

Education: The Wartburgs

In the ideology of the Iowa Synod, Christian education receives major emphasis. Every child should receive religious instruction from the age of six or seven up to confirmation at about fourteen. For this purpose every congregation should maintain a parochial school, which should also teach German, to preserve the German cultural heritage. It might also teach English and other secular subjects to provide a sound elementary education.

Ideally such a school should be taught by a trained parochial teacher. In addition the pastor would maintain a Sunday school, and the Christenlehre, preferably in a separate afternoon service, where religious instruction could be continued for the older youth and in which the entire congregation should take part, especially those among the long-unchurched older generation.

Teachers might be supplied by the normal school at Dubuque, where students from Germany were trained by Pastor G. Grossmann. But since the youthful synod lacked established congregations and had to concentrate on founding missions which would be unable to afford both pastors and teachers, it soon became evident that the greater need was for pastors who must likewise teach. In

1854, therefore the school in Dubuque was transformed into a theological seminary, and teacher education temporarily abandoned.

While students continued to come from Germany, the Iowa Synod enlisted students from American congregations. Since these would need preparatory training, a Latin school was opened in connection with the Dubuque seminary in 1854. It was in charge of Pastor Sigmund Fritschel, and was designed to provide a classical education.

Loehe undertook to support this institution by providing funds in 1854 for the purchase of a house on White Street, near Thirteenth, to which the school was removed from the original rented quarters on Garfield Avenue. The parsonage of St. John's Church now occupies this new site. Professor Grossmann took sole charge of the Latin school and seminary, at the same time serving as pastor of St. John's.

In 1857 the institution was removed to rural Clayton County near St. Sebald Church. A farm was purchased to provide material support, and a frame school building was erected to house personnel and provide all facilities. Grossmann served as pastor at St. Sebald and also as president of the synod, so his teaching duties had to be reduced. Before Sigmund Fritschel was recalled in 1858, his younger brother Gottfried, whom Loehe had sent over in 1857, was head instructor.

During the next decade the institution gradu-

ally developed the character which it was to preserve well into the twentieth century. The name Wartburg was chosen at St. Sebald in commemoration of Luther's refuge and suggested by the site, a hilltop overlooking broad plains. Facilities limited total enrollment to thirty at most; until 1865 there were rarely more than half that many students. The preparatory, or college, division offered a four-year and later a five-year course, stressing classical languages, German, and English. The seminary division added three years of theological work which gradually became standardized. The teaching load was carried by S. and G. Fritschel, assisted by Pastor Grossmann.

The removal to a rural area did not solve all financial problems. A heavy building debt, the Panic of 1857, and the Civil War inflation created a precarious situation. A portion of the debt was liquidated by Loehe's organization. Between 1860 and 1863 Professor Sigmund Fritschel collected money in Germany, and particularly in the Baltic provinces of Russia, where he enlisted friends who gave substantial support for years to come. Thence he also brought with him as housemother Miss Auguste von Schwarz, whose tireless devotion endeared her to a generation of clergymen.

After the Civil War the institution seemed secure. In 1868 it was decided to separate the two divisions so a former nunnery was purchased at Galena, Illinois. Since 1862 the college had ad-

mitted nontheological students; now plans called for extension of its course by one year and for admission of local students. Pastor J. Klindworth served as rector while Professors F. Lutz and A. Preller carried most of the teaching load. In 1874 the seminary was also removed to Mendota, Illinois, where a vacant campus had been purchased.

During the 1870's the synod found it difficult to maintain two institutions. In 1875 the college was recombined with the seminary at Mendota. The seminary grew and flourished, drawing students chiefly from Germany, but plans for expanding the college were abandoned.

Meanwhile, teaching in parochial schools had become a burdensome duty for pastors throughout the synod. Rigid teaching schedules interfered greatly with missionary activities. Many congregations by then were able to afford teachers, but trained Christian men who could handle German were scarce, so teacher education had to be resumed. Pastor Grossmann made a tentative beginning by enrolling a small class in an orphanage at Andrew, Iowa, in 1878. The next year the synod approved organization of a full-fledged normal school and accepted a Waverly offer to furnish funds for a building and campus. Old Main was erected and occupied in 1880. Even though local students as well as prospective teachers were admitted, the enrollment remained rather small. It was therefore decided in 1885 to move

the college from Mendota to Waverly, where in combination with the normal school it might better be able to expand.

The Mendota plant remaining inadequate, a large mansion and grounds were acquired in 1889 on Fremont Avenue in Dubuque for the growing seminary. The former was remodeled into a seminary building, and residences for the staff were built on the grounds. Sigmund and Gottfried Fritschel had remained as teachers through the Mendota period, assisted by instructors. Gottfried Fritschel died just before the removal. Sigmund Fritschel, together with Pastor W. Proehl, guided the seminary until his death in 1900. Pastor M. Reu then began a career as eminent theologian and teacher until his death in 1943. Sons of the two founders, Pastors Max Fritschel and George Fritschel, joined the faculty about 1895 and 1904 respectively. Dr. Max Fritschel was elected president on the death of W. Proehl in 1905. An English professorship, created in 1896, was filled by W. A. Sadtler, then by G. Zeilinger.

There was little curricular change until recent years. English gradually became the language of instruction after World War I. The most notable event of President M. Fritschel's administration was the erection of the present seminary in 1916 in commemoration of the quadricentennial of the Lutheran Reformation. Gifts from the Luther Leagues of the synod made possible the erection

of a statue of Martin Luther a few years later. In 1951 a fourth dormitory unit was added.

Extensive curricular changes were made after the formation of the American Lutheran Church in 1930. The school was accredited with the Association of American Theological Schools, and the teaching staff was gradually enlarged to eight. Six of the present staff are graduates of the seminary. After the resignation of M. Fritschel there followed brief presidencies of E. Rausch and J. Bodensieck. B. Holm is now president.

The college did not change its character at Waverly, but a six-year course and a three-year normal course were offered. President Grossmann's faculty contained eminent teachers, such as Professors O. Kraushaar and J. Fritschel. A generous donor, Mr. F. Schack, provided for a larger campus and a commons, North Hall, but continued growth soon strained facilities and led to another division. A magnificent campus was acquired in Clinton and the college reopened in 1894 under President F. Richter.

The normal school at Waverly was left in charge of President Grossmann and Professor A. Engelbrecht, Sr. Illness soon forced Grossmann to retire, and brief presidencies of Pastors F. Lutz and G. Bergstraesser followed. A change in institutional character resulted when at the end of the century the parochial school gave way to the public school. Teacher education continued, but an

academy, a business department, and a school of music were organized, and coeducation was introduced. Remarkable growth ensued when Professor Engelbrecht became president in 1909. His faculty contained such eminent teachers and organizers as Professors J. Becker, H. Arnold, O. Hardwig. The curriculum was entirely revamped, the plant greatly extended, and a junior college was organized. At its peak the enrollment exceeded 250 students. In the twenties, however, the rise of the public high school began to injure such departments as the academy. The college and the junior college became competitors in teacher education and pre-theological training, and in the thirties both found it difficult to weather the impact of the depression. The college at Clinton continued to offer a six-year course modelled on the German *Gymnasium*, but found it increasingly difficult to attract students. When Professor O. Kraushaar became president in 1900 unsuccessful attempts were made to convert the school into a coeducational liberal arts college. Under President John Fritschel, the lower years were converted into an academy, but not until the twenties under President O. Proehl could the changes advocated by Kraushaar be fully accomplished. Professor M. Wiederaenders introduced teacher education as a primary function alongside of the traditional pre-theological curriculum.

In 1933 the American Lutheran Church merged

the college and the junior college at Clinton and in 1935 transferred them to Waverly. Under President E. Braulick it weathered the difficult depression years. President C. Becker, inaugurated in 1945, initiated a continuing program of expansion. The curriculum was revised and expanded, and the conversion program was completed by securing accreditation with regional and professional organizations. A building program began which is still in full progress. The enrollment, which had approximated 300 students before World War II, was more than doubled. Measures were taken to strengthen the faculty and to encourage research.

While the institutions of higher education thus were adapted to the American environment, the parochial school all but died out. Compulsory elementary education and the development of excellent public schools were major factors in bringing this about, but declining emphasis upon maintenance of the German heritage was a contributory factor. Other means of maintaining the emphasis on religious education were substituted for the parochial school. Sunday schools, which followed the American pattern, came into general use. In rural congregations children were often taken out of the public schools for a year during which the pastor gave them intensive religious instruction preparatory to confirmation. In urban congregations Saturday instruction was often provided.

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