

Growing Pains

Much of the expansion of the first ten years of the Iowa Synod (1854-1864) was due to weekend preaching trips. Professors and advanced students took long journeys to serve scattered groups of Lutheran immigrants. The seminary became the focus for the formation of new congregations. From Dubuque impulses went out to St. Donatus, Sherrill's Mound, Galena and Rush Creek, Illinois, Platteville and Madison, Wisconsin. When the Seminary moved to St. Sebald in 1857, congregations were soon founded at Garnavillo, Clayton Center, Elkport, Guttenberg, McGregor, Prairie du Chien (Wisconsin), West Union, Eldorado, and Fort Atkinson. As a result of deputation work, a congregation was founded at Fort Des Moines in 1859. That same year Student Sack stumbled upon a Lutheran congregation without a pastor at Maxfield, Bremer County, and brought it into contact with the Iowa Synod. This congregation became the mother of about a dozen others in Bremer County!

Many of the pastors conducted parish school, and some taught in public school. Salaries ranged from nothing up to a maximum of \$200 per year. In short, the whole development required heroic

sacrifices. Giants among the fathers were the men at St. Sebald: President Grossmann, who was also pastor of the St. Sebald congregation; and the brothers Sigmund and Gottfried Fritschel, popularly called Professor Senior and Professor Junior respectively. To these must be added the Rev. J. Deindoerfer, at this time serving a congregation at Madison Wisconsin. (A number of descendants of these four fathers are still in the ministry of the American Lutheran Church.) These and their many helpers proved equal to almost any occasion as they rose with the frontier. Preachers and missionaries, some of them became educators, theologians, and statesmen of the church. Their badge of greatness was their devotion to the church and to the German immigrants who needed pastoral care.

The attempt to win the Red Man for Christ was the most interesting adventure of the early years. An opening was found through Mr. Redfield, a government agent for the Crows (Upsarouqua), whose station was at the junction of the Big Horn and Yellowstone rivers in Montana. From 1858-1864 a number of expeditions were sent out, involving the following missionaries: Schmidt, Braeuninger, Doederlein, Seyler, Kessler, Krebs, Flachenecker, and Matter. On the first expedition Schmidt and Braeuninger contacted friendly Crows, lived in the tent of their chief for two months, and then returned to home

base at St. Sebald (a nine weeks' journey!) to report. Prospects looked bright, but the hope of founding a colony proved vain, for contact with the Crows was never again established. On the third expedition Moritz Braeuninger was killed, apparently by Ogalala Indians who resented the intrusion of the white man. Next a winter's work was done among the Cheyennes, and Christmas celebrated — tree and all — with the Indians at Deer Creek on the Powder River, a tributary to the Yellowstone. This has been written up as the story of the first Christmas tree in Wyoming. In 1862 and 1864 repeated Indian uprisings finally killed the work. All whites had to be evacuated. The missionaries, warned by Indians, also left.

As sole fruit of their labors, Missionary Krebs brought along three Indian boys who had been entrusted to them as converts and wards. Two of these died in 1865 and lie buried in the cemetery behind the church at St. Sebald. The third one found life difficult, left the seminary colony, and died within a few years, after a checkered career.

Colonies to convert the Indians! The scheme proved visionary and impractical. But it showed that longing for souls which was the secret of the synod's growth, and which caused her to be called "a missionary synod." The Indian work was never resumed. Its only monument today is the bronze plaque on the large boulder which marks the Indian graves at St. Sebald.

The Iowa Synod sought to be cooperative in her relationship to other Lutherans. Because she distinguished between fundamentals in doctrine and open questions in theology she often found herself in controversy with her neighbors. Until 1857 Iowa was in close contact with the Buffalo (New York) Synod. Then came the argument concerning chiliasm, and cooperation ceased. With the Missouri Synod (organized 1847) Iowa had one argument after another. Perhaps this was due in part to the bad feeling engendered by the break from the Missouri Synod in 1853. Perhaps it also represented normal growing pains, and the freedom of the frontier, which caused so many Germans, when they came to this land, to find it difficult to agree. Many of these arguments concerned details in theology which Iowa considered to be nonessential. Some of them, such as the controversy concerning predestination, were of serious importance. In this battle the Ohio Synod (founded 1818) joined forces with the Iowa Synod against the Missouri Synod, and there was much switching of congregations and pastors back and forth. Because of the many controversies, the period from 1860 to 1900 has sometimes been called "the study period for Lutherans in the Mississippi valley." Apparently each of the Lutheran Synods in the Middle West sought to persuade others of its orthodoxy! These controversies showed the Iowa Synod to be Scriptural, Luther-

an, but moderate and cooperative in her approach. This was the heritage of Wilhelm Loehe.

During the 70's, 80's, and 90's, the Iowa Synod's chief task was to gather thousands of German immigrants into congregations in the Middle West. Close contacts were maintained with Germany, and many workers came from abroad. Most of these were from the Mission Seminary at Neuendettelsau, Bavaria, Germany, and finished their training at Wartburg College and Wartburg Seminary. Missionary impulses went out in many directions: to Minnesota, Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, the Dakotas, Washington, Oregon, Texas, and Canada. When thousands of German Russians from the Volga basin came to settle in the Dakotas (about 1870), the Professors Sigmund and Gottfried Fritschel made week-end trips by rail into this "bread basket of America." With the aid of friendly conductors they followed the groups of immigrants and founded one congregation after another. In 1896 the Texas Synod, which represented a sizeable German Lutheran development in Texas, joined the Iowa Synod. Everywhere these congregations fostered a dignified liturgical form of worship, careful education of the young, and true piety for young and old.

The leaders of the Iowa Synod desired to be true German-Americans, that is, German in cultural background and religious ties, but American by free choice in the political, economic, and (later)

social spheres. They felt strongly their obligation of loyal service to the land of their adoption. But the feeling also persisted that the religious life could best be fostered in German. Hence the insistence on the use of the German language in worship long after this had become a liability rather than an asset.

In the 90's the coming of the second generation into power in the church brought a gradual change. An English chair of theology was established at Wartburg Seminary in 1896. Private confession, which had formerly confined the synod's growth, was no longer practiced. The long period of instruction for church membership was reduced to reasonable dimensions, although the ideal of an informed and educated laity was kept.

Larger Lutheran relationships in America were not forgotten. When American Lutherans of different synods held free conferences in the late 70's, looking toward larger unity, Iowa was there. Though she did not officially join, Iowa cooperated with the General Council (founded 1867) and helped produce the Council's German service book and hymnal (*Das Kirchenbuch*, 1877). When the predominantly eastern bodies which are now the United Lutheran Church in America pooled their efforts to produce a Lutheran liturgy (*The Common Service*, 1888) and a Hymnal (1915), Iowa cooperated. After 1881 the Iowa Synod found herself drawn ever more closely to

the Ohio Synod, until she finally merged with the Ohio and Buffalo Synods to form the American Lutheran Church (1930).

The first two decades of this century marked the Iowa Synod's coming of age. She had a fine program for the local parish, a growing home mission work expanding through many states, a number of church papers for the education of her laity and for theological discussion, a growing number of social service agencies, and a growing awareness of the general Lutheran situation in this country. Among her church papers were the *Kirchenblatt*, founded in 1858 for lay education; the *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, a journal in constructive theology for pastors, founded in 1876 and edited from 1904 to 1943 by Dr. M. Reu, who was professor at Wartburg Seminary, and the greatest educator of the Iowa Synod. During the first World War two English papers appeared, *The Lutheran Herald*, edited by Dr. Emil H. Rausch, who was then in charge of the large St. Paul's parish at Waverly, and who later became president of Wartburg Seminary; and *The Lutheran Missionary*, which presented the cause of the newly acquired foreign mission field in New Guinea. Iowa Synod had its own Wartburg Publishing House which printed these and many other materials. Opened at Waverly in 1886, it was moved to Chicago in 1922. It is today merged with the publishing house of the former Ohio Synod at Columbus, Ohio.

The coming of the first World War caused the Iowa Synod to use English much more than formerly, and so greatly increased the effectiveness and the scope of her ministry. It also threw into her lap a Lutheran foreign mission field in New Guinea, originally staffed from Neuendettelsau, in Germany, but orphaned by the war. To this field Iowa sent men and supplies. Since the cooperation of Australian Lutherans was needed to do this work effectively, President Friedrich Richter of the Iowa Synod went to Australia and succeeded in uniting many scattered Lutherans into the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia, and in making arrangements to take over Lutheran Mission Finschhafen in New Guinea. Before 1930 Iowa had already sent twenty-six workers in this foreign mission venture.

In 1918 a movement began in the state of Ohio looking toward the eventual merger of the Ohio and Iowa Synods. In 1926 the Buffalo Synod asked to join. And in 1930 the American Lutheran Church was born, an organic merger of the former Ohio, Buffalo, and Iowa Synods. Because of the sudden death of President G. A. Fandrey, President C. G. Prottengeier was at the helm when the Iowa Synod entered the merger. The Iowa District of the new body embraced Ohio and Iowa congregations in Iowa, and became practically identical with the boundaries of Iowa.

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