

C H R I S T O P H   E B E R H A R D T

AND HIS

EFFORT AT DOCTRINALLY UNITING THE MICHIGAN SYNOD

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"For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" (1 Cor 14:8)

The blast of a trumpet was the signal for the troops to prepare for battle. In the early Christian era, if that blast wasn't clear, it could be mistaken to mean that it was the time of the New Moon (Ps 81:3) or that the year of Jubilee had come (Jer 4:5). The troops would prepare for battle only if the trumpet sound clearly indicated that danger was near. If the trumpet sound was uncertain, the results would be obvious. They could be taken by surprise and destroyed to the last man.

This is much the same situation in the early history of the Michigan Synod. There was "an uncertain sound in their trumpet calls to arms." The uncertain sound was the lack of a clear, sound Scriptural and confessional stand. The result was that they lost men. Some were good sound theologians who rejected the "uncertain sound" of the Michigan Synod and joined the Missouri Synod where the trumpet sound was certain. On the other hand, they lost men in the opposite direction too. They joined with the liberal, United Lutheran Church, which at least knew where they stood doctrinally.

\* \* HISTORICAL BACKGROUND \* \* \* \* \*

To get a full picture of the basis for this turmoil, we need to keep in mind what the situation was in Germany at this time. The Germans who emigrated to Michigan brought along some of the theological problems from Germany. Under the leadership of Fredrich Wilhelm III, Prussia became a unified state. The other German states soon followed suite. In order to keep his people unified, Fredrich III felt it necessary to have a unified church. He ordered the Lutheran and Reformed churches to work towards unity. He pushed for a unified liturgy in the churches and a unified effort at the universities and societies which trained the pastors. This of course resulted in confusion. You could have Reformed beliefs and Lutheran beliefs in one church and the pastor if he wished to conform to Fredrich III's wishes, had to serve both groups.

Many would not follow Fredrich's wishes. Some of those emmigrated to America for religious freedom. Others stayed and organized church bodies of their own which conformed to their own beliefs. Then there were those who went liberal and followed the Unionism practices which Fredrick II advocated.

There was a Christian revival going on in Germany as well as elsewhere, at the same time as this theological confusion. After rationalism's cold grip of the 1700's had succeeded in taking ov<sup>e</sup>er a large proportion of the pulpits, at the turn of the century there was an awakening in Protestantism. "In Germany the desire arose among the Moravians and the Pietists to convert nominal Christians within Christendom and to spread the Gospel throughout the world."<sup>1</sup> To promote this mission work, groups of Christians or groups of Congregat<sup>i</sup>ons got together and formed societies. Through these mission societies, they would train missionaries and sponsor them. They'd pay their voyage to the desired destination and they'd continue to support them until the new found missions could support the missionaries themselves. The only thing these societies required was that the missionaries send a report back once per year to re<sup>o</sup>late the results of his year's work.

By 1900 there were about 30 of these missionary societies organized in Germany alone. They had missionaries literally all over the world. Some of the main societies who supplied pastors for the Mid West part of the U.S.A. were: the Berlin Society, the Rhenish Society, and the Basel Society.

The Prussian Union not only caused confusion among the churches, it also caused confusion among some of these societies and the missionaries which they sent out as well as <sup>among</sup> the people to whom they were sent, at times. Perhaps both Reformed and Lutheran Churches made up a particular Society. The confession of the m<sup>is</sup>ssionaries going out from that society could be Reformed or Lutheran or both depending on certain factors. First of all it depended on a man's training that he had as a youth. He could go through a Unionistic school such as was just described and still remain staunchly Lutheran or Reformed. It also depended on the man in charge of the society at the particular time in which one attend<sup>e</sup>d that school whether he would turn out staunchly

confessional or liberal.

This was the very situation in which we find the most prominent of the Mission Societies, the Basel Mission Society. This society was the primary provider of pastors for the Michigan Synod. Keeping this in mind, one can readily see why the turmoil developed over the confessional stand of this infant church body. One good thing about this society at this time (around the 1850s) is that they didn't bind a man. If he wanted to be a staunch Lutheran confessional, he could be. If he wanted to be Reformed, he could. Of course, as time progressed, the doctrine of such a school would deteriorate and that it did. By 1870, Basel wasn't producing any staunch confessional pastors any more. In fact, they favored the liberal church body in America and supplied it with pastors.

In the 1830s, "Württemburgers" from Germany moved to America. They settled down in one of the most beautiful and one of the most promising areas in the United States, that was in Michigan, Ann Arbor to be exact. These people sent a call to the Basel Society. This call was answered by Frederick Schmid. He was the first Lutheran pastor to step on Michigan soil, arriving in 1833. On August 18, 1833, he held the first Lutheran service in Michigan.<sup>2</sup>

It wasn't until about 1841 that Schmid organized the first Michigan Synod. He did this along with four Loehe trained men. These men being more confessional ended up deserting Schmid because his "trumpet gave an uncertain sound" doctrinally. They joined the Missouri Synod. With these four men leaving, the first Michigan Synod fell through. What did these men find so objectionable about Schmid's doctrine? By his doctrine one can clearly see that he was trained in Basel. On the one hand he would soundly denounce false prophets. When he was rejecting the falsehood of the Badensians and the Albrechtsbrüder (the German term for the Methodists), he said, "It was necessary to have a clear confession." Over against the New Measure people, he was emphatic in stating that he and his colleagues intended to adhere as true Lutherans to the Scripture and the confessions.<sup>3</sup> So Schmid wanted to be a true Lutheran. He wanted to stand

firmly on the confessions. It seems that he wanted to be a true Lutheran only in a looser sense of the expression. For, the other side of Schmid is shown by his letter to Basel, dated April 29, 1851:

Going on eighteen years, I am supplying here with the Holy Word and Sacrament, several congregations, which number such who by upbringing are Lutheran and Reformed, but never yet have I been attacked in the least by the Reformed on account of doctrine and confession.

If the Reformed weren't attacking him for his doctrine, Schmid must not have been emphasizing the true Lutheran Scriptural doctrines. His trumpet was giving an "uncertain sound."

When the four Loehe trained men deserted Schmid, their witness had a good effect on Schmid's laxness. Schmid formed a new Michigan Synod on a more orthodox and a more confessional basis. The second Michigan Synod was formed in 1860 when Basel sent two men, Stephan Klingman and Christoph Eberhardt to answer Schmid's calls for help. This is the statement on which he and eight other pastors formed the second Michigan Synod:

The Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Michigan obligates itself to all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the sole rule and standard of faith and life, and to all the books of our Evangelical Lutheran Church as the true interpretation of the Holy Scripture.

This is the background of the situation when Eberhardt and Klingman enter the picture. We find Schmid taking one small step toward taking a clear doctrinal stand. It appears to be a clear stand upon Scripture. The practice of that stand was another matter altogether. The Basel influence was still there in practice. In this, the Michigan Synod was "much like that of Wisconsin--a relatively weak confessionalism accompanied by leniency in church fellowship practices."<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the seed for a doctrinally united Michigan Synod was there on that December evening, 1860, when these three men along with five other Pastors and two laymen founded the new Michigan Synod. Even though the two graduates were from the Basel society, they clung to conservative

Lutheran doctrine. They would influence the Michigan Synod to take a confessional stand and boldly to witness to the truth.

Some of the events in Eberhart's life before he arrived in America, are significant. When he began studying at Basel, he wanted to go to Africa. When he was sent to America, he had the feeling that he'd been denied a call to Africa because he lacked some gifts. That wasn't so. The Lord led him to America to cut through the jungle of tangled doctrines which Satan had brought about, and to lead the Michigan Synod out of that jungle to doctrinal and confessional unity,

Eberhardt and his friend, Klingman, graduated from Basel in 1860. Both were called to America. They sailed together and arrived at Pastor Schmid's in Ann Arbor, Michigan on September 27, 1860. There were two vacancies to be filled. There was a shepherdless congregation in Adrian and there was a need for a "Reiseprediger" for central Michigan, the area about one hundred miles north of Ann Arbor. Eberhardt settled the matter as to who would go to which place by this statement: "I am strong and healthy and more able to withstand the rigors of itinerent mission work than you are; I will go to Allegan County and you shall go to Adrian."<sup>7</sup>

There is more to Eberhardt's words than he ever imagined. He was strong physically as we'll see in his tireless work as a Reiseprediger. But the Lord had given him more than just physical strength. He had also blessed him with a strong faith. God blessed him with a zeal for the Truth and a zeal to lead his Michigan Synod in that Truth so that their trumpets would give a "certain sound."

In October of 1860, we find Eberhardt busily carrying out his duties as a Reiseprediger. He was so faithful to his calling that at the end of three months he had 16 preaching stations and was serving 150 families. He had to travel a circuit of 360 miles by foot. Every three weeks he traveled this distance. What a love for getting the news of our Savior to people this man had! One time he traveled all the way to the Northern Penninsula to see what the needs were there. He found many sheep without shepherds. This trip proved to be fruitless because there weren't enough men to

"fight the battle" on the home front much less to go to the even more remote area in the upper peninsula:

Today, must unfortunately, we can see few fruits from Eberhardt's work as a Reise-prediger. The reason for this was the lack of manpower. The Michigan Synod had no Seminary to provide faithful pastors. When Basel did answer the calls the pastors often times were unfaithful to the Confessions as well as the confession of the Michigan Synod. They would switch to the liberal United Ev. Lutheran Synod, taking the congregations with them. *not yet in existence*

St. Paul's Lutheran Church of Saginaw called Eberhardt to be their pastor in 1861. He answered their call and served them faithfully until his death in 1893. It was here that Eberhardt could give more effort to doctrinally uniting the Michigan Synod. However he still continued and was faithful in his mission work. From Saginaw he went north and formed the congregations in Bay City and Zilwaukee. He went south and founded congregations in Cheasening and Owosso. These congregations are still in existence today and are still faithful to the Word of God.

\* \* GREAT STRIDES TOWARD DOCTRINAL UNITY \* \*

The year 1867 marked a new era in the Michigan Synod. In this year the confessionally minded Stephen Klingman replaced Schmid in the president's chair. This was also the year that the Michigan Synod joined the General Council, hoping to receive more pastors to help relieve the need for shepherds in Michigan.

Koehler lists several reasons for the rise of this new more confessional era and for the decline of Schmid's stand. 1) "When he came over, the separation between Basel, Leipzig, and Hermansburg on confessional grounds had not as yet taken place." In this situation Schmid could profess the "Wuerttemberg Lutheranism," (that is a type of Pietistic Lutheranism that overlooked doctrinal differences to some degree for the purpose of spreading the Gospel), and at the same time associate with the confessional Loehe trained men. 2) Schmid and his Synod lacked the learned theologians to give them  
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the right cue, the "certain sound of the trumpet" in taking a sound stand against the United Kirchverein des Westerns as Missouri, Iowa, and the Buffalo Synods did. Thus, questionable characters were received into the Synod.

3) Michigan did not advance much in inward growth during this time, and outwardly it lost many congregations to the Kirchverein, which had a definite stand and knew what it wanted.

Under Schmid's leadership, the Michigan Synod had drawn up a constitution, but "this was too abbreviated and contained statements that could easily be misunderstood."<sup>9</sup>

Thus Schmid became "senior" of the Synod, and Klingman, by the grace of God was voted in as president. The younger men received the leading roles. Eberhardt was voted in as secretary.

As it was stated before, 1867 was also the year that the Michigan Synod joined the General Council. They had loosened their ties with Basel because Basel had become more unionistic. Then too, Basel had split from and was opposed to Lutheran Confessional centers, such as Leipzig and Hermannsburg. They supported full heartedly the liberal Kirchverein. So, the Michigan Synod looked elsewhere for pastors. This was their primary reason for joining the General Council. Their hopes didn't pay off however. The good thing that did come as a result of this membership is that it forced them back into the Confessions and into Scripture in order to to take a confessional stand.

At the first regular meeting of the General Council in 1867, the Ohio Synod demanded the Council's stand on the famous "Four Points" before it would join. The Four Points were 1) Chiliasm, 2) altar fellowship, 3) pulpit fellowship, and 4) secret or "unchurchly" societies. Each of the member synods were to study these matters and then they'd be discussed at the next meeting. This was the impetus which moved the men in the Michigan Synod to look at their stand and to make a more confessional stand. It "led them to a deeper understanding of correct doctrine and practice."<sup>10</sup>

Here is where the leadership of Eberhardt begins to be very noteworthy. He and another pastor, Pastor Schlenker, were to give papers on these Four Points at the next

Michigan Synod Convention. At the next convention, however, Eberhardt was sick and was unable to be there. He was there in spirit. Even though he wasn't satisfied with his paper which we know by his words, "that his paper wasn't worthy of being called a "conference paper" because he felt he wasn't able to write as he should. He wasn't able to organize his thoughts,"<sup>11</sup> thus he didn't feel he had done a very good job. He sent the completed paper along to the convention, however, even though he could not make it. His essay turned out to be "clear, sound, and positive, and set forth the truly Lutheran position"<sup>12</sup> in regard to the Four Points. The fact that Eberhardt came through so strongly doctrinally, despite his illness, reminds us again of his words before he accepted the call as a Reisedprediger. He was strong physically and doctrinally. Despite his illness which lasted four weeks, he produced a Scripture based essay that was the guiding light for the Michigan Synod throughout their ties with the General Council, out of the darkness of doctrinal confusion and unScriptural practice to complete unity in doctrine and practice.

We can't underestimate the value of this paper. It was the first doctrinal essay that the Michigan Synod published for their pastors to read and absorb. Perhaps, aside from the pastoral conference sermons, it was the first doctrinal essay that the Michigan Synod theologians considered. Since the Michigan Synod's constitution was faulty and lacked clarity, Eberhardt's paper was their guide until they revised the constitution to be a clear guide in doctrine and practice.

There are some key things in Eberhardt's paper that we'll want to take note of. He begins with a description of the church and pastors, a description of his own Michigan Synod and of its pastors.

There's religious chaos in the church, pastors know little about the Symbols (Confessions), pastors didn't know how to defend themselves against the American sects, i.e. Emotionalism, Chiliasm, Methodism. etc. There was nothing certain or definite in the churches.

For festivals they had guest pastors who were unlutheran. They just spoke general truths and out of "brotherly love" avoided the differences. They ignored differences, and looked cross-eyed at those who practiced false doctrine. The pastors do this without thinking.<sup>13</sup>

"If the shoe fits wear it." It fit many pastors in the Michigan Synod. When they heard the truth of their situation as Eberhardt clearly stated it, it must have made them uneasy. It must have awakened them out of their apathy in regard to their own doctrine and practice so that they would take not<sup>(e)</sup> of the means by which they could lead their flocks back onto the right path. It must have moved them to want to give a "certain sound with their trumpets." Eberhardt continues with the way to remedy the situation, the way to "give a certain sound with their trumpets."

The first step to change all this is to know this is the way to destruction. Thank God that there is a seed in our church left that will not bow its knees to this Baal. Lutheran Synods confess Orthodox Lutheranism but in practice it was quite different.

This was a powerful introduction on Eberhardt's part. He either would gain the men to join him in his effort to form a Confessional Lutheran Synod, or he'd expose their true colors and they'd leave. The latter doesn't seem to be the case though. After this introduction in which he "tells it like it is," he delves into a discussion on the Four Points.

In regard to Chiliasm, Eberhardt used clear Scripture passages to refute the false doctrine. Along with Lk 17:20, Lk 9:23, and Acts 14:22, he quoted Jesus' Words to Pilate, "My Kingdom is not of this world." The Word is clear. Chiliasm is a false doctrine.

Concerning communion fellowship with the heterodox, Eberhardt wrote:

This is a direct contradiction to our Lutheran doctrine. You cannot practice brotherly love, or have joint communion with them because that's Unionism. There is not a definite word of rejection of communion fellowship with the unorthodox in the Symbolical books, but they strongly reject false doctrine, stubborn teachers and blasphemers with respect to Holy Communion (Art X. Augsburg Conf.)<sup>15</sup>

This is a definite confessional stand regarding communion fellowship. Then Eberhardt goes on to denounce communion fellowship with the Reformed specifically. This was a bold thing to do in the circle of the Michigan Synod because this type of thing was being practiced. In fact the former president of the Synod even practiced this. Eberhardt continued:

The Reformed Church follows reason. For that reason the Lutheran Church would only accept them if they would renounce their errors and confess Lutheran doctrine on Holy Communion. The way to make sure only those clear on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, partake of it, is to educate the people. Then have announcements to make sure they believed what they were taught and continue instruction in that way. By this method they could reject hypocrits, "sinners", and impenitent from Holy Communion.<sup>16</sup>

Not only does Eberhardt denounce the wrong, he instructs. He tells his fellow pastors the right way to go. He instructs them to instruct their people so that they don't eat and drink of their Lord's body and blood unworthily.

Eberhardt comes out just as strongly against unorthodox pastors occupying their pulpits as he was against heterodox people at their altars for Holy Communion. One has to admire Eberhardt's clear, concise and yet dynamic force in his paper. The power comes because it's based on the most powerful thing on earth, the Word of God. He says:

All pastors must follow the religious tenants of the denomination to which they belong. A congregation of one denomination calling upon a man of another denomination is entirely wrong. Especially, they ought not serve Holy Communion because that would be entirely unfaithful.

If a preacher enters a pulpit of another denomination and doesn't preach his faith, he is not carrying out his office. He would be a hypocrit, unfaithful, a Unionist, and he'd be opening the door to unbelief.

Preachers themselves are not certain what the Bible says. The less you study the Bible the less scruples you have and the more you follow what reason says. That is why we won't practice pulpit fellowship with the unorthodox because we'd be unfaithful to our oath when we entered the ministry and our practice would be contrary to that of the Lutheran Church.<sup>17</sup>

In respect to lodges, Eberhardt spares no words in telling where this false religion leads. Here again he clearly brings out their damnable beliefs and points out the right direction to go. His argument is one that is surprisingly--not surprising in that he's leading the Michigan Synod to doctrinal unity, but surprising that "there's nothing new under the sun." We have the same problems today as believers had in 1878. Consider his words:

(Lodges) make it obligatory to support their members even though it brings about an injustice.

Their deeply corrupted ceremonies and Diestic doctrine and dangerous formal services--do not lead their people to their Savior and Redeemer; but rather away from Him into damned self-righteousness.

They deny all this that they have a special religion in themselves but this again is an untruth. For all their symbols and prayers and hymns express the cult of their religion which is to be found in the three points: 1) their faith in one God--no Trinity. 2) Their love and righteous conduct. 3) Their hope or faith in immortality. In three words their religion is this: God, virtue, and immortality. Christ is left out!<sup>18</sup>

We can appreciate Eberhardt's discussion on the Four Points and his directing on which way to go when we compare his paper to Schlenker's which was on the same topic and was read at the same convention. Schlenker states some good Scriptural truths on the Four Points. One good thing that he says is this, "We have to believe what the Augsburg Confession confesses. We have to reject what the Augsburg Confession rejects."<sup>18</sup> This statement we can appreciate. We can also appreciate the fact that he bases what he says on Scripture as well as on the the Confessions. Then at the same time he comes out with statements like this, "As long as we agree in doctrine, what difference does it make what we and they do in 'less than important things?'"<sup>19</sup> What does he meant by, "less than important things?" We don't know. That's just it! What he says, for the most part is good and true, but there are things such as the afore mentioned statement that is unclear at its best. It also seems that he treats the Four Points only shallowly. He doesn't delve into them as deeply as Eberhardt does. Schlenker then, is a typical Michigan Synod man. He has some good points but lacks a clear, definite, doctrinal stand in other points.

At any rate, on the basis of Eberhardt's and Schlenker's papers, the 1868 Conference of the Michigan Synod made these resolutions:

1. We reject Chiliasm. (A.C. Art 17)
2. We do not consent to communion fellowship with those of other faiths.
3. That we do not allow exchange of pulpits with the sects.
4. That we reject the secret societies as being the spirit contrary to true Christianity.<sup>2</sup>

For the Michigan Synod to make these resolutions was a giant step toward becoming doctrinally united. There is no small importance in Eberhardt's paper as far as being

the basis for these resolutions. We can't say that his essay deserves all the credit. Certainly Klingman, the president of the synod, was of the same spirit as Eberhardt. He must have had much influence in leading the Michigan Synod to become doctrinally united. The other pastors too must have been willing to go the right path in order for these resolutions to pass. But then at the same time, this paper was a solidifying element. It served as the focal point based on Scripture and the Confessions around which the Michigan Synod could rally together. It would serve to separate the sheep from the goats, being that type of "make it" or "break it" paper. Now the Michigan Synod had a clear statement on which they could stand and give a "trumpet call with a certain sound."

The question arises, if Eberhardt led the Michigan Synod to make such a clear and confessional stand regarding the Four Points in 1868 already, why didn't he lead them the final steps of the way to become sound Lutherans by breaking their fellowship ties with the General Council? They remained part of the General Council until 1888. The Wisconsin Synod withdrew from the General Council already in 1869 and the Minnesota Synod followed suit two years later. Their reasons for withdrawing was because of the unclear and slightly evasive way the General Council dealt with the matters of Communion and Pulpit fellowship. The Wisconsin and Minnesota Synods were certainly justified in their actions. But I think the Michigan Synod can be justified by their action too. There are a number of things which play in, in answering this question, "Why did the Michigan Synod remain in fellowship with the General Council?" First of all, thanks to the leadership of Eberhardt with his paper and direction, and his friend, President Klingman, the Michigan Synod recognized from the beginning that the General Council was unclear on two of the Four Points. They had dealt with the matters of Chiliasm and Lodges in a Scriptural way. The Michigan Synod hoped and prayed from the beginning that the General Council would become just as clear on Pulpit and Altar fellowship. Eberhardt's report to the 1869 Convention of the Michigan Synod is evidence of this hope. He wrote:

Expecting all that they desire in respect to the Four Points (as he had testified in his 1868 essay on those points) would be like expecting a sick person to get well immediately. The result wasn't entirely as they wished. It was a step forward...One has to help the sick man along and hope he becomes "healthy." That's the important mission entrusted to us and our congregations. We'll have to pray that the Lord will bless our work.<sup>21</sup>

So, it wasn't that Eberhardt and his colleagues were oblivious to the problems. They felt they had a mission to do, "help the sick man to become healthy," that is work to improve the conviction in the General Council so that it became doctrinally sound. This they resolved to continue to work toward and hope and pray for at their 1869 convention. To continue to give a strong witness to the truth on these Four Points, Eberhardt urged that they continue studying them.

Eberhardt and his committee reported much the same things concerning the General Council at the Michigan Synod's next convention, 1870. He stated that "the General Council's resolutions weren't very clear," and that "they were to study these points so that the Michigan Synod could with good conscience remain in the General Council,"<sup>22</sup>

It is interesting to note that Eberhardt and his committee staunchly advocated the Scriptural teaching on Pulpit and Altar Fellowship in the 1871 convention of the *Michigan Synod*. He clearly stated, "No pulpit or altar fellowship with those of heterodox churches. NO EXCUSES!"<sup>23</sup> Then just a few months later at the General Council convention they came out with the Akron Rule. In this, they allowed for excuses and exceptions. They allowed these statements in the Akron Rule, "2. The exception to the rule belongs to the sphere of privilege, not of right. 3. The determination of the exceptions is to be made in consonance with these principles, but the conscientious judgment of pastors, as the cases arise."<sup>24</sup> In other words, if the pastor has a "good" reason, he can break the Scriptural guideline, "Lutheran pulpits are for Lutheran ministers only. Lutheran altars are for Lutheran communicants only," the first provision in the Akron rule. This rule was a step in the right direction but it still didn't measure up to the standards of the Michigan Synod who based their standards on the Word of God.

The Michigan Synod's efforts didn't go unrewarded altogether. Their faith and confession were strengthened by having to uphold the truth. Then, when Krauth delivered his 105 theses in 1877, on Pulpit and altar fellowship, they thought their prayers were being answered. This was quite a clear, definite work on fellowship although it still did not measure up to what Eberhardt and his committee advocated. Another thing Eberhardt and his colleagues were concerned about was the fact that only the minority went along with Krauth's point in discussion of his theses. In connection with that, all these things were pretty good on paper, now what would the practice of those in the General Council be? Eberhardt and his followers, "hoped and prayed that the Synods would abide by their rule so that they'd be united in spirit by both doctrine and practice."<sup>25</sup>

All of the above discussion shows Eberhardt's leadership in defending the truth, in giving a certain trumpet sound over against the unsound practice of the General Council. He and Klingman were always optimistic, hoping and praying to heal the sick man. That was one reason for remaining in the General Council. Their action was commendable in that it shows their patience and at the same time their fortitude to continue to boldly testify to the truth.

Another matter that undoubtedly was of great importance to the Michigan Synod and to Eberhardt especially, was the man power shortage. Eberhardt had witnessed about one-third of the pastors and congregations defect from the Michigan Synod to the liberal United Kircherein. He and his synod undoubtedly hoped they could "heal the sick man" so that he could turn around and help them out in their mission work.

Keehler lists age and maturity as another factor which played in. Klingman and Eberhardt were still quite young and inexperienced whereas the Wisconsin and Minnesota leaders were more experienced.<sup>26</sup> They hadn't had the experience of seeing that once Satan's seeds of liberalism are sown in a body and they stubbornly refuse to root it out, it is very difficult to "heal them."

This all shows it was not necessarily to Eberhardt's or to his Synod's discredit



that they remained in the General Council, considering the situation. When the General Council demonstrated in 1884 how they were going to follow the Akron Rule in practice, and the Michigan Synod's exhortations for discipline fell on deaf ears, Eberhardt led them out of the Council unscathed by their false doctrine. The General Council failed to discipline the two Lutheran pastors who preached in Presbyterian churches at Monroe, Michigan where they met in 1884 for their convention. They wouldn't listen to Eberhardt's and his colleague's protests. After patiently waiting for three years to see if the General Council would discipline these men, the Michigan Synod ran out of patience. The time had come to break up a sinful relationship. Eberhardt recommended:

We must publicly declare our position over against the General Council by severing our connections with that body. Until we take that step, we should rightfully be regarded as un-Lutheran by positive Lutherans.<sup>27</sup>

During the Michigan Synod's convention of 1884, the same year that the offense by the two pastors occurred, Eberhardt reported to the Synod, "Is God about to show us a different way to come to our aid?"<sup>28</sup> During this session, the synod resolved to consider a worker-training school of its own. It was largely because of Eberhardt's effort that the Michigan Lutheran Seminary was begun. That it continued to exist and produce pastors who were faithful to God's Word and to the Confessions, it was also due to a large extent to Pastor Eberhardt's talents as he supported it with his time--teaching the students, dogmatics, pastoral theology, homiletics, and mathematics, as well as with his treasure.

There's a good picture of the Michigan Synod in its early years given in its history:

The Michigan Synod in those early years may well be compared with a mass of driftwood which the winds and the waves have carried to some sheltered spot along the shore. There was some fine material in it, men like Christoph Eberhardt who is justly called the "Father of the Seminary," but most of it was simply driftwood.<sup>29</sup>

Let us sum up once more the blessings God gave the Michigan Synod by calling

Christoph Eberhardt into its midst. Nelson depicts Eberhardt as "Michigan's most influential leader."<sup>30</sup> We have seen this to be true. His first step in doctrinally uniting a faithful Michigan Synod was through his doctrinal essay on the Four Points. This was the rallying point, the one good part about being part of the General Council, to which the Michigan Synod clung without wavering throughout the twenty years that they were associated with that group. Finally, Pastor Eberhardt led them out of these ties. His young Synod, under his leadership as president, was able for the first time to stand on its own two feet doctrinally. It was able to provide pastors for itself through the Seminary Eberhardt had done much to found. Before Pastor Eberhardt died, he saw his Synod upholding Scripture and the Confessions so faithfully, that the Michigan Synod could agree to join the Wisconsin and Minnesota Synods without any doctrinal disagreement.

Something we can learn from this story of Eberhardt is the importance of giving a clear trumpet call. It's only on this basis that a body can become doctrinally united. One also sees the importance of training its own pastors and not depending on another church body to do this. This is the only way one can be sure that they will be trained in the Scriptural way, a way which we can be sure is the right way. The need for faithful pastors who give "a certain trumpet sound" will always be there. The need is there to give a clear sound regarding the infallibility of Scripture, properly distinguishing between Law and Gospel, and always untiringly reaching out further to share the Good News further as our highly esteemed church father, Christoph Eberhardt did.

END NOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Kenneth Scott Latourette, A History of Christianity-Reformation to the Present(New York: Harper and Row, 1975) p1047.
- <sup>2</sup>J.L. Neve, A Brief History of the Lutheran Church in America (Burlington: German Literary 1916) p338
- <sup>3</sup>John P. Koehler, The History of the Wisconsin Synod (St Cloud: Sentinel, 1970) p26
- <sup>4</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>5</sup>Neve, op. cit., p339
- <sup>6</sup>Clifford E. Nelson, The Lutherans in North America (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) p396
- <sup>7</sup>Centennial Committee of the Joint Synod, Continuing in His Word (Milwaukee: NPH) p86
- <sup>8</sup>Koehler, op. cit., p 176
- <sup>9</sup>Karl F Krauss, History of the Michigan District, Essay File, (June, 1968) p4
- <sup>10</sup>Centennial Committee, op. cit., p88
- <sup>11</sup>Ibid., p89
- <sup>12</sup>Bericht über die neunte Wahres - Versammlung der Evengelisch Lutherischen Synode von Michigan und anderen Staaten, (September, 1868) p21 --Michigan Synod Proceedings, (1868)
- <sup>13</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>14</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>15</sup>Ibid., p23
- <sup>16</sup>Ibid., p25
- <sup>17</sup>Ibid., p26
- <sup>18</sup>Ibid., p16(?)
- <sup>19</sup>Ibid., p17
- <sup>20</sup>Ibid., p13-14
- <sup>21</sup>Michigan Synod Proceedings, (October, 1869) p 11
- <sup>22</sup>Michigan Synod Proceedings, (October 1870) p13
- <sup>23</sup>Michigan Synod Proceedings, (September, 1871) p18-19
- <sup>24</sup>Nelson, op. cit., p237
- <sup>25</sup>Michigan Synod Proceedings, (October, 1873) p16-17
- <sup>26</sup>Koehler, op. cit., p176
- <sup>27</sup>Centennial Committee, op. cit., p91
- <sup>28</sup>Ibid., p155
- <sup>29</sup>Ibid., p185
- <sup>30</sup>Nelson, op. cit., p396

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