

The Two Faces of Fachtmann

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Gottlieb Fachtmann, arriving from Germany in the summer of 1857, became our Synod's first traveling missionary (Reiseprediger). It seems that he was sent over by the Langenberger society in answer to the plea sent out by Muehlhaeuser around 1852.

Why the need? Well, many German people sought freedom, so they immigrated from their mother country. They sought freedom from the masses, for Europe was overcrowded. It was difficult for anyone to settle down and make a living. They sought freedom from burdensome laws - laws governing their work habits - laws governing their worship habits. Many were forced to leave their homes because they couldn't obey the laws governing their worship with good conscience. ~~Plus~~, once one family arrived and experienced the beauty and freedom of this land, they would write to their relatives and friends telling them how great their new home was. ^{their relatives and friends} Soon, they would follow and they would all try to settle together. "It was natural that people from the same section in Germany should cling together and settle in this country." ¹ Because of this group set-up, it was easier to organize a church in their respective cities.

It was to places and groups like these that men like Fachtmann went to preach the Word. He explored the regions around Columbus and Beaver Dam, Fondulac, Neenah, Hortonville, and New London. Now there are large congregations in

all of these cities due to his work.

It was difficult for a Reiseprediger to travel to these respective groups of believers, for they would have to travel by horse and buggy, cutter, horseback, or on foot. Now we might feel that it was a terrible hardship for them, yet they didn't look at it as a hardship but as the work of the Lord. That made it bearable.

It has been said that Pastor Fachtmann's activity was very fruitful. Koehler, in his History of the Wisconsin Synod, writes: "Compared with the university men who previously had come to Wisconsin, Fachtmann proved to be an able, sober-minded man, alert to the church situation in the strange land, and he put his observations on record in many carefully composed reports to the president of Synod." ²

In 1858, the Synod sanctioned the work Pastor Fachtmann was doing for the Synod and authorized him to continue the good work he was doing. Fachtmann and his congregation in Town Polk (Washington County) were accepted into the Wisconsin Synod. At this meeting, Fachtmann was asked to report on his mission work. He was also appointed (now officially) as traveling missionary. Fachtmann sent reports of his work to Muehlhaeuser on a regular basis.

Fachtmann did various things when he traveled. He taught school and he preached the Word; he made sick calls and gave communion. He also baptized whenever he was asked. Wherever he established a congregation, he paved the way for

a full-time pastor to come in and take over, and he'd be on his way. He contributed alot to the growth of the Wisconsin Synod.

In 1863, however, we see that Fachtmann was not only a member of the Wisconsin Synod but also that of the Minnesota Synod.

Things began going against Fachtmann when P. Koehler protested against Fachtmann's memorial and refused his signature, at the 1859 Synod convention. Because he was employed by a unionistic society, P. Koehler did not agree that Fachtmann could work for a Lutheran synod. The German societies made it apparent that to them Fachtmann did not exist. They had reasons which really haven't been mentioned but which I will cover later. It seems that the Wisconsin Synod didn't want to take credit for him nor did the German societies. J.P. Koehler wrote that "Fachtmann was a man with a vision and naturally was inclined to exercise it and translate it into action. He was also ready, too, to render help, without exactly becoming a busybody. P. Koehler and others called him (Fachtmann) as well as Muehlhaeuser unionistic." Fachtmann was such an industrious man that it seems difficult to understand his condemnation. Nevertheless it is true that he had unionistic tendencies.

Pastor Fachtmann had a good head on his shoulders. He saw a need for preachers to have an all-around education, and preferred that in order to receive that type of education such a school would have to be located in a big city. He felt a country town just wouldn't make it. During the time when

discussion of a college for the Synod was strong, he said that Milwaukee would be preferable over Watertown. Other men felt the same way that Fachtmann did and stressed the big city over the country town. It might have been more profitable but two points made them decide otherwise. One was evil influence of city on such a school and the other was that a school in the country would not incur such a high cost for running and for pay for the teachers.

In 1864 Fachtmann moved on. Already a member of the Minnesota Synod, he made it final at the 1864 Synod meeting at Manitowoc. He would continue to come to the conventions but now as a delegate for Minnesota alone. Pastor (sometimes called Father) Heyer before his retirement saw the good in Pastor Fachtmann and chose him as his successor to lead the Minnesota Synod. Koehler seems to say that when Pastor Fachtmann moved on, he was given an honorable release whereas the July 15, 1872 issue of the Gemeinde-Blatt says that he was in fact forced to leave the Wisconsin Synod, because he was accepted by the Synod before they knew his controversial past. It further states that every pastor of the Wisconsin Synod felt bitter disgrace at having allowed a person of his standing to be among them.⁴ I'm not sure what to believe on this point. It would seem odd, however, that if they were that bitter against Pastor Fachtmann, they would have gotten rid of him before 1864 and that they wouldn't have allowed him to continue his duties as their outstanding Reiseprediger.

Nevertheless, he had a past that seemed to haunt him

wherever he went. It started in Germany. Only the records in Germany could help us to know why he was thrown out of the church in Germany, but let it suffice to say that he had to leave. Before he left he had to make a promise that he would never again preach in a pulpit because of the terribleness of his sins. He never kept that promise. To a pastor like Fachtmann, that was like putting food in front of him and then telling him, "Don't eat it!"

When he arrived in America, he started to preach in Albany, New York. Everything was just fine, until some people from Germany came to see if he was keeping his promise. These people, by the way, were sent by their church elders in Germany. When they found out that he was not keeping his promise, they felt the need to tell his shameful story and he was forced to leave Albany. It seems that after that incident, he disappeared (probably to Germany).

He then came to the Wisconsin Synod. Things went fine for a while and then the past caught up with him again. The Gemeinde-Blatt further states that after being approached with this shameful history, he didn't show any sign of regret. Finally, he was said to have been forced to leave.

While in Minnesota, again things went fine until the axe fell. That past of his caught him again. It was because of this that a special section in the Gemeinde-Blatt was written. I have included a copy of this section at the end.

The gist of what is said in the article I will

summarize. It says that the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Minnesota and other states, with much regret, must warn all faithful Lutherans about the dangerous, unscrupulous, and unfaithful man Gottlieb Fachtmann and his associates (accomplices).

They stated that a few years before this article the Minnesota Synod had issued a warning (seemingly directed to him) in the church paper(Kirchenblättern), the contents being very mild and not specific. They hoped that he would regret his actions and apologize. Well, he didn't regret any of his actions and used his former standing in the Minnesota Synod to speak for him. This argument from silence ended up confusing his parish with hatred and lies. Some of his parishoners believed him since he sounded Lutheran in his teachings. Another reason some of them believed him was because they didn't know his past or what brought him to America.

Because he refused to repent of his actions, the Minnesota Synod felt it necessary to publicly announce why every faithful Lutheran must avoid Fachtmann until he regrets his actions.

So they informed all their churches that Pastor Fachtmann was not supposed to preach in any pulpit again because of the promise he made in Germany.

There also was his unfaithful and unLutheran actions which became a heavy burden on the minds of his fellow pastors.

The Minnesota Synod said they would have shared his burden with him, if only he would have gone about his duties and teachings with a humble heart. Yet they felt he tried to rob his fellowmen of the jewels of their faith.

Long before his ousting, Fachtmann had disregarded all the admonishments of his fellow members in an arrogant way and without regret.

It seems that Fachtmann had tried to hinder their actions, but because of their strong faith and teaching, the Minnesota Synod awakened from this horrid dream in which he had led them.

What is humorous and yet interesting is the fact that at the 1868 Synod convention, when all the pastors were asked to declare their convictions toward the church, Fachtmann was the first to jump to his feet.

Pastor Fachtmann was said to be "to lax in doctrine and practice" for them.⁵ He didn't hesitate to meddle wherever and whenever he had the chance to do so. In turn he was known as someone who disregarded all human rules and divine order.

This man, who was charged as a liar, a unionist, and one who misused his office as traveling missionary to attempt to form another synod, was the same man who once said; "I'm convinced that the Lutheran teachings and practices are the only one and right things." Yet there is more - "But it is hard to bend an old tree, yet I, have become a great Rationalist."⁶

In 1871, Pastor Gottlieb Fachtmann was expelled from the Minnesota Synod. During the time he was in Minnesota it seemed that his unionistic tendencies got stronger.

This Reiseprediger, probably the most successful, seems so erratic in his behavior. He would do so good and then ~~all~~ ^W ~~of a~~ sudden he'd get himself into trouble.

There are many things that we could question about Fachtmann, like: What were the original sins he committed against the German church? What made him choose Wisconsin Synod after leaving Albany, New York? Perhaps he ran from the ^W Wisconsin Synod because of the fear of the past. Maybe it was wanderlust. Many of these questions we cannot, as yet, give an answer. We do know that Fachtmann had two faces. One is good and one is bad. Maybe the good outweighed the bad, but the bad got the best of Gottlieb Fachtmann.

E N D N O T E S

1. You and Your Synod (Milw.: NPH, 1972), p 6.
2. J. P. Koehler, The History of the Wisconsin Synod
(St. Cloud: Sentinel Publishing Co., 1970), p 53.
3. Ibid., p 76.
4. Gemeinde-Blatt XXII, 5(July 15, 1872).
5. Koehler, op. cit., p 126.
6. Gemeinde-Blatt XXII, 5(July 15, 1872).

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

Koehler, J. P. The History of the Wisconsin Synod.
St. Cloud: Sentinel Publishing Co., 1970.

You and Your Synod. Milwaukee: NPH, 1972.

Evangelisch - Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt. July 15, 1872, p 5.

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translation.

big: Nein, Ehle, Dein Vabe ist er See; betest Du auch für ihn? ihm bitterweh im Herzen, als er so n merkte ihm nichts an. Nun kam herein und man setzte sich an den erzählte ruhig und ernst, wie es und aus jedem Wort, das er sprach, es barmherzigen Gottes, der große zeitbar. Es war Esther, als würde Redens allmählig eine schwere Last ihrem Herzen; sie seufzte ein paar und mit jedem Seufzer ward's ihr ter zu Muthe. Nur von Thomas nicht wieder, nachdem er dem Kinde für ihn beten,—denn Andres hatte einer Todesmattigkeit, es wohl gemas ihn den Wellen überlassen und st von der rettenden Plankte. Aber Seele hatte es jemals erfahren und n.

e Weiden, weil sie tren zu Gott hiel ihrer Herzensangst, als von einem denn: In Noth hilft Gott!

(Fortsetzung folgt.)

Erklärung aus und für Minnesota.

Christi hat von jeher eine doppelte wie solches vorbildlich an dem Bau Jerusalems zu ersehen ist. Damals leute mit der einen Hand die Arbeit deren Hand hielten sie die Waffen (6 ff.), um die Feinde umher abzu Kirche Christi soll die Mauern des usalems aufzuführen. Sie bemüht en zurecht zu bringen, das Schwache das Starke zu behüten. Das wäre vergnügliche Arbeit, wenn—es keine e das Werk Gottes hindern, und es t hätten, wenn ihnen nicht ernstlich

Solche Zerstörer der Sache Christi wohl, daß Lüg und Betrug ihre He d, um die Schäfslein irre zu führen. sich zu Engeln des Lichts," wie der s sagt, sind „trügliche Arbeiter," r," falsche Propheten." Christus sie, reißende Wölfe," Matth. 7, Wölfer," weil sie einzelne Seelen den und ganze Herden von ihnen ig machen und durch falsche Lehre Praxis der Seele nach tödten.

Nach die Treue eines wahrhaftigen s auch darin, daß er sich der Arbeit unterzieht und keinen Kumpf schon, welche ihm anvertraut sind, vor ihelichen Feind zu behüten. inesota wird uns die betäubende Fre e und Kämpfers auch nicht erspart. Wenn wir uns ihr entziehen woll n es mit einem Mann zu thun, des and Treiben uns schon lange wohl nsternwegen hätte er jedoch als Hei etwas gelten mögen, wenn er ruhig geblieben wäre. Wir hätten ihn Gen Ruhm gegönnt, da er früher

Glied unserer Synode war. Wir hätten unsere Gemeinden gern mit den Enthüllungen verschont, die er uns abzwingt durch sein Treiben, und uns gern die Schmach erspart vor aller Welt gegen einen Mann zu zeugen, der noch immer das heilige Predigtamt Christi zu führen vorgiebt. Es hätte Niemand aus unserem Munde näher erfahren sol len, wer er ist, nachdem wir vor Jahren unsere Pflicht in dieser Hinsicht gethan hatten, wenn er nicht immer heillosen sich bemühte, gerade weil er mit unserem Arbeitsfelde bekannt ist, dasselbe zu zer rütten und von der lutherischen Kirche abzugeben. Auch jetzt noch hat die Synode gezögert und hat sich nur nach den ernstesten Erwägungen entschlos sen, nachdrücklicher als früher vor diesem gefährli chen Geiste zu warnen. Aber sein über alle Be griffe gewissenloses Handeln, zwingt uns nochmals, unsere Pflicht den Gemeinden gegenüber zu thun und ihn in einigen Stücken, w o b e i n o c h v i e l e s v e r s c h w i e g e n b l e i b t, offenbar zu mä chen, damit wenigstens das Unrige gethan sei, um die, welche sich in guter Meinung haben irre füh ren lassen, zu warnen vor diesem so tief gesunkenen Mann. Folgendes Schriftstück ist auf kürzlich zu Mankato gehaltenen Synodal- Versammlung verfaßt und zum Druck beordert worden:

Die evangelisch-lutherische Synode von Minne sota und anderen Staaten steht sich leider gein dthigt, die mit ihr verbundenen Gemeinden, sowie alle treuen Lutheraner, welche noch wissen, welch großen Schatz Gott ihnen in dem Bekenntniß un serer Kirche vertrant hat, vor einem gefährlichen, im höchsten Grad gewissenlos und gottlos handelnden Manne, dem nürten Pastor G. Fachtmann und seinen Helfershelfern öffentlich zu warnen. Wohl erschien vor etlichen Jahren schon eine solche öffentliche Warnung in unseren Kirchenblättern, die aber sehr mild und in allgemeinen Ausdrücken abgefaßt war, weil man hoffte, der arme Mann könnte noch zur Besinnung kommen, denn wie gern hätte man seine hier noch unbekannt Schande un gedeckt gelassen. Allein, er hat sich nicht nur nicht warnen lassen, sondern läßt sich seitdem vom glü hendsten Hass so weit treiben, daß er seine frühere Stellung in unserer Synode dazu braucht, unsere Gemeinden zu verwirren und mit der Lüge, er sei ein lutherischer Pastor, sie (unsere Gemeinden) in die Hände des nürten „Vereins des Westens" zu spielen. Ein Theil unserer lutherischen Gemein den läßt sich auch leider vor ihm noch beeinflussen; einmal weil er sie mit lutherisch klingenden Brü Helwörtern betriegt, während er ihnen werthlose Subjekte, oder nürte Pastoren, die doch weder Eiß noch Eitelkeit sind, aufzuführen sucht; zum an dern weil sie von seiner Beredsamkeit oder von dem, was ihn nach Amerika getrieben hat, nichts erfahren haben und von seiner heillosen Antosfsh rung nichts wissen. Da kann die Synode nicht anders, weil ihr keine anderen Mittel, ihn von See len ungefährlich zu machen, zu Gebote stehen, als öffentlich darzutun, warum Pastor Fachtmann von jedem ehelichen Christenmenschen gesehen wer den muß, solange bis er Buße thut.

So werde es unsern Gemeinden beim bekannt, daß ich we re S ü n d e n den Pastor Facht mann in Deutschland nun v o l l s t ä n d i g g e m a c h t h a b e n und daß er seinen kirchlichen Vor gefetzten dort versprechen mußte, nie wieder das

Predigtamt zu bekleiden. Wir nennen die Sün den nicht, deren er angeklagt stand. Nur soviel sei gesagt, daß er aus Deutschland verschwin den mußte, und auch verschwand. Trotzdem fing er in Albany, im Staate New-York, nach seiner Ankunft in Amerika, an zu predigen, bis durch Leute, die von Deutschland kamen und vom dortigen Kirchenregiment beauftragt waren, zuzusehen, ob er sich wohl wieder in's Pfarramt dränge, seine Geschichte bekannt wurde. Da war er mit einem Mal plötzlich verschwunden. Später tauchte er in Wisconsin auf und hatte eine Anstel lung gefunden, ehe noch sein Leben in der dortigen Synode bekannt war. Nachher haben es sämt liche Wisconsinische Pastoren als eine bittere Schmach getragen, daß ein solcher Mann unter ih nen sei, der noch obendrein sogar keine Spuren einer wahrhaftigen Buße zeigte, und versuchten so lange ihn zur Niederlegung seines Amtes zu ver mögen, bis er Wisconsin verließ.

Wir gehen auf sein Wirken in Minnesota über. Auch hier lag seine Schande, mehr noch sein un geistliches und unlutherisches Gebahren, wie ein schwerer Baum auf den Gemüthern seiner Mitpa storen. Ach, wie gern hätte man erstere mitgetra gen, wenn sein Lehren und Handeln aus einem ge demüthigten und durch Christi Blut wieder geheiligten Herzen geflossen wäre und im Einklang mit der theuren Wahrheit unseres Glaubens gestanden hätte, oder wenn er wenigstens nicht Andern dies Kleinod hätte rauben wollen. Aber schon lange Jahre vor seinem Ausschluß wies er alle Ermah nungen seiner Mitsynodalen in schundder, unbüßfer tiger Weise zurück. Je mehr die Synode aus ih rem unionistischen Traum erwachte, in welchem sie durch diesen Mann gewiegt war, und sich in Lehre und Praxis als eine treue, lutherische Synode ge staltete, desto hemmender und hinderlicher trat er auf, trotzdem er auf der Synodalversammlung im Jahre 1868, als die Synode „aufgefördert" war, durch Aufstehen sich auf's Neue feierlich zu dem unverletzten Glauben unserer Kirche zu bekennen, der erste war, der auf die Füße sprang. Zu dem selben Jahre konnte er aber noch bei der Sitzung des General-Councils unsere Synode als eine solche darstellen, die sich zu der größten Glaubens mengerserei bekenne. Immer wieder zur Rede ge stellt und ermahnt, ließ er sich zuletzt in der Blind heit seiner Feindschaft soweit hinreißen, daß er die Synode auseinanderzureißen suchte, dieselbe mit ih ren Pastoren in den Gemeinden verläumdete und in denselben gräßlich wühlte; um Vergerniß und Zertrennung anzurichten. Er überste sich nicht, in das Amt seiner Mitspastoren überall eingzugreifen, wo ihm nur eine Gelegenheit geboten war; kurz er erwies sich je länger je mehr als ein Sol cher, dem weder menschliche Regeln, noch göttliche Ordnungen heilig waren und sich boshaft gegen alle Mahnungen verstockte, wie es auf der Synode im Jahr 1869 deutlich wurde. Und das ist der selbe Mann, der bei einem ernsten Vorfall bekannte: „Ich habe längst die Überzeugung, daß die luther ische Lehre und Praxis die einzig richtige ist; aber es ist schwer einen alten Baum zu biegen, ich aber bin im Nationalismus groß geworden."

Als nach diesen gebuldigen ersten Ermahnun gen sich immer mehr verstockte und als ganz im Geist der Lüge verstrickt offenbar geworden wor. Blich