

THE WENDISH LUTHERAN CHURCH OF TEXAS

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## THE WENDISH LUTHERAN CHURCH OF TEXAS

The early Wendish Lutherans in Texas have left an interesting history of Lutheranism in North America. One can discern the classic factors which may effect the outward unity of a church, though in a microcosm, even among these faithful Lutherans. Religious identity, national identity, pastoral leadership, language, personality, distance, war, pride, misunderstanding, doctrinal beliefs and even "enthusiasm" have some effect upon the unity of this church. The scope of this study is the early ecclesiastical history of these people who founded the community of Serbin in central Texas, about forty miles east of Austin. In the early days they were known as the Wendish Lutheran Church, or the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Serbin colony; today the congregation is St. Paul's Lutheran Church of Serbin, Texas. The period of focus will be approximately the decade of the 1850's, although we want to begin with a sketch of their background in Europe.

### European Background

The name "Wend" is the German designation for all the former Slavic populations living in Germany, and particularly the Slavic remnants in the Lusatias.<sup>1</sup> This is an area along the Spree River about seventy miles long, thirty miles wide, and about fifty miles southwest from Berlin.<sup>2</sup> In the middle of the eighteenth century, lower Lusatia

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1. George C. Engerand, The So-Called Wends of Germany and their Colonies in Texas and Australia (University of Texas Press, 1934), p. 17.

2. Lillie Caldwell, Texas Wends, Their First Half-Century (The Anson Jones Press, 1961), p. 23

was in Prussia while the upper part was divided between Prussia and Saxony.<sup>3</sup>

When the Germanic Goths migrated southeast into the eastern part of the Roman Empire, a Slavic tribe, belonging to the West Slavonic branch of the Windic class of Aryans, filled the void which the Goths left behind. This Slavic occupation was completed by about A. D. 600.<sup>4</sup> Beginning in the ninth and tenth centuries, the Germans gradually overwhelmed the slavs through Germanization or extermination. The Wends are the remnant of that Slavic tribe in Germany. They are perhaps the smallest group of slavs more or less conscious of forming a separate nationality. However, since there is no definite Slavic race, the distinction is largely cultural and linguistic.<sup>5</sup>

#### Discontent in Germany

The Wends were set apart from their neighboring Germans by culture and language. Their identity as a people had survived centuries of war and political domination by neighboring powers. On the one hand, the Wendish identity survived because the Lusatias were relatively small and unimportant, and this small region was passed back and forth between the greater powers. On the other hand, the Wends tended to band together and were quite conscious of their cultural and

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3. Op. cit., p. 13

4. P. E. Kretzmann, "The Early History of the Wendic Lutheran Colony in the State of Texas," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, Vol. III (July 1930), p. 47.

5. Caldwell, op. cit., p. 9.

linguistic identity, so that they deliberately resisted programs of Germanization. Apparently, the desire to preserve their Wendish identity was a strong motive for the eventual immigrations to Texas and Australia. One might note that in 1815, the Congress of Vienna divided Lusatia between Prussia and Saxony, dividing the Wendish area approximately in half. In Prussia a policy of Germanization was "pitilessly pursued."<sup>6</sup> Illustrative of the Wends' desire to preserve their "national" identity was a song which Johann Kilian wrote, and which became a favorite hymn of the Wends: "Wendens be True to Your Language and to Your Religion."<sup>7</sup> This Wendish "nationalism," which at the time of the immigration helped to unite the congregation, later proved to be a divisive factor of the church in Texas.

Another cause for the Wendish discontent in Germany was economic discrimination, particularly in Prussia. The Wends were not allowed to do the skilled labor for which they were trained. When they did obtain a job, they received much less pay than did the Germans. Furthermore, many Wends were forced to change their names to German names.<sup>8</sup>

Nevertheless, the main reason for the immigration was religious discontent. The occasion for this discontent was the decree of the Prussian Union of 1817, which forced the union of Lutheran and Reformed churches in Prussia. The Wends readily embraced the Lutheran reformation in the sixteenth century, and strongly identified with the Lutheran faith.

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6. Engerand, op. cit., p. 23.

7. Caldwell, op. cit., p. 38.

8. Ibid., p. 40.

Perhaps they could endure secular oppression, but the religious enslavement by the "Pope of Berlin"<sup>9</sup> was intolerable! That religious discontent was the main concern of the Wends is evident by the fact that the group which immigrated organized as a congregation, and it was as a congregation, per se, that they immigrated to Texas. It was a congregation organized not by the pastor or the bishop, but by the people themselves. The same immigration party chose for its leader a pastor. As the initiative to immigrate came from the people, so it was truly a church which immigrated. The religious identity was primary; the secular community was incidental.

#### Johann Kilian

Although the initiative came from the laymen, we must not discount the influence and leadership of the man they called to be their pastor. Johann Kilian's influence was decisive not only for the immigration, but also in reference to the state of concord in the congregation for the next two decades.

Johann Kilian was born of Wendish parents who were farmers at Dohlen, in the Wendish part of Saxony, in 1811. After his confirmation he attended the gymnasium at Bautzen, the capital of Saxonian Lusatia. Kilian's parents died when he was young and left him sufficient funds to pursue his higher education. Hence, in 1831 Kilian enrolled in the University of Leipzig. It is certain that Kilian became acquainted with C. F. W. Walther at this time, as they went to the

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University of Leipzig.

9. Kilian's reference to the King of Prussia as quoted in Kretzmann, op, cit., p. 47.

university together. Obviously, Kilian shared the same confessional faith with Walther, as was evident from Kilian's immediate affiliation with the Missouri Synod upon his arrival to Texas in 1855. Kilian and Walther corresponded with each other, and it is believed that Walther influenced Kilian to lead the Wends to America.<sup>10</sup>

An honor graduate from the university, Kilian entered the ministry in 1834 as assistant to Pastor Mohme of Hochkirk.<sup>11</sup> Kilian thought of doing mission work in East India, and consequently, went to Basel, a center for missionary training, with that objective in mind. Barely there, he received word that his uncle, Pastor Michael Kilian, of Kotitz in Saxony had died. While attending the funeral, the congregation there called him to be its pastor. Kilian served Kotitz from 1837 to 1848.

Kilian's ministry in Kotitz was important for the cause of Wendish confessional Lutheranism, as well as for the cause of enhancing Wendish "national" consciousness. Kilian used both German and Wendish language at Kotitz. Furthermore, at this time he translated into Wendish Luther's Large Catechism, The Augsburg Confession and also wrote numerous prayer books, sermons and tracts. As mentioned above, in 1846 Kilian wrote the favorite, "Wendens be True to Your Language and to Your Religion." Besides this hymn he also wrote a collection of Wendish songs called, Songs of Joy.<sup>12</sup>

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10. Caldwell, op.ccit., p. 42.

11. Engerand, op. cit., p. 90.

12. Caldwell, op. cit., pp. 37-38.

An important and noteworthy event was Kilian's reformation sermon in 1846 which he published in both Wendish and in German, entitled, "The Care Required of Lutheran Christians in the Present State of Confessional Confusion---A Serious Word to the Lutheran People."<sup>13</sup> In that sermon Kilian not only emphasized the chief doctrines of the confessional Lutheran Church, but he also spoke out against the Saxon state church. The following quote shows the confessional stand which Kilian made:

One of two things is likely to happen. Either the state church will fall away from the Lutheran faith, and then we shall have to leave it, or the state church will remain Lutheran and then the false brethren will have to get out. . . .<sup>14</sup>

Kilian got out, accepting a call in 1848 to two free Lutheran Wendish congregations in Prussia, one in Weigersdorf and one in Klitten. From these two charges he traveled as a sort of circuit rider to a number of smaller groups, some in Prussia and some in Saxony, as far as Wittenberg---a total of eighteen stations.

#### Organization

One might imagine that Kilian's ministry among the Wends served not only to sharpen the confessional consciousness among the Wends, but also to encourage their sense of "nationalism." It is likely that his ministry helped to bring a number of Wends into a single Lutheran congregation.

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13. Kretzmann, op. cit., p. 48.

14. As quoted in Caldwell, op. cit. p. 39.

In 1849 the Wends began to form clubs, called Vereines in German. The members would pay approximately five dollars in dues with which the clubs would print and distribute Wendish Lutheran books to their members.<sup>15</sup> We might note that this tendency to form small groups, which originally helped to unite the Wends, later proved to be devisive to the congregation in America.

Meanwhile, immigration was beginning to be a viable option. In 1847 three families (Wendish) migrated to Australia. In 1848 three more families moved to Australia. In 1840 four families went to Australia. Then, in 1853, thirty-five Prussian Wends migrated to Texas. These sent back enthusiastic letters, urging others to come to Texas because of the freedom and economic opportunities there.<sup>16</sup>

Subsequently, in 1854 a number of Wends from various communities organized a Lutheran congregation in opposition to the Prussian state church, and with the purpose to immigrate. Following is an interesting account by Johann Teinert, a member of the congregation:

A new congregation was formed by people from various villages and stations where Pastor Kilian preached. From these places the people came together and had various meetings, most frequently at Karl Lehmann's and at my father's Karl Teinert's.<sup>17</sup>

On March 25th the congregation was organized at Daubin, Prussia, at which time they also decided on a large immigration.

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15. Ibid., pp. 39-40.

16. Ibid., p. 42.

17. Kretzmann, op. cit., p. 49.



On May 23rd the congregation decided to call Pastor Kilian as their pastor and leader. The call was signed by six men, Korla Wicz (Karl Lehmann) of Dubrawa, Korla (Karl) Teinert of Wukrancicy (Dauban), Arnost Mjerwa (Ernest Moerbe) of Kluks (Klix and Bautzin), Jan Hola Tahmen (Johann Hohle), Krystof Kokel (Christoph Krockel) of Wospork (Reichwalde), and Jan Hurban (Johann Urban) of Rakojd (Rackel). The call concluded with the following words:

May the Lord grant us all His holy Spirit that we may remain in love toward Him and our beloved pastor until finally we shall end the pilgrimage and enter into his heavenly Kingdom, where we, with our dear pastor, shall praise and worship Him in all eternity. Amen.<sup>18</sup>

Kilian promptly accepted the call.

#### The Immigration

In the first week of September, 1854, over five hundred Wends left their homes for Texas by way of Hamburg and Liverpool. Kilian apparently wrote that there were 588 colonists. Contracting with the Valentine Lorenz Meyer Ship Lines, the congregation eventually boarded the large two-decked English sailing ship, the Ben Nevis, at Liverpool, England. According to the ship register, the Wends came from sixty-five cities and villages scattered in Prussia and Saxony.<sup>19</sup>

The trip itself lasted about eight and one-half weeks. The initial occurrences of cholera and the subsequent hardships at sea had a humbling effect upon the congregation. The journey undoubtedly

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18. As quoted in Engerrand, op. cit., pp. 92-93. Also, Kretzman, op. cit., p. 49.

19. Anne Blasig, The Wends of Texas (Naylor Company, 1954), pp. 19-20.

occasioned many memories which the congregation would hold in common for years to follow. A common resolve had united the group. Now the hardships of the journey, as well as the mere proximity of persons, helped to solidify the unity of this Wendish Lutheran congregation. We should mention the tragically devisive aspect of the journey, however, and that is the fact that seventy-three members died on the trip.<sup>20</sup>

#### The Settlement

The congregation arrived at Galveston, Texas, on December 16, 1854. The colonists proceeded across the Houston prairie in January, having stayed in Houston over Christmas. Although the Rev. Caspar Braun, the pastor of an independent Lutheran church in Houston did much to care for the immigrants, many still had to camp in the open even when it was cold.<sup>21</sup> Of the subsequent journey, Pastor Kilian wrote:

I arrived with this congregation at Galveston on December 16 of last year [1854] and then made the trip with those in possession of some means, two hundred miles into the country, while the poorer ones had to look for work in Houston and elsewhere. Here, on Rabbs Creek, in Bastrop County, those who are well-to do, who also paid the expense of the voyage for the poor, are about to buy a league of land approximately 4,400 acres, so that also the poorer ones may be enabled to follow them into this new home.<sup>22</sup>

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20. Ibid., pp. 27-28.

21. Arthur C. Repp, "St. Paul's and St. Peter's Lutheran Churches, Serbin, Texas, 1855-1905." Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, Vol. XV (July, 1943), p. 38. Repp notes that Braun was one of the organizers of the Texas Synod in 1851 and was it's president for the first two years. However, in 1853 he left the Texas Synod when it joined the General Synod.

22. Kretzmann, op. cit., p. 50.

In February the land was finally purchased. The congregation chose to settle in the post-oak region of central Texas because the plentiful wood there would provide the materials to build their houses, and because the scenery reminded them of their previous home.<sup>23</sup> When the land was distributed among the various colonists, ninety-five acres were set aside for the church and school.

At this time harmony prevailed among the congregation. The settlers were mostly concerned with building their community, and were generally isolated from the outside world. Although conditions were extremely rough for the first two or three years in Texas, they nevertheless fulfilled their main focus of concern, namely, that they were a united church. Undoubtedly, just as the Wends found comfort in the Gospel amidst the hardships of those first years, so they found solidarity in their identity as a Lutheran church. Consequently, they fulfilled the priorities which such identity entails. By October 17, Kilian was able to move into the parish which the congregation built for him. The structure consisted of two large rooms with a hall between them. In one room the pastor and his family lived, while in the other the school and church services were conducted.<sup>24</sup>

Throughout this period, Kilian not only ministered to those at the settlement site, but he also ministered to those families who had

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23. Caldwell, op. cit., p. 54.

24. Repp, op. cit., p. 41.

been left behind, especially those at New Ulm, about forty miles away. It was there that Kilian had his first confirmation class in the New world.<sup>25</sup>

The congregation was connected with the Missouri Synod from the beginning. The synod in convention accepted Kilian into membership, although he was not present, in 1855. The congregation itself, however, did not become a member until 1866. It is not clear why the congregation did not join. Apparently, they saw no need to join since they were united in the orthodoxy of their pastor. Furthermore, the congregation, being highly conscious of its Wendish identity, did not feel compelled to join another German church. It is probable that the settlers had ideas of establishing a "Wendland" in Texas.<sup>26</sup> At any rate, Pastor Kilian was the first and only "Missouri" pastor in Texas for fourteen years.<sup>27</sup>

Before and during the immigration, the congregation was solidly Wendish, although there was apparently a small minority who felt more comfortable with the German language.<sup>28</sup> True, it was a "transient" congregation, but it was united in a common identity and a common resolve. Once the Wends settled in America, however, the former basis for cohesiveness began to break down. Although the process was gradual at first, the church nevertheless became distinct from the local community. That is, while the congregation wanted to be a Wendish Lutheran

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25. Ibid.

26. Caldwell, op. cit., p. 62.

27. J. W. Behnken, "The Missouri Synod in the South and Southwest," Ebenezer, p. 371.

28. Caldwell, op. cit., p. 58.

congregation, the community became increasingly less Wendish and less Lutheran. Such was the inevitable process of Americanization.

#### The Schism of St. Peter's

The first threat to the unity of the parish ensued as early as 1856, when the Reverend E. Schneiber, a Methodist, began preaching on Pin Oak and Rabbs Creek.<sup>29</sup> A number of Germans were already living in the vicinity when the Wends arrived. Some of them subsequently joined Kilian's congregation. However, when the Methodists, who were German, began to preach from the homes of some Germans living in the area, the German element at Kilian's church apparently found the "meetings" appealing. The trouble actually began to take shape in 1857, as Kilian later wrote that the Methodists came in that year.<sup>30</sup>

Perhaps the Wendish tendency to gather into small groups also aggravated the situation. Whatever, some of the settlers had been holding small prayer meetings, called "hora's." The Church council tried to discourage these meetings, but with little success. Subsequently, Kilian himself conducted such meetings for about six months, twice a week, on Wednesdays and Fridays. However, attendance slacked off until the meetings were discontinued by Easter of 1858.<sup>31</sup>

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29. Repp, op. cit., p. 43.

30. Ibid., p. 44.

31. Ibid.

Meanwhile, certain members of the congregation continued to meet in German homes where Methodists preached. In his sermon on the Sunday before Pentecost, Kilian told the congregation that the disturbing members would have to straighten out their affairs, or leave the congregation, or else he himself would leave.<sup>32</sup>

Kilian believed that the main issue was the invasion of the pietism of Arndt.<sup>33</sup> Apparently, when pietistic Germans left the state church of Germany to come to America, they tended to find Methodism in this country attractive. It is evident, however, that most of the German element in the Wendish church did not want to forsake their Lutheran identity. For them the main issue was the language. They simply wanted to hear the German language preached.

Consequently, when the Wends refused to allow the use of German in the services, the German faction turned to the Texas Synod. First they wrote a letter to the president of that Synod. They also sent a deligation to Rev. George Lieb of the Texas Synod. On October 9 Lieb along with a member of the faction group visited Kilian about the matter. As Kilian's efforts at reconciliation failed, Kilian tried to direct the faction toward the Texas Synod rather than have them turn to the Methodists. Subsequently, the group applied for membership in the Texas Synod as the St. Peter's Church of Rabbsville.<sup>34</sup>

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32. Ibid.

33. Ibid., (January, 1943) p. 115.

34. Ibid., (July, 1942) p. 46.

In the synodical meeting of the Texas Synod, which met on May 13, 1859 the application came up and the synod instructed the president, John C. Roehm to further investigate the matter while Lieb served as pastor of the German faction.<sup>35</sup> Roehm wrote to the president of the Western District of the Missouri Synod, C. Schaller, stating that the Reverend Lieb was serving a group of people who to some extent had been excommunicated by Kilian. When Schaller enquired of Kilian about the schism, Kilian replied with a long letter in which he explained the situation. Although Kilian insisted that there was no expulsion, and indicated that it was a voluntary separation due to the pietism of Arndt as opposed to Lutheranism, Kilian nevertheless recommended that Schaller consent to Lieb's ministry at St. Peter's. Kilian felt that the Texas Synod was leaning toward Missouri and that the group would be lost to the Methodists if not salvaged by the Texas Synod. On the basis of Kilian's recommendation, the Texas Synod accepted St. Peter's into membership on April 27, 1860.<sup>36</sup>

Meanwhile, the group built a frame church on the outskirts of Serbin before the end of 1858. According to Caldwell, the new church was dedicated by Pastor Kilian himself on June 5, 1859.<sup>37</sup> Kilian's participation in the dedication of St. Peter's new building may seem inconsistent and unionistic. We can only guess the reasons for

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35. Ibid.

36. Ibid., (January, 1943) p. 115.

37. Caldwell, op. cit., p. 59.

this procedure.

We would like to emphasize, however, Pastor Kilian's patience and pastoral concern in his frontier setting—a setting in which Kilian experienced severe isolation from the conserving fellowship of other orthodox pastors. The persistence and faithfulness with which Kilian went about his duties is difficult for us who have known only the comforts and luxuries of modern American civilization to appreciate, or even comprehend. Certainly Kilian was a conscientious pastor, as was evidenced by his pioneer work in other areas besides Serbin. He served some twenty families in New Ulm, Austin County about forty miles away, to which he traveled once every five weeks. He also preached at Louis Settlement in Fayette County, at Roeder's Mill in Austin County, and at Bastrop, Texas. Besides these duties, he also taught the parochial school for eleven years.<sup>38</sup>

#### Harsh Conditions

The tensions in the Wendish colony, as well as the faithfulness of the pastor and people alike, may be better appreciated in view of the harsh conditions of those first five years in Texas. The first shelters were mostly crude log cabins without chimneys and with dirt floors. There were some mud huts and dugouts as well.<sup>39</sup> As we mentioned, the "parsonage" constituted a somewhat better structure, made with boards, shingles and sealing boards, as well as glass window panes. These were not added, however,

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38. Behnken, op. cit., p. 371. Behnken reports that Kilian taught for ten years. However, Godfried Lehnigk did not relieve Kilian until 1867. (cf. Repp, op. cit. (January, 1943), p. 123.

39. Blasig, op. cit., pp. 36-37.



until almost a year later, on August 13, 1856. There were two windows in the parsonage, one in each room. (Incidentally, Pastor Kilian and his family lived in that same parsonage until his death in 1884.) In addition to the poor living conditions, there was a shortage of clean drinking water. Indicative of this shortage is the fact that the men of the congregation worked from September 9, 1856 until April, 1857 digging a well for the parsonage. After digging seventy feet, the project was abandoned and a ground cistern was constructed.<sup>40</sup> Consequently, the poor conditions gave rise to various fevers throughout the community, such as malaria, yellow fever, dysentery, typhoid, convulsions and cholera. Pastor Kilian, and his wife Maria, lost their four-week-old daughter, Maria Theresa, to a fever in March of 1855.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, the farmers were not able to plant a crop in 1855 because the fields were not cleared in time. Then, in 1856 and 1857 drought prevailed so that both food and water were scarce. The drought was worse in 1859 when no corn was harvested at all, and there was only one well with water.<sup>42</sup> In view of these primitive conditions we can only learn from the persistent efforts of Pastor Kilian to conduct a conscientious ministry. In the following letter, dated May 16, 1857, Pastor Kilian writes about his heavy work-load and lack of physical comforts in his "Wendish Settlement":

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40. Ibid., p. 40.

41. Ibid., p. 37.

42. Ibid., p. 42.

One whole year is gone since I received your kind letter dated the 20th day of April 1856. Excuse the long delay of my reply, which was difficult for me, because by my very little knowledge of the English language. I am prevented from fully expressing my mind because I am too much engaged in business as preacher, schoolmaster and farmer. My congregation of this place amounts now to fifty families. Every fifth Sunday I preach in my second Wendish congregation of twenty families in Austin Co., [New Ulm] forty miles away. Besides I must travel sometimes to other less parties committed to my ministerial care. Under such burden of various occupation, I can't gain time to read all papers which come to my home, however interesting they may be. The sheets of "The Missionary" I received hitherto regularly, but I was seldom able to pursue them. My domestic comfort also has not yet increased so far as to favour any diffuse reading. My such experience I am compelled to beseech you: Send me no more numbers of the Missionary. For the received numbers I enclose here in one dollar.<sup>43</sup>

#### The First Church Building

The concluding phase of this decade of the 1850's regards the construction and dedication of the first church building. In spite of the loss of fifteen families to the newly formed St. Peter's church, additional families of Wends arrived in the Rabbs Creek area who had previously been delayed in their journey from Houston. Consequently, the congregation resolved to build a new church. The minutes of the August 7, 1859 meeting which was held at Kilian's parsonage read as follows:

The undersigned have decided to build on their church property of the Serbin colony an Evangelical Lutheran Church near the parsonage. The church, which is to have the architectural design of California homes, is to be fifty-feet long, twenty-five feet wide, and fourteen feet high. . . a cistern should also be built at the present parsonage. The members agree to work cooperatively on the construction of the building

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43. Blasig, op. cit., p. 40. The letter was written by "John Kilian, minister" to Rev. W. A. Passavant, Pittsburg, Pa., in the University of Texas archives.

and to pay five dollars per member for the construction materials before September 29. It is also agree that the remainder of the debt is to be divided equally among the members and is to be paid before December 25, 1860.<sup>44</sup>

Subsequently, the cornerstone was laid on November 11, and the members "raised" the wood-frame church building on November 24.<sup>45</sup>

The dedication service occurred on Christmas day, December 25, a day attended by freezing weather and snow. Nevertheless, because the occasion was such a momentous day for the community, the service was popularly attended. Many Germans in the area also attended. Consequently, the pastor preached two sermons that morning, one in Wendish and one in German. He also had a small address in English. Following, we note Kilian's record of the dedication service:

The procession, early in the morning, started from the parsonage, whose wing had till then served for church and school purposes, to the new church, while the bell was being rung and an appropriate hymn was sung, with the pastor in his vestments. . . and the church council at the head, then the young men and young women, and then the remaining people. Serbian Wendic singing and the liturgy, with organ accompaniment, opened the celebration. Hereupon the pastor delivered the preliminary address from the altar, in which it was said that the church now dedicated was the first Serbian [Wendish] church in Texas.<sup>46</sup>

Needless to say, the dedication of the new church building was an important milestone in the life of the congregation. The occasion

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44. Ibid., p. 45.

45. The current church edifice is a unique stone church of Gothic architecture with a seating capacity of 600. It was initiated only seven years later, in 1866 but was not completed until 1871.

46. Blasig, op. cit., p. 56.

stood out, on the one hand, as a testimony to the faith of the congregation. On the other hand, the event represented the deep desire to maintain the Wendish identity.

### Beyond the 1850's

Both the faith of the congregation and the ethnic consciousness of the community continued to effect the affairs of the Wendish Lutheran Church of Texas. The newly formed St. Peter's church did not represent a final solution. The clash between the Wends and Germans continued to be a thorn in the side of Pastor Kilian and gave rise to constant conflict for the next twenty years. As far as we can discern, doctrine, per se, was not a cause for divisiveness. The faction church, St. Peter's, failed to grow until even the Texas Synod would not supply it with a pastor. Perhaps it was indicative of Kilian's pastoral concern that when members of St. Peter's later petitioned for reunion in 1867, Kilian's congregation immediately effected a reconciliation against the vigorous protests of the new teacher, Rev. Lehnigk. Although Kilian frequently complained about the difficulties between the two congregations,<sup>47</sup> he agreed to the reunion. But the reunion was apparently not solid. Only three years later, in 1870, another faction broke away and again called themselves St. Peter's. Another source of conflict which developed in the 1860's concerned the support of the school, where there was the desire on the part of some to form congregations and schools in locations

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47. Repp, op. cit., Vol. XVI, (April, 1943), p. 18.

which were closer to their homes. The events of the 1860's and 1870's however, constitute another chapter in the history of the Wendish church of Texas, and extend beyond the focus of this paper.

### Conclusion

By the close of the decade of the 1850's the Wendish Lutheran Church was still Wendish, with Wendish the only official language of the church. The congregation was still relatively isolated from the pressures of Americanization. Although there may have been secular concerns molding the people into a homogeneous and harmonious community, their faith was foremost among them. Hence, their identity as an orthodox and Wendish Lutheran Church was primary. They were united in that identity. The distinction between the secular community and the churchly community was not yet clear.

Both nationality and incipient pietism were divisive factors. Nevertheless, through the pastoral leadership of Johann Kilian, the true faith of the church was preserved. Kilian continued to face the faction organization with pastoral concern.

Finally, that people and pastor alike strove for the faith and persevered amidst such adverse conditions must be regarded as a miracle of God's grace. Many churches have failed under lesser trials. We can only conclude that the continuence of the church—and as an orthodox congregation—was a blessing of God upon a group which resolved to stand by His Word.

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