

WHY DID THE FIRST MICHIGAN SYNOD BREAK UP? or WHY DID TRINITY,
MONROE, MICHIGAN SPLIT TO FORM ZION?

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WHY DID THE FIRST MICHIGAN SYNOD BREAK UP? or WHY DID TRINITY,
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My original intent for this project was to study the early history of Zion, Monroe, Michigan. When I learned that Zion was formed by 20+ families who left Trinity, I started to dig for the answer to this question, "why?" In my research I discovered that the answer to, "Why did Trinity split?" also answered "Why did the first Michigan Synod break up?" The key is in the two types of men who formed the first Michigan Synod. The one type is represented in Fredriech Schmid, the first pastor to serve ^{the} congregation in Monroe. The second type is represented in William Hattstaedt, the first full-time pastor in Monroe. Therefore I will approach these questions by:

- I. A study of the background, education, and writings of Fredriech Schmid
- II. A study of the background, education, and writings of William Hattstaedt
- III. A study of the clash between these two men

I

FREDRICH SCHMID was born on Sept. 6, 1807 in Waldorf, Wuerttemberg (Schwabia) Germany. He was brought up in the Evangelical Lutheran Church. In March of 1828 he began a five year course at the Basler Mission Institute, Basel, Switzerland. At the time of his ordination, the Basler Mission Institute received a request for a pastor from a colony of Wuerttembergers in Ann Arbor, Mich. This call was given to Schmid who then sailed for America in June of 1833. He arrived in Detroit in August and conducted the first German services in Detroit in a carpenter shop. After promising to return in five or six weeks, Schmid continued his journey on foot to Ann Arbor.

He arrived in Ann Arbor August 20, 1833. The first services

there were held in a school house about four miles west of the city. By December of the same year a little church was built a mile and a half from the city on donated land. The church was dedicated and the congregation officially organized in October 1834 under the name: The First German Society in Scio. The constitution of the congregation reads:

The undersigned members of this Congregation acknowledge the teachings of the Holy Scripture, old and new testaments, as they are found in the unaltered Augsburg Confession and collective symbolic books of the Lutheran Church, and dedicate themselves festively to hold the Word of God as the proper order, which in every case is to be observed by every member as the only true rule of conduct.¹

These Wuerttembergers and the first Michigan Synod were Lutherans. But they were of a little different "flavor" than their constitution seemed to indicate. For they were influenced by the Prussian Union. And many members were of Reformed parentage. Fredriech Schmid was a Wuerttemburger. He was proud of it. He wrote:

I, for my part, would like to remain faithful to the true teachings of our forefathers and to the beliefs of our Evangelical Church in which I enjoy the peace and the blessing of the Lord.²

Practice and liturgy were such in the Wuerttemberg Evangelical church that neither Lutheran nor Reformed would be offended.

Schmid wrote:

For nearly 18 years I have served numerous congregations here with the Holy Word and Sacrament, in which there are Lutherans and Reformed from the homeland, yet I have never had to experience the slightest criticism on the part of the Reformed because of teachings and creed. As far as church practice is concerned, I maintain everything according to our Wuerttemberg church, except that we from early times did not have communion wafers.³

In the communion liturgy, for example, Schmid used the words "The Lord Jesus Christ said, 'This is my body,'" etc. You can see that the Reformed would not be offended by this.

Schmid's doctrine and practice can be traced back to the Evangelical church in which he was raised. This same doctrine and practice was reinforced in him through his education at the Basler Mission Institute in Basel. The Basel Mission was founded in 1816. Its objectives were:

that well reputed religiously-minded young men of every creed and station might receive suitable instruction in foreign languages and simple Bible doctrine (reine Bibel-lehre), in order, after several years, to go forth as useful missionaries to the unnumbered heathens in foreign places and preach to them the saving Gospel according to Christ's commission Matt. 28:19.4

In keeping with the school's objectives, German, English, Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, Latin was taught along with Isogogics (Schrifterklärung), Christian doctrine and ethics, pastoral theology, homiletics, and catechetics. Symbolics is noticeably lacking.*

The Basel Mission also was a product of its time. Accordingly we are not surprized to find that the Basel Mission was very concerned about the inner life of its students (pietism); that preaching the word is more important than doctrines and confessions (pietism, Prussian union). And as Schmid was a graduate of Basel, we find this same pietism in his letters:

there was music upon the deck during which the sailors carried on very noisely and with tumult late in to the night... I preached the gospel on the deck each Sunday and every evening... (with the result that)... the people on this boat were not like those on other boats on which the people sailed with singing, dancing, and music, which I forbade them in love.5

If the godly truth is proclaimed in a godly and powerful manner and the pastor lives in the strength of the gospel, then the truth-loving people of both confessions can get together through the strength of the word; and this will occur too without any attempt to force a union 6

* A complete catalog can be found in Magazin für die neueste Geschichte der ev. Missions und Bibel Gesellschaften, 1835, #79, p. 399 ff.

For the time being, file this information in the back of your mind while we take a look at William Hattstaedt. Then we will have the necessary background to understand why the first Michigan Synod split and why the congregation in Monroe split to form Zion.

II

WILLIAM HATTSTAEDT was born in 1811 to Michael Hattstaedt and Wilhelmine nee Immel. He was the youngest child. He had 3 older sisters. When he was 5 his mother died. When he was 9 his father died. The Hattstaedt children were then divided among the relatives. William was given to his Grandfather Immel. William's childhood was by no means easy. He wrote that at an early age he learned to bend the knee before his grandfather⁸ ;

When he was 14 he was confirmed in the Lutheran Church and received the Lord's Supper. However, in later years he told his son that his confirmation was a perfunctory act and that he had no faith in Jesus as his redeemer.⁹ At age 16 he went to the Bürgerschule in Ansbach and learned the trade of a brass founder.

Hattstaedt wrote that as a young lad he enjoyed very much the company of his friends and the pleasures of this world. However, his conscience was not at rest. And gradually he found less and less enjoyment with the things of the world. He became very concerned with the meaning of his own death. He wrote:

Auch der Gedanke an den Tod stand stets lebhaft vor meiner Seele. Ich besuchte fleißig die Gottesdienste, hielt mich aber in meinem Feierstunden am liebsten an einsamen Orten auf, um meinem Todesgedanken nachhängen zu können.¹⁰

Hattstaedt was greatly influenced by the pietism of his day. This is evident in several things. Hattstaedt's conscience was bothered by things that are adiaphora. Once some of his friends lured him into a card game. He wrote:

Sobald ich die Karten faßte, fuhr ein Schreck gleich einem
Blißstrahl durch mein Seele.¹¹

Needless to say, Hattstaedt never played cards again. I mention this because his sensitive conscience in adiaphora will get him into trouble in his ministry in Monroe, Michigan.

Another influence of pietism was his need to experience Jesus as his savior rather than to simply know him as his Savior. Hattstaedt knew Jesus as his savior when he was confirmed. Yet he judges himself as not having faith. He also wrote how he came "close" to experiencing Jesus as Savior when he sinned and asked God for forgiveness. As he was searching for rest for his troubled conscience he began to attend Bruedergemeinde meetings. He wrote:

Supfertig und gläubig ergriff ich das heil in Christo, und meine Seele fand Frieden, das Sehnen meines herzens war gestillt. Sobald ich's glauben konnte, daß der herr Jesus auch mein heiland sie, war mir jedes Wort von Ihm, was ein erfrischender Thau nach einem heißen Tage dem lechzenden Erdreich ist.¹²

Fortunately Hattstaedt did not stress the importance of experiencing his faith. His religious experience was such that he clung to every word of God because it was so precious to him. He was not about to let any of it be compromised to preserve a union. This will be a determining factor in his relationship with Schmid and the congregation in Monroe, Michigan.

And so Hattstaedt determines to dedicate his life in service to the Lord. But at first he did not know exactly how. It is at this time that Pastor Wyneken published the pamphlet, The Distress of the German Lutherans in America. Pastor Loehe read it and was deeply impressed. So when Wyneken visited Loehe in 1842, a mission society in Dresden was formed (Verein zur kirchlichen Unterstuetzung der Deutschen in Nordamerika).¹³ Both Wynecken and Loehe were influential in the formation of this society. So you can get a pretty good idea of the doctrine and

practice taught there. The purpose of this society was to train men who would serve in North America and would steadfastly cling to the Confessions of the Lutheran Church.

Hattstaedt also read The Distress and was determined to serve the Lord in North America. He sent his application in and was accepted. He received his first instructions from pastors Lehmus, Burger, and Krausbold in Fürth. This training lasted half a year. In the spring of 1842 he was enrolled in the Mission institute in Dresden. He studied there until October 1843.¹⁴ He completed his theological training under Pastor Loehe.¹⁵

Hattstaedt was of kindred spirit with Loehe. They were both moved by a burning love for their Lord. They were totally committed to all the teaching of the Bible as they were set forth in the Book of Concord. Hattstaedt arrived at this position first of all through his own study of scriptures and secondly through the guidance and training he received at Dresden and under Loehe. With this background and under orders of his teacher Loehe, Hattstaedt went to America determined to serve a congregation of true Lutherans in accord with the Lutheran Confessions.*

It doesn't take a prophet to foresee what will happen when a man like Fredriech Schmid and William Hattstaedt are hooked up together to serve a mixed group of Reformed and Lutheran.

III

MONROE, MICHIGAN began to be settled by Germans from Baden (Reformed) and Bavaria (Lutheran) in 1828. By the time Schmid came to Ann Arbor in 1833, there were 20 German families. When these 20 families heard there was an Evangelical pastor in Michigan, they sent a deligation to Schmid and asked him to come and minister

* The complete manuscript of Hattstaedt's instructions can be found in Kirchliche Mittheilungen, 1844, # 6.

the word and sacrament on a regular basis. So it happened that Schmid traveled 40 miles to Monroe every 8-10 weeks. The first service there was held on Dec. 22, 1833. The first congregation to be organized there was Zoar Ev. Lutheran Church (the name has been changed to St. Paul's) outside the city. This happened in 1834.

As their number grew, they wanted their own pastor. They almost had a pastor when a Mr. Hordorf came to town. I say almost because Hordorf was not quite a pastor. He claimed to have taught at Basil. However he was not ordained. He became pastor in an underhanded way. He was totally lacking in preaching ability. He didn't stay long.¹⁶

Finally in 1843 Zoar sent a request for a pastor to Prof. F. Winkler at Lutheran Seminary at Columbus, Ohio (Ohio Synod). He did not have any available men at that time. But just then William Hattstaedt arrived from Loehe and was given the call. He went to Monroe where the people were overjoyed to see him. However the people urged him to join the Michigan Synod. So Hattstaedt met with Schmit to discuss the constitution of the Synod (which accepted all the confessional writings of the Lutheran Church) and its doctrinal standings. Hattstaedt was satisfied. So on October 4, 1844 Schmid installed Pastor Hattstaedt in Zoar Congregation. At the same time he was received into membership of the Michigan Synod.¹⁷ Later that same year Hattstaedt married Schmid's younger sister.

It didn't take too long before Hattstaedt and the other men from Loehe discovered the serious problems which in time would split the synod and divide the congregations. First, there were pastors in the synod (I do not have their names or any details) whose practices were contrary to the Lutheran Confessions. It is

however reported in Der Lutheraner:

in welcher er Verpflichtung auf sämtliche symbolische Bücher unserer lutherischen Kirche des reinen Bekenntnisses, und wenn gleich Unkenntniß des luth. Wesens, doch anscheinend guten Willen vorfand.¹⁸

Secondly, the congregations were mixed, composed of Lutherans and Reformed. In Monroe this problem surfaced in this way. Schmid used the simple Wuerttemberg liturgy. Both the Reformed and the Lutheran were happy with it. But when Hattstaedt came, he used the liturgy which he learned from Loehe. It was a more complex liturgy. He chanted parts of the communion liturgy. He believed in using all the traditional liturgics which were edifying and not contrary to Scriptures.* This sounded "Catholic" to these simple Germans. Such a problem of itself need not be serious. It can be overcome through loving, patient instructions by the pastor. However there was more to it.

Pastor Schmid used the words in the distribution, "The Lord Jesus Christ says, 'This is my body,'" etc. Pastor Hattstaedt used the words, "Take and eat: this is the true body of our Lord Jesus Christ."¹⁹The addition of "true" was offensive to the reformed because it made it clear the "This is my body" is not to be taken symbolically. Furthermore they felt it was wrong to use anything but the exact words of Christ.

Hattstaedt attempted to instruct his people in these matters. And by outward appearances all the people assented to what Hattstaedt taught. Perhaps Hattstaedt moved to fast. Perhaps these people refused to be instructed. At any rate many were dissatisfied with Hattstaedt.

But Hattstaedt was a faithful pastor. He worked tirelessly

* The complete communion liturgy can be found in Agende für christliche Gemeinden des lutherischen Bekenntnisse von Wilhelm Löhe,

in bringing together German families in the Monroe area so that a congregation in the city and a congregation at Sandy creek were organized. On November 10, 1844 representatives from the three congregations met at Zoar to combine, and adopt a constitution. However each congregation had its own church council. Worship services were held on two Sundays at Zoar and Trinity (in the city) alternating morning and afternoon. On the 3rd Sunday services were held at Sandy Creek.

On the surface for two years things went smoothly. But Pastor Schmid suspected there would be trouble from those members with a Reformed background. He wrote:

I received a co-worker a brother from the Dresden Mission Institute this fall, who took over for me my distant congregation in Monroe. Actually, he was sent there from Columbus. Inwardly he is stiffly Lutheran, which is not desirable for effective work in a congregation of Lutheran and Reformed Germans, most of whom do not know the meaning of Lutheran and Reformed.²⁰

And trouble did erupt in 1846 when Pastor Dumser came to the Michigan Synod from Basel. He had been ordained at Basel. He refused to subscribe to the unaltered Augsburg Confession or any other of the Lutheran Confessions, because "Bücher für ihn ein Gewissenszwang sei."²¹ Nevertheless Pastor Schmid who was then president of the Michigan Synod admitted Dumser into membership.

Pastor Hattstaedt and the other Loehe men immediately protested. At the Synod convention in June of 1846 they presented articles which demanded that the pastors, teachers, and congregations accept without reservations the Book of Concord of 1580.* Schmid and others rejected these articles and refused to kick Dumser out. So Hattstaedt and the other Loehe men had no choice but to leave

* The text of these articles along with the letter of resignation given to Pres. Schmid can be found in Der Lutheraner, 1846, p. 99

the Michigan Synod. Shortly thereafter they joined the Missouri Synod which was being formed. Pastor Schmid wrote about the break up:

We, too, had a synod among us here, but it lacked firm foundation and therefore collapsed; some wanted an organization strictly Lutheran, others not so strict, and as a result a lengthy paper was drawn up but when one wanted to follow its path, the wind blew it away.²²

In Monroe rumors were spread that Pastor Hattstaedt left the Michigan Synod only because of disagreement over the liturgy.²³ For over a year the congregations in Monroe were disrupted. Finally on Pastor's birthday, August 29, 1847 Zoar and 20 families from Trinity ($\frac{1}{2}$ the congregation) left and called their own pastor. Their new pastor happened to be the same man who refused to subscribe to the Lutheran Confession and brought about the end of the Michigan Synod, Pastor Dumser. These 20 families organized Zion.

In the same year seven more families left Trinity. One of Trinity's members owned a Gasthaus which he kept opened on Sundays. According to Hattstaedt there was a serious drinking problem here. Members were getting so drunk that even outsiders were offended. It's hard to say how serious this drinking problem really was. Hattstaedt, the pietist he was, may have defined any drinking as drunkenness. The Germans being Germans may have really been getting "smashed." At any rate the congregation disciplined the owner of the Gasthaus and passed blue laws against drinking or even getting together of Sunday.²⁴ As a result seven families left. As far as I can tell these families joined Zion.

In conclusion, the Michigan Synod broke up and the church in Monroe split because its membership was made up of Lutherans and Lutherans by name only. The former wished to remain true to the Lutheran Confessions. The latter were unclear, perhaps ignorant

of what the Confessions say and their importance. These people wished to be called "evangelical Lutherans." But they did not want to be known as people who quibble over doctrines and pieces of paper. Such a mixture of membership cannot abide. One will leave the other.

But what of Zion, Monroe? Zion was formed by people of Reformed background and by Lutherans who were not clear on their beliefs. Zion's first pastor was not a Lutheran. He refused to subscribe to the Lutheran Confessions. Zion was joined by people who insisted on their right to drink. How is it then that Zion is now Wisconsin Synod while some other congregations started by Schmid and ^{W-22} members of the first Michigan Synod, are now in the reformed camp? Humanly speaking I believe Zion is Wisconsin Synod through the efforts of Pastor Klingman, a second generation Basil man. Certainly a profitable study could be made to find out how Klingman turned Zion around.

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