in January of 1887 to reconsider the decision. This special convention determined that they were to have a "practical" rather than a "scientific" seminary and that they were not going to go into debt for more than \$2,000.00 for the project. Even though Adrian had already been chosen at the last convention, the delegates reconsidered that choice. They discussed several cities. Adrian was not among them. Since various sites were available in Saginaw and a gift of \$4,500.00 was guaranteed if that city was chosen, Saginaw was selected. In February Eberhardt donated 2 1/2 acres (he would later enlarge the site with the purchase of an adjacent piece of property). The building was finished in September and the school opened on September 20.<sup>34</sup> The congregation in Adrian withdrew from the Synod for a time because they were angered by the whole procedure. It seems that they thought that Eberhardt had acted in a rather high-handed manner.<sup>35</sup> We can put a better construction on Eberhardt's actions. He was concerned about the economic health of his small synod. Locating the seminary in Saginaw meant a considerable financial savings. No doubt he also wanted the seminary close to him so that he could oversee its operation.

In 1887 the faculty in Saginaw included Prof. Lange, Pastor Eberhardt, Pastor Huber, and Teacher E. Sperling. Sperling later accepted a call to teach at Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm. Lange taught exegetical theology, Latin, Greek, catechism, symbolics, homiletics (preaching), church history, and world history. Eberhardt taught dogmatics (systematic theology), pastoral



theology, and arithmetic. Huber taught English. Teacher Sperling taught penmanship and music.<sup>36</sup>

Eberhardt's leadership and positive influence in the Michigan Synod should not be underestimated. In many ways the seminary owed its existence to his influence. When he died several months after Michigan entered the Federation, it was a severe blow to the synod and its seminary.

On April 27, 1893, Pastor Eberhardt was called by the Lord. Pastor Eberhardt is rightly called the father of the Seminary. By his zeal and liberality he made the establishment of the institution possible; it was the object of his loving concern until his death. As an instructor he devoted his abilities to her; to a large extent her administration rested on his shoulders. Yes, even beyond his death, his loving concern extended to her. His will called for the bequeathing of his library to the Seminary, an acre of land abutting the Seminary premises, and the sum of \$5,000.00 in cash.<sup>37</sup>

The synod experienced a period of growth from 1887-1892. The seminary produced twelve candidates for the ministry. An additional twelve pastors joined the synod from other sources. That growth included removing Prof. Lange from his office in 1888 because he held a false view of the doctrine of the call. Pastor Huber became director of the seminary. Pastor Eberhardt and Teacher Sperling assisted in instruction.<sup>38</sup> In 1888 Michigan also began publishing its own periodical, *Ev. Luth. Synodal-Freund*.

Having left the General Council in 1888 for confessional reasons, the synod soon sought a new alliance with like-minded Lutherans.

#### Moving toward Federation with Minnesota and Wisconsin

Since the Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan Synods had a similar development and were neighbors geographically, it was natural for the three to move towards a union. The same mission houses and societies had supplied pastors for all three. Each synod had moved from a fuzzy unionism to confessional Lutheranism. Pastors often moved from one of these three synods to serve in another. All three had been members of the General Council for a time.

The ties between Wisconsin and Minnesota were particularly strong. Both were founding members of the Synodical Conference and had cooperated with each other for at least two decades. Minnesota had sent students to Northwestern and had spoken of a federation with Wisconsin already in 1868. Various problems prevented this from taking place immediately.<sup>39</sup> Michigan, however, had never quite shared the closeness that Wisconsin and Minnesota had with each other because of its long involvement in the General Council and because Lake Michigan served as a geographical barrier.

In 1890 Lederer replaced Eberhardt as president of the Michigan Synod. In the summer of 1891 Lederer and Director Huber of the seminary made a trip to explore mission fields to the west. While in New Ulm, Minnesota, Lederer met with C.J. Albrecht, the president of the Minnesota Synod and Lederer's classmate from St. Chrischona in Germany. In the course of their conversation, the possibility of a Michigan-Minnesota-Wisconsin federation came up. That very August a Michigan delegation of President Lederer, Director Huber, Pastor Kionka, and Pastor Mayer met with President Albrecht of Minnesota and Director Ernst (of Northwestern College) who was representing President von Rohr of Wisconsin. They drew up specific proposals for the Federation.

The Michigan Pastoral Conference considered the proposals at the fall meeting in Marshall. Later there would be complaints that the proposal was ram-rodged through the conference.<sup>40</sup>

Michigan considered the eight point proposal at its convention in the spring of 1892. The convention voted to seek membership in the Synodical Conference as had been stipulated by Wisconsin and Minnesota as a condition for union. The synod was eager to enter the Synodical Conference because it recognized the doctrinal orthodoxy of that organization. In 1892 Michigan resolved, "Inasmuch as we are one in doctrine with the honorable Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, and are earnestly engaged in eradicating all unsound practice among us, we herewith address an application for membership in the Synodical Conference which meets in New York later this summer."<sup>41</sup> The convention also *unanimously* adopted the Federation plan.<sup>42</sup> Later the Michigan Synod declared in a lengthy article in the *Synodal-Freund* that the proposal to convert the Saginaw seminary into a prep school "was done 'over the protest of the oldest, most respected and honored member of the Synod, Pastor Eberhardt.'"<sup>43</sup>

The first meeting of the Federation was held October 11-13, 1892, at St. John's Lutheran Church, 8th and Vliet Streets, in Milwaukee. On the last day of the convention the delegates participated in the cornerstone laying for the new seminary building on 60th and Lloyd Streets in Wauwatosa.<sup>44</sup> This was to be the *only* seminary for the Joint Synod.

Events had moved quickly, too quickly for many in Michigan. There simply was not enough time to prepare for the changes mandated by the union with Wisconsin and Minnesota. Problems soon arose.

### III. Conflict in Michigan

As Michigan moved to a crucial stage in its history it lost its two most able leaders. Stephan Klingmann died in 1891 and Christoph Eberhardt died in 1893. Their wise counsel and strong leadership perhaps could have prevented the problems which were coming. The next several years would mark one of the darkest periods in the history of the synod and district.

As the smallest of the three synods, Michigan had the most to gain by joining the Federation, but also the most to lose. Almost from the start some in Michigan had second thoughts about the union and turning their seminary into a prep school. Their seminary was producing pastors. Twelve Saginaw graduates had entered the ministry between 1888 and 1892. This number included men like W. Bodamer, F. Krauss, G. Wacker and J. Westendorf who would play such an important role in later district and synodical history.<sup>45</sup> Was this the time to close the theological department of their beloved school? They remembered how they had struggled for pastors before they established their own seminary. The recent graduates were loyal to their alma mater.

Questions naturally arose. Would high school students be willing to cross the lake for college and seminary training? If they did, would they prefer to remain in the parishes of Wisconsin rather than return to Michigan?<sup>46</sup> If their young men would not be willing to go to Wisconsin for their training, how long would the Federation continue to carry Michigan? Would they be relying solely on the Federation for their pastors?<sup>47</sup> Was this wise?

A number of men voiced their dissatisfaction with the decision to turn the seminary into a prep school. The members of the faculty were especially displeased. The "Brief History of the Michigan Synod," written in 1910 by a committee of men who evidently were deeply involved in the disruption which followed, relates the subsequent events.

The conversion of the Seminary into an academy had been unanimously voted. But now a part of the Synod, particularly the staff of the institution, was dissatisfied with this. They devised a temporary reestablishment of the theological department. It thus occurred that in 1893 the Synod resolved: "that we respectfully petition the Joint Synod, because of circumstances continuing to prevail in our midst, to permit us to reestablish the previous arrangement in our Seminary for an undetermined duration." It would certainly have been best if the Synod had summarily denied this petition and had called upon our Synod to honor the arrangement agreed upon in the year previous. It appeared, however, that she believed it would be possible, by a specific accommodation, to win over the malcontents in the Michigan Synod. Thus she resolved, "It would appear to be rather difficult to achieve that desired theological training in the manner sought by the honorable Synod of Michigan at its institution. In spite of that, because of conditions obtaining there, we must for the present leave the adjustment of this matter to the honorable Michigan Synod." This accommodation of the Joint Synod did not have the desired effect in our Synod.<sup>48</sup>

The split in Michigan widened. In 1894 the synod voted Lederer and the other leaders who had brought them into the Federation out of office. Carl F.

Boehner became the new president. For a time he had been a member of the Wisconsin Synod. He had left that synod because of two pamphlets he had written. One was against the Methodists. The other attacked American women because of the practice of abortion. Both caused a storm of controversy because of his harshness and unbridled manner. Sometimes how a person says something undermines what he is trying to say. Koehler reports that when he left the Wisconsin Synod, he became an Episcopalian missionary to China.<sup>49</sup> Later he returned to the United States and joined the Michigan Synod. His leadership style only served to aggravate the situation. He played on the loyalty the recent graduates had to their alma mater. Those on the other side who favored the Federation agreement and were opposed to the developments in Michigan to go back on that agreement were mainly men trained at the Kropp Seminary in Germany or at St. Chrischona.

J. P. Koehler (1859-1951), who was active in the ministry in Wisconsin during this controversy, doesn't pull any punches when he describes the drama which unfolded and the main characters in that drama.

The Michigan Synod, within four years, suffered a split that was not healed until fifteen years later. The original stock of this synod's pastors that had received its training in the Saginaw seminary was in an ugly mood, because the proposed conversion of their institution into a preparatory school, which would give it only a high-school rank was deemed a degradation. No doubt, too, the superior caliber of the Kropp contingent in the Michigan clergy was resented (most of these eventually landed in Wisconsin). The ugliness of the mood appeared in what happened in the course of several years.

The attachment of the largely still immature young element for their alma mater was exploited by Boehner, Linsemann, Merz, and Huber. The first-named was an unstable character which the Wisconsin Synod found out; in addition, the man was unscrupulous. His three partners were men who attained to positions to which they were in no wise equal. They themselves did not realize their shortcomings but were rather filled with self-importance. None of them was competent to teach Sexta (*i.e.*, 9th grade), still they were supposed to teach theology.<sup>50</sup>

Whether Koehler was being too harsh in his evaluation of the teaching ability of Linsemann, Merz, and Huber cannot be determined. But it is true that none of these men were the equal of the university-trained theologians and educators in Wisconsin, men like August Ernst (1841-1924) and Adolf Hoenecke (1835-1908) and the Notz brothers Eugen (1847-1903) and Frie-

drich (1841-1922). Many in Michigan either didn't recognize, or perhaps, refused to see or admit that Wisconsin's seminary offered better training and more hope for the future.

In April 1895 a peace conference between the two factions in Michigan was held. Prof. Ernst, the President of the Federation, was also present. The representatives at this conference decided that the theological department of the Michigan Seminary would continue for three more years and then the school would be converted into a prep school. The Michigan Synod convention that summer, however, resolved to continue the theological department for all the students presently enrolled. This meant that the theological department would continue for several years. At this decision a minority protested, declaring that they had lost confidence in the leaders of the synod and the administration of the seminary. They brought charges against the Michigan leadership to the Federation convention later that summer. The Federation ruled in their favor and insisted that the original articles of federation be followed—the Michigan seminary should drop its theological department and become an academy.<sup>51</sup>

When the 10 pastors of the minority refused to send their congregations' offerings for the support of the Michigan Synod, the synod suspended them from membership.<sup>52</sup> These 10 pastors organized at a meeting in Sebawaing and brought charges against Boehner and the Michigan majority to the Synodical Conference meeting in August 1896, but failed to list specific charges beforehand. Therefore the leadership of the Synodical Conference could not inform Pres. Boehner of the charges against him. Since the Michigan Synod sent no delegates to that convention, the Synodical Conference sent a committee to the Michigan Synod convention in September of 1896. This committee couldn't gain a hearing because the majority in Michigan was upset that accusations had been entertained against them at the Synodical Conference convention even though they were not in attendance. Without discussion Michigan then voted to break with both the Federation and the Synodical Conference. The Michigan Synod's resolutions breaking with the Federation expressed their hurt and anger over how they had been treated at the Federation convention and the "unjust" accusations which had been brought against them.<sup>53</sup> The Federation had already declared a break in fellowship with Boehner and the Michigan majority with a notice in the August 1, 1896, issue of the *Gemeinde-Blatt*.<sup>54</sup> Michigan then changed the suspension of the minority into an expulsion. The Michigan minority became the Ev. Lutheran District Synod of Michigan and retained membership in both the Federation and the Synodical Conference.<sup>55</sup> The Michigan Synod found itself in fellowship with no one.

Patience simply was not the order of the day. That was true of the Michigan majority, the Michigan minority, and the leaders of the Federation. Haste and rash action prevailed.

Having withdrawn from the Federation, the Michigan Synod soon found a

new partner which just happened to be looking for a seminary like the one in Saginaw to train its pastors. The Augsburg Synod, a small Midwestern synod founded in 1876, had advertised for a union with a synod which had a seminary. Michigan hastily entered into a partnership with Augsburg in 1897 only to have that union fall apart in 1900. By then it had become obvious that the two synods simply were not in agreement in doctrine and practice.<sup>56</sup> Michigan protested the false doctrine and practice in the Augsburg Synod, but it did no good. The Augsburg Synod tired of the strife and asked that their arrangement with Michigan be discontinued. The Michigan Synod quickly concurred. In 1900 Michigan resolved,

Since the Ev. Lutheran Synod of Michigan has come to the conclusion that individual members of the Venerable District of Augsburg are departing from our Evangelical Lutheran doctrine and practice, and the District-of-Augsburg majority refuses to proceed with this matter, hence we thereby are made to realize that we are not of one spirit, so then we find no reason why this request should not be heeded and that without further debate.<sup>57</sup>

The Michigan Synod continued to look beyond the confines of Michigan to conduct mission work. Pastor Merz in the winter of 1897-98 made a trip to Washington, Oregon, and California where he found a number of independent Lutheran pastors. He induced these men to become affiliated with the Michigan Synod and the synod adopted this far-flung mission enterprise as its own. There were high hopes in Michigan concerning the work that could be done in the far West. Unfortunately the synod's mission zeal was once again not matched by the ability to consolidate and administer their gains. The distance made it difficult, if not impossible, to supervise the field. Some of the workers in the West were less than good candidates for the ministry and the financial expenditures necessary to work the field led Michigan to abandon the effort in 1899.<sup>58</sup>

Meanwhile, a number of other changes were taking place. The synod had elected W. Bodamer as president in place of Boehner in 1898. Boehner left the synod in 1902 and moved west. Some of the other leaders in the controversy also left. Pastor Huber had become director of the Seminary when Lange was dismissed for doctrinal reasons in 1888. Huber resigned as director in 1893 when he accepted the call to be Eberhardt's replacement at St. Paul's, Saginaw. Otto Hoyer of New Ulm was called and served until 1895. He accepted a call to Northwestern College in Watertown a year before Michigan broke with the Federation. Pastor Linsemann served as director from 1895 until 1902. When he resigned, the synod called Prof. F. Beer who had been a professor at the Kropp Seminary in Germany and had come highly recommended. Under his leadership the seminary suffered a serious drop in enroll-



*Michigan Lutheran Seminary ca. 1920*

ment. Before 1902 there had always been at least twenty students enrolled. By May 1907 only seven remained. That summer two were graduated and four indicated that they were leaving. Only one student remained.<sup>59</sup> Pastor Karl Krauss offers this explanation:

What brought about this near collapse of the Seminary? The minutes of the Seminary board and of the Synod are meager in this matter. As nearly as can be determined—and this is based on information gleaned by the writer from his father and others close to the situation—it was an unevangelical attitude on the part of the director toward his students, a tendency to enforce a very rigid, almost Prussian military discipline, a lack of understanding of American youth. Beer's relations to his colleagues also became very strained. The bad situation brought about the closing of the Seminary in 1907.<sup>60</sup>

Michigan's seminary produced forty pastors during the twenty-two years of its existence as a theological seminary. "At the time of its closing one of these was deceased, and twenty-eight were members of Synod serving congregations in it. The remaining eleven joined other synods: General Council in the West, Ohio and Missouri."<sup>61</sup> With the closing of the seminary the real point of irritation with the Federation was removed.

For some time the men in Michigan had been having second thoughts about their actions. In 1904 there were two free conferences with some Missouri Synod pastors to see if there was agreement among them in regard to doctrine and practice. Michigan was interested in renewing its ties with the Synodical Conference. That same year the synod convention in Riga gave this answer to the question, "How do we at this time regard our withdrawal from

the Synodical Conference?"

1. We must acknowledge that such a step was unjustified and precipitate, because we must tell ourselves that neither need nor conscience compelled us, and that there was actually no cause for our manner of procedure.
2. We are compelled to express our deepest remorse that we were not willing to accept, nor to give audience, nor to make use of the good services offered to us by the authorized delegation of the Synodical Conference; particularly intensely we rue the manner in which we at that time slighted the delegation.<sup>62</sup>

The convention favored joining the Synodical Conference, but only after discussion in the pastoral conference and congregations of the synod. They had learned the lesson not to rush into anything anymore, but to do everything in a careful, orderly fashion.

The Michigan convention in 1905 tabled the memorial to re-enter the Synodical Conference because the congregations were split on the issue. Prof. Fredrich explains,

The time for conclusive action had obviously not yet come. Haste was avoided. The memorial, however, gives a good overview of the whole situation. Explaining the current view toward withdrawal from the Synodical Conference nine years before, the memorial admits that there were no good grounds for the action and that the Conference's committee received shabby treatment at Sturgis. Then it points to certain factors that influenced the bad action and treatment and lists among them, "a violation of justice" in that specific charges were not transmitted, "a violation of love" in that accusations against Michigan were considered in its absence. The common denominator in these issues that still rankled is a lack of patience and an overdose of haste.<sup>63</sup>

The 1905 convention also recognized that the conflict with Wisconsin must be eliminated before they could rejoin the Synodical Conference.<sup>64</sup>

The next year a remarkable meeting took place in Bay City between representatives of the Michigan Synod and the Michigan District Synod. These representatives adopted a statement of six questions and answers. In the statement both sides freely admitted their guilt. These questions and answers were printed in the 1906 Proceedings of both the Michigan Synod and the District Synod. Since it is rare to find such a free admission of guilt in the annals of ecclesiastical history, it is worthwhile to include the questions and answers in full.

1. How does the Michigan Synod view the fact that it did not abide by the promise it gave at the establishment of the Joint Synod?

Answer: The manner and way in which the Michigan Synod broke the commitment it had entered with the Joint Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan was disorderly and un-brotherly.

2. How does the Michigan Synod judge today concerning the protest of the minority at its convention in Saginaw in 1895?

Answer: We recognize that it was wrong for the Synod not to consider the protest submitted by the minority.

3. How does the Michigan Synod now view the suspension and exclusion of the minority?

Answer:

- a) We now regret both the suspension and exclusion of the minority. (Note: The Motzkus case is excepted from this resolution.)
  - b) We recognize that the exclusion of Motzkus was unjustified because it happened without him being heard;
  - c) We, the Joint Conference, recommend that the two presidents settle the Ludington matter.
4. How does the Synod now stand on President Boehner's manner of handling the various congregations as described in the report of the District Synod in the year 1896?

Answer: We repudiate (*verwerfen*) Boehner's letters as described in the Report of 1896 together with the practice presented in it.

5. Does the Michigan Synod admit that the above-mentioned practice was un-Lutheran and that moreover the Synod had lost sight of the fear and obedience of God's Word at the time?

Answer: Yes, the Michigan Synod admits to this.

6. How does the District Synod of Michigan stand on the declaration in the 1896 Report that the Michigan Synod had embraced false doctrine and lost its orthodox Lutheran character?

Answer: The place (1896 Report, page 32) should be stricken as well as every passage which contains a direct accusation of false doctrine; we regret that in the heat of controversy

This mutual admission of guilt became the framework for the reunification of the two groups and the reunification of the Michigan Synod with the Federation. This was the only way that reunification was possible and it was the only God-pleasing way.

Further meetings in 1908 in Monroe and 1909 in Saginaw led to the reunion of the two Michigan groups in 1910. In 1909 the Michigan Synod sent representatives under the leadership of Pres. Krauss to the Federation convention to request membership in the Federation once again. The Federation's committee met with the Michigan Synod representatives for four sessions and presented these recommendations to the Federation convention:

1. We recommend that the Joint Synod recognize our fellowship with the Michigan Synod.
2. We have found that no valid reason exists that would hinder a union of the Michigan Synod with our synodical federation.
3. We recommend to the Joint Synod that it view the manner in which the Michigan Synod has sought this union as correct and acceptable.
4. We recommend to the Joint Synod that it cordially urge the Michigan District Synod to finalize its union with the Michigan Synod as soon as possible, and to do this in such a way as to preserve the legal status of the Michigan Synod.
5. We recommend that the editors of our directory be authorized to incorporate the roster of the Michigan Synod into our directory.
6. The Joint Synod ought to resolve that the Michigan Synod is to be recognized as part of the Joint Synod as soon as the union in Michigan has taken place.
7. We recommend to the Joint Synod that it follow the union agreement of 1892, which will establish a pro-seminary as soon as the union is completed.
8. We recommend that for the administration of the preparatory school in Saginaw a board of three men be chosen from the present membership of the Joint Synod and that the Michigan Synod choose an additional two men for this board as soon as the merger is completed.
9. We recommend as members of this board Prof. A. Ernst, President Soll, and Pastor Machmiller (to serve until 1911).
10. To represent the Joint Synod, we recommend that three men present this resolution to the next convention of the Michigan Synod, namely, President Soll, President Bergemann, and Prof. Schaller.

11. We recommend that the above resolution be published in the next issue of the *Gemeinde-Blatt*.<sup>66</sup>

When the Federation convention adopted the committee report, Pres. Krauss in the name of the Michigan Synod expressed his sincere thanks for the friendly reception and the heartfelt kindness of the Federation. The Federation delegates expressed their joy and thanks to God by singing the first stanza of "Now Thank We All Our God."<sup>67</sup>

The Michigan Synod and the Michigan District Synod formally reunited in 1910. However, four more congregations (Albion, Kalamazoo, Marshall and Sherman) left the synod and joined the Missouri Synod. They gave as a reason for their leaving the synod their fear that the reunion with the Federation would not be profitable or bring blessing but would lead to further unrest.<sup>68</sup>

#### IV. The Lasting Blessings of the Federation

In 1917 the three synods moved from federation to a final amalgamation into the Wisconsin Synod as we know it today. The stormy history of the Federation yielded lasting benefits for all of the constituent synods. But the Joint Synod would soon have to weather another storm, that of the Protestant Controversy which remains unsettled to this day.

The Federation developed a strong worker training system which has been the envy of many other denominations. The Theological Seminary in Wauwatosa (later moved to Mequon) entered a golden age under gifted theologians like August Pieper, John Schaller, and J.P. Koehler. The *Quartalschrift* (later *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*) and the *Gemeinde-Blatt* became voices for confessional Lutheranism. Northwestern College prospered. Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm began to produce a steady supply of well-trained teachers—teachers which the Michigan Synod had lacked for so many years. On its part, Michigan began to produce more than its share of pastors and teachers for the Wisconsin Synod. The second class to graduate (1915) from the new prep school had four members. The four matriculated to Northwestern College and served long and well in the Wisconsin Synod.

The four were Gerald Hoenecke, long-time New Testament professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary; Karl Krauss, Lansing pastor and district, synod, and Synodical Conference official; Arthur Wacker, spearhead of the belated foreign mission endeavor of his synod; and Bernhard Westendorf, Flint pastor whose outstanding efforts in evangelism and education were a boon to his district and synod.<sup>69</sup>

Michigan Lutheran Seminary re-opened in 1910 under the capable direction of O.J.R. Hoenecke who was called from Wisconsin. His leadership, gifts

and dedication would prove to be a great blessing for Michigan. During the next decades the synod experienced spiritual growth through the union and it moved to bring the practice of its congregations in line with its confession. The Joint Synod in convention in Mankato, Minnesota, in 1911 exercised its right to call another teacher to MLS, Pastor Adolf Sauer who served the school faithfully until his death in 1946. This may be the only time the Joint Synod called a professor directly rather than working through the institution's governing board.<sup>70</sup>

Michigan found the mission opportunities it originally sought in the Federation. These opportunities were not only among the Apaches, but also in synodical expansion into the Dakotas and Montana, the Pacific Northwest, Colorado, and Arizona. Michigan's role in later foreign mission expansion and the creation of the North and South Atlantic Districts of WELS is well known. Michigan also found the charitable opportunities it sought in our synod's Committee on Relief. This committee grew out of the Michigan District and until recently was comprised entirely of members of the Michigan District.

The Michigan Synod, in spite of the stormy beginning, found the opportunities and advantages it originally sought in the union with Wisconsin and Minnesota.

#### V. Lessons to be Learned

We study history to learn from the mistakes and the successes of the past. The history of the Michigan Synod and the Federation offers many such lessons. The most obvious lesson is that a denomination needs a sufficient and steady supply of pastors and teachers in order to remain healthy and to grow. There has to be a balance between mission expansion and worker training. A church body can be zealous and mission-minded, but if it doesn't have the workers to man its mission fields and follow up on its mission efforts, all of those efforts are likely to come to naught.

Not only does a church body need a steady supply of workers, those workers also need to be well-trained, confessional Lutherans. The Michigan Synod lost many congregations to the United Evangelicals because some of its pastors were unionists. Ill-trained and unscrupulous pastors destroyed other congregations or permitted sloppy practice which took decades to overcome.

Throughout its history Michigan demonstrated a loyalty, zeal, and optimism which at times were misplaced and naive. That can be seen in the way Schmid and other pastors and congregations continued to send their offerings to Basel even though that Mission House was becoming more and more unionistic. More than that, Basel was sending men and money to the United Evangelicals who were stealing congregations and members from the Michigan Synod! Loyalty to the Scriptures must always be put above loyalty to an institution. Michigan demonstrated a naive optimism in its dealings with the General Council. It needed a good dose of realism to see through the false

promises and practices of that organization. Fierce loyalty and false optimism can be seen in the Michigan majority's attitude toward their synod and theological institution. Their hopes for both were unrealistic.

This history also shows the importance in making haste slowly in ecclesiastical affairs, controversy, and the exercise of discipline. The three synods moved too quickly in entering the Federation. Michigan did not have enough time to prepare for all the changes that were necessary (nor did Minnesota for that matter). Everyone involved in the controversy which followed showed a lack of patience which resulted in actions that were often legalistic. Taking the time to listen to complaints and moving slowly with those who are weak or who do not understand or are in error or do not agree with what we are saying can save a lot of problems later on.

All of us can learn from the actions of both the Michigan Synod and District Synod in the way they freely admitted that they had been wrong. Too often we become defensive or make excuses or blame others rather than looking at our own faults and sins. Saying "I was wrong, I'm sorry," would go a long way in solving many personal, congregational, and synodical problems. But even more importantly, that is the proper and God-pleasing thing to do when we have erred.

Finally, this account demonstrates that a good and gracious God is still in control of history. He works when and where it pleases Him. That can be seen in the way that he took three struggling, unionistic synods and moved them to become a strong and confessional denomination. He has remained patient and merciful even when we have not. That loving God has continued to bless our synod over the years in spite of all our human failings, weaknesses and sins. To him alone be glory!

Prof. John M. Brenner

### End Notes

1. This article is a revision and expansion of an essay entitled, "A Synod for the '90s: The 1890s," presented at the WELS Michigan District Convention in Saginaw, Michigan, June 9-11, 1992.
2. "A Brief History of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Michigan and Other States," in *Michigan Memories—Things Our Fathers Have Told Us*. ed. by F. Bivens, R. deRuiter, and D. Schaller (Michigan District of WELS, 1985) 197-198. Hereafter "A Brief History." The men who wrote this history in 1910 had a firsthand knowledge of much of the history they were recording.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 197.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 160.

5. Letter dated Nov. 25, 1833, "Selected Letters of Friedrich Schmid," in *Michigan Memories*, 44.
6. Letter dated Nov. 21, 1845, "Selected Letters of Friedrich Schmid," in *Michigan Memories*, 127-128.
7. Letter dated Dec. 21, 1844, "Selected Letters of Friedrich Schmid," in *Michigan Memories*. 124.
8. "A Brief History." 160-161.
9. Craemer became a professor at and then president of Missouri's seminary in Ft. Wayne. He eventually served with Walther at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. Lochner taught at Concordia Seminary in Springfield for a time and also helped found the teacher's college which eventually was moved to River Forest.
10. "A Brief History." p.162.
11. *Ibid.*, 64.
12. *Ibid.*, 166-167.
13. See M. Lehninger. et al. *Continuing in His Word*. (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1951), 92-93, and O. Frey, "Outward Growth and Inner Development of the Michigan District in the Century Past," delivered at the Michigan District Convention, 1950.
14. E.C. Fredrich, "Haste Makes Waste in the Story of the Michigan Synod's Division." *Michigan Memories*. 221-222.
15. Letter dated February 5, 1879. "Selected Letters of Friedrich Schmid." in *Michigan Memories*, 156.
16. J.P. Koehler. *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*. (Printed for the Protestant Conference, St. Cloud, MN: Sentinel Publishing Company, 1970), 176.
17. See Nelson, *The Lutherans in North America*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 230-238.
18. "A Brief History." 169.
19. "A Brief History." 171-174. Cf. also O. Frey, *op. cit.*, p. 4-5.
20. "A Brief History." 174.
21. *Minutes of the 6<sup>th</sup> Convention of the General Council of the Ev. Lutheran Church in America*, 1872. 47.
22. *Minutes of the 9<sup>th</sup> Convention of the General Council of the Ev. Lutheran Church in America*, 1875. 17.
23. C.P. Krauth "Theses on the Galesburg Declaration on Pulpit and Altar Fellowship," in *Documentary History of the General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America*. ed by S.E. Ochsenford (Philadelphia: General Council Publishing House, 1912) 346.
24. All 105 of Krauth's theses are printed in *Documentary History of the General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America*. 345-374.
25. Koehler, 177.
26. *Verhandlungen der einundzwanzigsten Konvention der Allgemeinen*

*KirchenVersammlung (General-Konzil) der Evang.-Luth. Kirche in Nord-Amerika, 1888.* 37.

27. E.C. Fredrich, *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans.* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1992) 20.
28. Koehler, 176.
29. Frey, 7.
30. The Missouri Synod inherited the Ft. Wayne Seminary from Loehe soon after the synod organized. Loehe continued to supply students and financial support for several years. The Saxons in Perry County started their "Log Cabin College" in 1839 soon after settling in Missouri. The school moved to St. Louis in 1849, serving as the "theoretical" seminary for the Missouri Synod.
31. *Continuing in His Word*, 185-186.
32. *Michigan Synod Proceedings, 1885*, 10-11.
33. "Brief History." 192-193.
34. *Ibid.*, 193-194.
35. Daniel Drews, "The Negative Effects on Stephansgemeinde, Adrian, Michigan, of Building Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Saginaw," Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Senior Church History Thesis, 1985.
36. *Michigan Synod Proceedings, 1887*. 41.
37. "Brief History." 207.
38. *Ibid.*, 194-195.
39. *Continuing in His Word*, 104-106
40. See Prof. Fredrich's remarks in "Haste Makes Waste." 220.
41. *Michigan Synod Proceedings, 1892*. 34.
42. *Michigan Synod Proceedings, 1892*. 35. See "Brief History." 196-200.
43. Fredrich, "Haste Makes Waster." 222. Prof. Fredrich is quoting the "Darstellung der geschichtlichen Entwicklung des Streites innerhalb der Michigan Synode," *Synodal-Freund*, X (April 1897) 44.
44. Richard Balge, "The Federation of 1892." *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, vol 89 #3 (Summer 1992) 168.
45. Fredrich, "Haste Makes Waste..." 222.
46. Fredrich, *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*. 103.
47. Suggested by Fred Adrian, "The Troubled Beginning of the 'Allgemeine Synode' 1892-1895." Senior Church History Thesis, March 20, 1975. 10.
48. "A Brief History." 201.
49. Koehler, 94-95.
50. *Ibid.*, 192.
51. "A Brief History ..." 202.
52. The suspension was announced in the *Synodal-Freund*, vol 9 #7 (July 1896) 83.
53. *Michigan Synod Proceedings, 1896*, 42-43.
54. Fredrich, "Haste Makes Waste." 230-232.
55. *Continuing in His Word*. 97. The number of pastors in the Michigan Dis-

trict Synod fluctuated between nine and fifteen. Some congregations of the synod joined the Wisconsin Synod before the reunification of the Michigan Synod and the Michigan District Synod. See *Pastors and Congregations of the Antecedent Synods of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 1850-1917 (The Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, and Nebraska Synods) with a Listing of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Graduates, 1863-1929.* by Norbert M. Mathe (Wauwatosa: Norbert M. Manthe, 2001) 51-54, 104-106.

56. Fredrich, "Haste Makes Waste..." 232-234.
57. Koehler, 222.
58. "A Brief History." 210.
59. *Continuing in His Word*, 189.
60. K. Krauss, "Michigan Lutheran Seminary--50th Anniversary," *Northwestern Lutheran*, August 14, 1960, 265.
61. Frey, 12.
62. "A Brief History." 203.
63. Fredrich, "Haste Makes Waste." 236.
64. *Michigan Synod Proceedings, 1905*, 41.
65. *Michigan Synod Proceedings, 1906*, 9-10. The *Michigan District Synod Proceedings, 1906* are almost identical. For some reason, however, in the District Synod Proceedings the parenthetical remark in answer 3a is missing as well as b and c.
66. *Proceedings of the Joint Synod (Federation), 1909*. 38-39. English translation by Mark Schroeder in "A Synod and Its Seminary: The Confessional Development of the Michigan Synod (1840-1910). WLS Senior Church History Theses (1981) 27-28.
67. *Proceedings of the Joint Synod (Federation), 1909*. 39.
68. *Michigan Synod Proceedings, 1910*. 12.
69. Fredrich, *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*, 123.
70. *Continuing in His Word*, 191.
71. Cf. Koehler, 191.

## Appendix A — Chronology

- |      |   |
|------|---|
| 1831 | Several Württembergers come to America and settle near Ann Arbor. They appeal to Basel for a pastor.                                  |
| 1833 | Pastor Friedrich Schmid is sent by Basel in response to the request and arrives in Ann Arbor.   |
| 1843 | Schmid, Metzger, and Kronenwett found the first Michigan Synod—the Mission Synod. They are soon joined by four men sent out by Loehe. |
| 1848 | The first Michigan Synod disbands when the Loehe men leave because of Schmid's unionistic practice.                                   |



- 1850 Pastors Muehlhaeuser, Weinmann, and Wrede found the Wisconsin Synod.
- 1860 Schmid, seven other pastors (including Eberhardt and Klingmann) and congregation delegates form the Michigan Synod. J.C.F. Heyer and four other pastors form the Minnesota Synod.
- 1861 Eberhardt is called to St. Paul's in Saginaw.
- 1863 The Wisconsin Synod founds a seminary in Watertown.
- 1865 The Wisconsin Synod opens Northwestern University in Watertown.
- 1867 Klingmann succeeds Schmid as president. His presidency marks a turn toward a more confessional Lutheranism.
- 1867 Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin become founding members of the General Council.
- 1869 The Wisconsin Synod leaves the General Council for confessional reasons.
- 1871 The Minnesota Synod leaves the General Council for confessional reasons.
- 1872 The Synodical Conference is organized with Minnesota and Wisconsin as charter members.
- 1884 The Minnesota Synod founds Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm. Michigan Synod protests General Council pastors preaching in Presbyterian churches in Monroe.
- 1885 Michigan Synod founds Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Manchester, Michigan.
- 1886 Protests against General Council practice are intensified.
- 1887 Michigan Lutheran Seminary moves to Saginaw.
- 1888 Michigan Synod leaves General Council and begins publishing its own periodical, *Synodal-Freund*.
- 1890 Lederer replaces Eberhardt as Michigan Synod president.
- 1891 S. Klingmann dies; Michigan Synod considers plan for Federation with Minnesota and Wisconsin.
- 1892 Michigan Synod joins Synodical Conference and Federation with Wisconsin and Minnesota.
- 1893 Eberhardt dies; Michigan Synod tries to retain the theological department of their Saginaw Seminary.

- 1894 Boehner replaces Lederer as Michigan Synod president.
- 1895 "Peace Conference" held. Michigan Synod resolves to keep seminary open for all remaining students. Minority protests majority action and lodges complaint with Federation.
- 1896 Minority brings charges against Boehner et al. to the Synodical Conference. Michigan Synod refuses to meet with committee of Synodical Conference and breaks with Federation and Synodical Conference.
- 1897 Michigan Synod unites with Augsburg Synod.
- 1898 Bodamer replaces Boehner as Michigan Synod president.
- 1900 Union with Augsburg Synod is dissolved.
- 1902 Beer replaces Linsemann as Director of Seminary at Saginaw.
- 1904 Michigan efforts to rejoin Synodical Conference begin; free conferences are held with Missouri Synod pastors.
- 1906 Peace meetings between Michigan Synod and Michigan District.
- 1907 Seminary in Saginaw closes.
- 1910 Michigan reunion and re-opening of seminary as a prep school.
- 1911 Federation meeting rejects proposal to amalgamate the district synods, but urges district synods and conferences to study the matter.
- 1913 Federation in convention recommends amalgamation.
- 1915 Federation in convention unanimously adopts new constitution to form Joint Synod. The constitution becomes binding upon adoption by the several district synods.
- 1917 First meeting of the "Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan and Other States."
- 1919 Adoption of amended constitution. Name changed to "Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States."

## Appendix B — President (through the 1917 amalgamation)

### Michigan Synod

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

### Michigan District Synod

J. Klingmann	1896-1901
C. Lederer	1901-1910

### Wisconsin Synod

J. Muehlhaeser	1850-1860
J. Bading	1860-1863, 1867-1889
G. Reim	1863-1865
W. Streissguth	1865-1867
Ph. von Rohr	1889-1908
G. Bergemann	1909-1917

### Minnesota Synod

J.C.F. Heyer	1860-1868
F. Hoffman	1868-1869
J. Sieker	1869-1876
A. Kuhn	1876-1883
C.J. Albrecht	1883-1894
C. Gausewitz	1894-1906
S. Schroedel	1906-1909
A. Zich	1909-1910
E. Pankow	1910-1912
J. Naumann	1912-1917

### Federation—Joint Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan

A. Ernst	1892-1901
C. Gausewitz	1901-1907
F. Soll	1907-1913
C. Gausewitz	1913-1917

### Michigan Lutheran Seminary

A. Lange	1885-1888
F. Huber	1888-1893
O. Hoyer	1893-1895
W. Linsemann	1895-1902
F. Beer	1902-1907
(closed)	1907-1910
O. Hoenecke	1910-1949

## Appendix C — Glossary of Terms and Names

**Basel Mission House & Society** — Organization which trained and sent both Lutheran and Reformed missionaries to America.

**Chrischona (St. Chrischona)** — Organization to train laymen for mission work (Pilgermission) established in Basel, but separate from the Basel Mission Society; sent missionaries, evangelists, teachers, etc. to America; operated Syrian orphanage in Jerusalem. Many graduates came to Wisconsin and especially to Michigan and Minnesota. The St. Chrischona Pilgermission sent out men who could support themselves by working at a trade while they were also doing mission work.

**District Synod of Michigan** — cf. Michigan minority below.

**Federation** — Used in this paper to refer to the union between Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota from 1892 until 1917 when the final amalgamation of the three synods took place. This term is used to avoid confusion because the name of the organization before 1917 and the name of the merged group in 1917 was the same—Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan and Other States. The individual synods had more autonomy under the terms of the Federation than they did after the amalgamation.

**General Council** — Organized in 1867 as a confessional reaction to the General Synod. It never was able to come to grips with the scriptural principles of church fellowship.

**General Synod** — Organization founded in 1820 to promote and coordinate work among various Lutheran synods in America. The General Synod was dominated by liberal Lutherans.

**Hermannsburg Mission** — Founded in 1849 by Pastor Ludwig Harms at Hermannsburg, Germany, to train and send missionaries to Africa and America. These missionaries received a sound Lutheran training during the first few decades of the school's existence.

**Joint Synod** — See Federation above.

**Kropp** — Seminary in Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, established in 1882 to train pastors for America. Many graduates came to Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.

**Loehe** — Pastor in Neuendettelsau, Germany, who trained and sent many Lutheran pastors to America. He organized whole colonies of Franconians to settle in Michigan in an attempt to do mission work among the Indians.

**Michigan majority** — The group of Michigan men who wanted to keep the theological department of the seminary open. They broke relations with the

Federation and the Synodical Conference. They kept the name "Michigan Synod." Included in this group would be many men who would play important roles in later Michigan District and Wisconsin Synod history: Binhammer, Bodamer, Eckert, Gauss, Heyn, F. Krauss, Wacker, and J. Westendorf.

**Michigan minority** — The pastors who opposed keeping the theological department of the Michigan Seminary open. They were eventually suspended and excluded by the Michigan Synod. They then organized as the Michigan District Synod and remained in the Federation and the Synodical Conference. The original group included: Abelmann, Asal, Bast, Fisher, Kionka, J. Klingmann (the son of S. Klingmann) Lederer, Motzkus, Moussa, Stern, and Soll.

**Pilgermission** — cf. Chrischona above.

**Reiseprediger** — Travelling missionary. The Reiseprediger would travel from one outpost of Lutherans to another serving them with the means of grace and gathering the scattered groups into congregations. Schmid, Eberhardt, and others traveled great distances on foot.

**Synodical Conference** — Founded in 1872 to promote true confessionalism among Lutherans in America. The Missouri, Wisconsin and Minnesota synods were charter members. Became the leading voice of confessional Lutheranism in America for nearly 100 years. Carried on joint home and foreign mission work and educational endeavors.

**Unionism** — Expressing religious fellowship without regard to doctrine and practice.

## ***A Tale of Two Synods: Events That Led to the Split between Wisconsin and Missouri***

by Mark E. Braun. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House,  
2003. 436 pp, pb, \$16.99

**M**ore than forty years have passed since the Wisconsin Synod suspended fellowship with the Missouri Synod. Most of the major players in the heart-wrenching controversy that led to the break have passed from the scene. Most pastors who were active in the ministry at the time of the break and are still alive are now in retirement. The majority of pastors and people in our synod do not have a living memory of the agonizing events, discussions, and decisions of the inter-synodical conflict that lasted from 1938-1961.

Dr. Mark Braun's *A Tale of Two Synods* meets a need to inform a new generation of a defining period in the history of our synod. Braun gives us a vivid account of the controversy between Wisconsin and Missouri that makes the struggles of that period come to life. Profuse quotes from church periodicals and correspondence of the day and remembrances recorded by surveys, interviews, and letters of those who experienced the conflict make Braun's narrative informative, compelling, and lively.

Braun begins by reviewing the early relationship of Wisconsin and Missouri from the founding of the synods through the founding of the Synodical Conference and the early conflicts that challenged the unity of that confessional federation. The author is adept at describing the differences in the background, make up, and development that combined to give each synod its unique character. The second chapter focuses on the gathering storm of conflict by reviewing the differences that developed between the two synods over the doctrine of the church and ministry and participation in the military chaplaincy and the scouting movement. Braun's description of the problems that participation in the military chaplaincy caused Missouri is particularly enlightening. The third chapter traces the differences that developed between the two synods in the doctrine of fellowship. The fourth details Wisconsin's efforts at admonition that eventually led to the suspension of fellowship in 1961. Chapter five records the sad tale of conflict within Missouri over the doctrine of Scripture that came to light particularly after the two synods went their separate ways. Braun's final chapter includes observations on the difficulty and necessity of suspending fellowship with Missouri and the impact that the break had on our synod.

This controversy was not only an inter-synodical controversy, it was also an intra-synodical synodical controversy. *A Tale of Two Synods* documents the conflict that raged within Missouri during those trying years. It also explores

the differences in opinion in Wisconsin over the best way to deal with Missouri and the differences in our synod in the understanding of the doctrine of fellowship and its application in the life of the church.

We commend Northwestern for publishing this volume. We appreciate Dr. Braun's careful and extensive documentation of his sources. Those who lived through the trying years of the inter-synodical controversy will appreciate the review this volume provides. The younger generation in our synod will find *A Tale of Two Synods* informative and a valuable resource for understanding a watershed event in the history of our synod.

*John M. Brenner*

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The WELS Historical Institute was given formal approval by the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) in convention in 1981 to organize for the purpose of collecting and preserving historical data and artifacts that are related to the various periods of Lutheranism in America, especially of the WELS. In recent years the synod took over the responsibility of maintaining the archives. The Institute maintains a museum and publishes a *JOURNAL* and *NEWSLETTER*. Membership is open. Fees are as follows, which include the subscription fees: Individual: \$20.00; Husband/Wife: \$25.00 (2 votes but only one publication issue); Congregation, School, Library, Corporation: \$40.00; and Student: \$15.00. Fees may be sent to the WELS Historical Institute, 2929 N. Mayfair Road, Milwaukee, WI 53222.

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