

Summary History of the Synod of the West

By Joseph L. Mihelic, and

Lightly edited by Joel L. Samuels

Introduction

German Presbyterianism in the Upper Mississippi Valley may be said to have begun with the coming of the Rev. and Mrs. Peter Flury to Dubuque, Iowa in the fall of 1846. Peter Flury was a Swiss-German and his wife Sophie Jackson Flury was English from Brighton, England. After serving a pastorate in Schiers, Switzerland, Pastor Flury and his wife decided to come to America as missionaries to American Indians, and applied to the American Mission Board for an assignment. The Board, however, commissioned him in October 1846 and sent him to Dubuque, Iowa where there was a colony of Swiss-German immigrants who had asked the American Mission Board for a pastor.

The Flurys came to Dubuque in the fall of 1846 and rented a house in which they began a school for the children and adults of the Swiss immigrants, as well as anyone who was interested in learning German and English and the Christian religion. The school was free and open to Protestants and Roman Catholics.

On Christmas Day of 1847, Flury organized a congregation of thirty-five charter members and called this congregation the German Evangelical Church. He provided it also with a Constitution which he modeled after the Reform Church of Switzerland, the Church which he served at Schiers, Switzerland. This constitution has been preserved in the *Kirchenbuch* ("church-book") of the congregation and shows Flurys' concern for the correct order in the operation of the congregation's business, as well as his interest in education of both children and adults. During his brief sojourn in Dubuque, Flury soon became known as a dynamic preacher and exponent of Christian teachings in the surrounding towns and villages of Dubuque. In 1849, his wife Sophie died, and Peter

Flury returned to his home in Schiers, Switzerland, where he eventually married again and continued his work as a pastor and educator.

The next pastor of the German Evangelical Church of Dubuque was the Rev. Jean Madoulet, probably another Swiss immigrant who had worked among German settlers in other states under the American Board of Missions. His Dubuque pastorate was brief, but during this time, he trained John Bantly, a Swiss immigrant, for the ministry. Bantly became the pastor of a small German congregation in Platteville, Wisconsin and a friend of the next pastor, the Rev. Adrian Van Vliet.

Adrian Van Vliet was a Dutch immigrant, a tailor by trade, born in Holland in 1809. His parents passed away when Adrian was a baby, and he was reared by his grandparents who were fisher folk, living on a boat. When he was about eight years old, his grandparents retired and lived on the land so that the young grandchild could attend school. At the age of fourteen, he was apprenticed to a tailor. At the age of 20, he was drafted into the Dutch army for one year, but because of the war with Belgium, his military service was extended to five years. Since he was a deeply religious person, belonging to the Dutch Reformed Church, his religious sensibilities made his military life almost unbearable. After working at his tailor trade for a few years, he decided to immigrate to New York in 1847. In New York he met a Dutch girl whom he married, and the two decided to go to St. Louis, Missouri. They became members of the Second Presbyterian German Church in St. Louis where Adrian became active in teaching Bible in the Sunday school. But the life in St. Louis was no less hectic and noisy than the one which they left in New York. After about two years they were on the move again, and this time on a boat on the Mississippi River to Galena, Illinois. Once there, Adrian

became ill, but through careful ministrations of his wife, he soon recovered, and then his wife became ill and died. Alone, and almost penniless, Adrian decided to visit his friend John Bantly. Bantly had already completed gymnasium studies in Switzerland, where he could not make up his mind about his life's work. He married and he and his wife decided to try their fortune in America, and eventually came to Dubuque where he met Peter Flury who urged him to go into the ministry, but Bantly rejected his advice, and went to Galena where he met Van Vliet, apparently through a Bible study group.

In Platteville Van Vliet plied his tailor trade. He became a member of the Congregational Church, which was then led by the Rev. John Lewis, and also attended the Academy that Lewis had founded. It was a period when the call for trained ministers was great. Both Bantly and Lewis urged Van Vliet to consider ministry. At first he rejected their suggestion because he lacked both an educational training and a call from God, but through a continual urging and persuasion of Bantly, Lewis, and others, he consented to take instructions in theology and a few related subjects with the Rev. John Lewis.

In the spring of 1852 the Mineral Association of Presbyterian and Congregational ministers met in Hazel Green, Wisconsin and examined Van Vliet and voted unanimously to ordain him, and at the same time offered him the call from the Dubuque German Evangelical Church which had recently become vacant.

Van Vliet accepted the call and began his labors in Dubuque. Though his German had a pronounced Dutch accent, the congregation was won to him by his obvious sincerity, his knowledge of the Scriptures, and his unusual ability to express Biblical and theological truth in a lucid manner. What appealed to them especially was his staunch

Calvinism in which the Grace of God received a strong emphasis. While Peter Flury who was also a Calvinist was respected, his preaching and that of Madoulet often evoked antagonism, so much so that some German settlers who called themselves atheists, and rationalists often attempted to disrupt their worship service by throwing rocks through the windows and with loud and abusive language. No such behavior took place during Van Vliet's pastorate. On the contrary, many people were attracted by his preaching, his irenic spirit and winsome personality, proving thereby that a sincere Christian message can be communicated not only by rhetoric, but also by one's attitude and behavior.

Shortly after his inception as a pastor, he began to notice the large number of German immigrants crossing the Mississippi River at Dubuque, and moving inland to settle the fertile prairie land of Iowa, Nebraska, the Dakotas, and Minnesota. He noticed that they were coming in groups, but without any spiritual leaders. In his conversations with them, he discovered that many of them were originally from East Friesland, and spoke a German dialect closely related to his own native Dutch, so much so that he had no difficulty in conversing with them. Since Van Vliet had a very strong sense of personal responsibility for the spiritual welfare of his fellowmen, the picture of the frightened faces of these people who were moving to settle and populate an unknown territory, would not leave his consciousness, and he began to worry and pray for them. Out of this spiritual struggle came the conviction that he must do something for their spiritual welfare. The plan that evolved was that he could train young men for the Christian ministry, just as he had been trained by the apprentice method by the Rev. John Bantly and the Rev. John Lewis in Platteville. He also recalled a German

immigrant family by the name of Kolb who had two teenage boys Andrew and Jacob, who showed interest in religion and the desire to help people. He invited them to come and live with him, and he would prepare them for the ministry. The two boys responded and came to Dubuque, and he began his instruction in the fall of 1852. Thus a German school for the ministers was born.

The Beginning of German Presbyterianism in Iowa

Sometime in 1854, Van Vliet became associated with the Presbytery of Cedar Valley. In his January of 1854 report to the American Mission Board, he asked to be released from the membership of the Missionary Society. He gave for his reasons the fact that he was reared in the Dutch Reform Church which implanted in him strong Calvinistic doctrine, and that the German congregation which he was serving in Dubuque held also the same Calvinistic doctrinal views. He said that he regretted that he was forced to take this stand, and that if it were possible to be both a member of the Presbytery of Cedar Valley and the Association, he would have liked it best. Apparently his request was granted because Rev. Holbrook, pastor of the Congregational Church in Dubuque, along with others who knew Van Vliet, recommended that the association continue to support Van Vliet financially for another year.

In March 1854, the German Evangelical Church of Dubuque voted almost unanimously to become the First German Presbyterian Church and a member of the Presbytery of Cedar Valley. In 1855, the Presbytery of Dubuque was organized and the First German Presbyterian Church became a charter member of the new presbytery, as well as its pastor Rev. Van Vliet. Only five family members withdrew from the Church,

and they eventually they formed the Immanuel German Congregation Church in Dubuque.

The number of Van Vliet's students, including Andrew and Jacob Kolb, had grown to five, with even more asking Van Vliet for permission to join the student body. They were all introduced as soon as possible to either the Presbytery Dubuque or to the neighboring Dane Presbytery in Wisconsin, and, after due examination, were taken under their care as prospective candidates for the ministry among the possible German Presbyterian churches. As soon as Van Vliet saw that his students had sufficient training in their theological and Biblical knowledge he arranged with the respective presbyteries to have them examined, and if they passed, to have them licensed to preach. Once they were licensed, Van Vliet took them around to the various German settlements and, if conditions were favorable and the people desired a church organization, Van Vliet would organize a Presbyterian church in the settlement. He would provide them with a temporary preacher and spiritual leader until such time when the student-preacher would be ordained or until some other Presbyterian ordained clergyman would be called.

A number of Presbyterian churches were organized in the vicinity of Dubuque in this manner: Galena in 1854, Waukon and Lycurgus in 1856, Clayton City in 1857, Dyersville and Independence in 1858, and Sherrills Mound in 1859. Besides imparting in his students a strong Calvinistic orientation and Biblical knowledge, Van Vliet also implanted in them a strong missionary spirit sending them forth to establish churches throughout the Upper Mississippi Valley. In ever widening circles, German communities were contacted and congregations organized.

As the student body increased the financial burden of supporting the school, as

well as supporting most of the students, with his salary of \$400 per year was becoming next to impossible. He decided to charge the students \$2.50 per week for their room and board, but most of the students could not afford even that small sum and Van Vliet carried them on in his books. Also to meet their lodging, he had to have erected two small cottages next to the church, which cost him \$900. In order to lighten the financial burden he purchased a horse and a wagon and assigned a student each week to go out among the German farmers and collect food supplies for the school. In this manner he was able to partially meet the ongoing expenses. He received no pay for his teaching.

In 1864 he decided to ask the nearby Presbytery of Dubuque and Presbytery of Dane, Wisconsin to take over the operation and the management of the school. The two presbyteries agreed and elected a board of four directors: two ministers and two laymen from each presbytery. When the board of directors met, they drew up a constitution, established the relationship between the First German Presbyterian Church and the school (which they named "The German Theological School of the Northwest"), and provided the rules and the requirements by which the school was to be operated. When the Board formed by the two presbyteries took over the administration of the school, they offered the Presidency of the school to Van Vliet. However, he refused and was content to be known as the Professor of Theology. The Board then stipulated that henceforth the Professor of Theology would also be considered the administrator of the school.

The Board also attempted to provide a teaching salary for Van Vliet, but which he refused, saying that his minister's salary was sufficient for him. They provided for him a paid assistant, the Rev. Godfrey Morey, an orphan boy whom Van Vliet had helped to educate by sending him to the local high school and later to Alexander College (a

Presbyterian school which had moved to Dubuque in 1853 from Des Moines). In his spare time, Morey would help the German students (many of whom had the barest minimal education when they came to study under Van Vliet) with some part of secular and Biblical knowledge.

As the circle of "graduates" and ordained German ministers grew, these former students of Van Vliet often came to visit their former teacher, usually in the company of an elder of the church which they served, to seek Van Vliet's counsel for some problem. In time these visits developed into an annual get-together with their former teacher usually in June before the synodical meetings. The German name of the group was "Der Konvention deutscher Prediger des Westens," (the Convention of the German preachers of the West). At first they kept no record of their meetings, but with the annual meeting of 1862, regular minutes were kept. In 1867, at the June meeting, which was held in Dubuque, they also had a visitor from Allegheny City, Pennsylvania, the Rev. John Launit who was the pastor of a Presbyterian Church there. At this meeting, the decision was made to publish a religious German newspaper which would be called *Der Presbyterianer*. When it came to choosing an editor for the paper, the Rev. Launit was the unanimous choice. From the first issue, which appeared in October 1867 the paper was published and printed in Pennsylvania. With the October 1, 1869 issue the paper was transferred to Dubuque, where it was published until 1949 (when it ceased its publication due to a lack of readership). During its period of existence, *Der Presbyterianer* was an important German religious periodical. It bound together not only Germans of Presbyterian persuasion, but also served as a source of news from various religious and non-religious German communities. Today it remains one of the most important sources

of historical information of German Presbyterian churches in the Upper Mississippi Valley.

The Rev. Adrian Van Vliet died May 9, 1871. With his death, there passed from the earthly scene a most remarkable religious personality who had brought into being German Presbyterianism of the Upper Mississippi Valley, and upon which he had left an indelible mark of his Christian faith. He had thus helped many Germans to become self-respecting and loyal citizens of their American homeland.

Van Vliet was succeeded by his former student, the Rev. Jacob Konzett, a Swiss immigrant from Schiers, where his parents were members of the Rev. Peter Flury's congregation. He had been fourteen when his parents came to America in 1847. Konzett's family settled at first in Galena, but when his father could find no work, Pastor Flury came to visit them, and he urged them to come to Dubuque. There, Konzett's father found employment, and young Jacob was apprenticed to a saddle maker, an occupation that was not much to his liking. During this time, Jacob Konzett lived rather a boisterous life which eventually led to a religious conversion. It was then that he applied to the Rev. Van Vliet for permission to attend his classes.

By 1871, Konzett had already served as pastor of several German Presbyterian churches in the vicinity of Dubuque, and had also had assisted Van Vliet in his school. When he was chosen as Van Vliet's successor in the chair of theology, he was also called to the pastorate of the First German Presbyterian Church. Upon assuming leadership of the school, Konzett soon discovered that the three positions were too much for one man. After a reasonable time, he resigned his pastorate and devoted himself to teaching theology and to the administration of the school.

Also, by this point, the quarters in the basement of the church had become too cramped for classes, and the two small cottages were not enough to house all the students, as enrollment had by then grown to about thirty. Conzett persuaded the Board to consider new quarters. As luck would have it, across the street from the church stood the vacant Episcopal Female Seminary, which he purchased for \$10,000. He paid the down payment of \$2,000, which he had borrowed from a German cookie baker. He raised the remaining money by appealing to the German constituency of the area.

Next, Conzett began the reorganization of the curriculum and the raising of the admission and scholastic standards. It was here that he met with a considerable resistance from some of the constituency, including his brother-in-law, Rev. Moery, who had resigned from his assistant professorship, and went into a pastorate. Because of the new requirements, the student body diminished, both in the new and old students who had begun to transfer to other seminaries. The Board, however, remained loyal to Conzett and supported him in his effort to raise the educational standards of the school. By 1881, Conzett felt that he had achieved most of his purpose that he set out to do, and that year he resigned and went into a pastorate, first in Chicago and then in Cincinnati, where he remained until his death in 1915, continuing to be active in the German churches, the Convention and its publications.

The next twenty-five years were difficult for the school, but it survived and continued to produce better educated and trained ministers both for the old and new German Presbyterian churches in the Midwest. Many of these German churches were still using German in their services, but gradually English language services were being introduced in some of them. In the mid-eighteen-eighties, the Seminary received the help

of two non-German pastors. One was the Rev. William O. Ruston, who became the pastor of the Second English Presbyterian Church of Dubuque, and who became associated with the Board of the school. The second was the Rev. Adam McClelland, Ph.D., who joined the faculty as Professor of Church History after retiring from his long-term pastorate in Brooklyn, New York. Dr. McClelland was born in Belfast, Ireland, where, as a youth, he had lost the sight of both of his eyes, but this had not kept him from acquiring the best possible education in Belfast and later in New York City. After his retirement, he came to Dubuque German Theological School as a Professor of Church History and English. In both of these two subjects, he was of immense help to the German students. During his next twenty years he came to be known far and wide as the "Beloved Blind Professor of Dubuque." These two non-Germans contributed a great deal to the survival and continuous growth of the school and the influence of its students, ministers, and missionaries among the German settlers, which by the end of the 19th century had grown to a very large number of German churches which belonged to the English presbyteries and synods of their locations.

In 1904, the school was reorganized into three parts: the Academy, a preparatory school of two years; the College, a four year school granting an A.B. degree (to which non-German students were admitted), and the Theological Seminary, a three year program granting a B.D. degree to those who successfully completed the seminary course. A new faculty was developed, with Dr. William Ruston as its President, and English was employed for instruction in the Academy and the College (German was used only in the Seminary).

The Formation of German Presbyteries

Two years before the reorganization of the school, in 1902, the Board of the school had employed a financial agent, the Rev. Cornelius M. Steffens the son of Dr. Nicholas Steffens who had assisted the school on two occasions as Professor of Theology. The young Steffens, seeing a great potential for the school, went to work and within a comparatively short period of time raised enough funds to payoff the existing debt, and made plans to move the school to the western part of Dubuque and had erected a building there. In time, the new campus received more buildings to accommodate the growing student body, only a few of whom were candidates for the ministry, the majority studied for other professions.

The reason for the drop in the seminary enrollment was that the need for German Presbyterian ministers had diminished with the drop of German immigration and the gradual change of German services to English services. Nevertheless, there developed a strong demand for separate presbyteries among the German ministers. The prime reason was given that their comprehension of English language was insufficient to follow presbyteries' discussion of important parts of doctrinal and polity matters. Also they found themselves unable to express themselves sufficiently well in English to make contributions to the presbyteries' meetings with their thinking. This need drove their leaders to petition the synods in which most German churches were located, by now some had grown to be very large in their membership as well as wealth. A separate presbytery in which all the transactions would be in German was needed.

Initially, their pleas and petitions were denied for some very obvious reasons, one of which was that in a very foreseeable future these German churches would be

assimilated and English would replace the German language. Obvious as this seemed, they persisted in their petitions, the driving forces of which were associated with the college and the seminary at Dubuque, namely, the Rev. Cornelius M. Steffens (who had become the President of the school in 1908) and the Rev. William O. Ruston of the Seminary and the Convention of German Presbyters of the West. Through their petitions and persistence, the two won the permission to organize three presbyteries: Galena, Waukon and George, from the General Assembly, in 1908:

- The Presbytery of Galena comprised of German ministers and churches in the Synods of Illinois, Wisconsin, Missouri, Indiana and Ohio.
- The Presbytery of Waukon included the German ministers and churches in the Synods of Iowa, and Minnesota east of the seventeenth meridian from Washington."
- The Presbytery of George included the German ministers and churches in the Synods of North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas and Colorado.

During the next three years, the effort to win the approval for a synod (which would be composed with the three presbyteries: Galena, George and Waukon) continued without a let up. The victory was achieved at the 124th General Assembly meeting in Louisville, Kentucky in June of 1912. At this Assembly, the instruction was given "to meet in the Eden Presbyterian Church, Nora Springs, Iowa on August 14, 1912 at 7:30 P.M.," under the moderatorship of the Rev. Daniel Grieder. This was carried out according to the General Assembly direction, and the Synod of the West became an ecclesiastical judicatory of the Presbyterian Church in U.S.A.

Each of the three presbyteries consisted of the following churches and ministers, and the total communicant members and the Sunday school enrollment of each presbytery were as follows:

Presbytery of Galena

Churches 22. Ministers 14. Total Membership 1,302. Sunday school 1,160.

1. Forreston Grove, Illinois Minister: The Rev. H. Schmitt
2. Beloit, Wisconsin Minister: The Rev. R. A. Friedrich
3. Prairie Dell, Shannon, Illinois Minister:
4. Zion, Wheeling, Illinois Minister: The Rev. J. H. Wiegand
5. Galena, Illinois, Hill Minister: The Rev. John Ratz
6. Salem, Sutter, Illinois Minister: The Rev. J. Figge
7. Second, St. Louis, Missouri Minister: The Rev. Albert Kinzler
8. Marion, Boscobel, Wisconsin Minister: The Rev. John D. Stauss
9. Salem, Hope, Missouri Minister: The Rev. F. W. Kroesche
10. Woodburn, Bunker Hill, Illinois Minister: The Rev. B. Fieselmann
11. Zion, Fosterburg, Alton, Illinois Minister: The Rev. B. Fieselmann
12. Salem, Godfrey, Illinois Minister: The Rev. Benjamin Fieselmann
13. Pulaski, Muscoda, Wisconsin Minister: The Rev. A. C. Kroesche
14. Highland, Wisconsin Minister: The Rev. A. C. Kroesche
15. Bethel, Bay, Missouri Minister: The Rev. A. Kalohn
16. Nazareth, Herman, Missouri Minister: The Rev. A. Krebs
17. Zion, Herman, Missouri Minister: The Rev. A. Krebs
18. Wheatland, Wisconsin Minister:
19. Emmanuel, Owensville, Missouri Minister: The Rev. D. Meyer
20. Zoar, Owensville, Missouri Minister: The Rev. D. Meyer
21. First Church, Milwaukee, Wisconsin Minister: The Rev. Wolters

Presbytery of George

Ministers 25. Churches 31. Total Membership 1,457. Sunday School 2,025.

1. Arcadia, Iowa Minister: The Rev. John A. Ringold
2. Ashton, Iowa Minister: The Rev. Fr. S. Tracht
3. Avon, South Dakota Minister: H. C. Hanson
4. Breda, Iowa Minister: The Rev. L. Hundling
5. Carnarvon, Iowa Minister: The Rev. C. A. Maerz
6. Davis, South Dakota Minister: The Rev. Henry Cramer
7. Denver, Colorado Minister:
8. De Smet, South Dakota Minister: The Rev. A. F. Proett
9. Doran, Minnesota Minister: The Rev. Fr. J. Beving
10. Ellsworth, Minnesota Minister: The Rev. Henry A. Schmitt

11. Emery, South Dakota Minister:
12. George, Iowa, Ebenezer Minister: The Rev. A. E. Boell
13. George, Iowa, Lyon Co. First Minister:
14. George, Iowa, Zion Minister: The Rev. B. J. Swede
15. George, Iowa, Zoar Minister: The Rev. L. H. Hayenga
16. Germania, Iowa, German-English Minister:
17. Glenville, Nebraska, Hanover Minister: The Rev. E. Baumann
18. Hastings, Nebraska Minister: The Rev. John W. Rosenau
19. Kanaranzi, Minnesota, Ebenezer Minister:
20. Lennox, South Dakota, Ebenezer Minister: The Rev. Fr. Waalkes
21. Lennox, South Dakota, Germantown Minister: The Rev. S. G. Manus
22. Marion, South Dakota Minister:
23. Matlock, Iowa Minister: The Rev. Frederick S. Tracht
24. Renville, Minnesota Minister: The Rev. Aug. Petersen
25. Rushmore, Minnesota, Bethel Minister: The Rev. A. H. Thurau
26. Rushmore, Minnesota, Immanuel Minister:
27. Rushmore, Minnesota, Ostfriesland Minister: The Rev. A. H. Thurau
28. Sibley, Iowa Minister: The Rev. O. B. Oltmanns
29. Twin Brooks, South Dakota Minister: The Rev. J. Jansen
30. Willow Lake, South Dakota Minister: The Rev. A. F. Proett
31. Sibley, Iowa, Hope Minister: The Rev. L. H. Hayenga

Presbytery of Waukon

Ministers 21. Churches 17. Total Membership 1,478. Sunday school 1,345.

1. Bethlehem, Waukon, Iowa Minister:
2. Centertown, Dubuque, Iowa Minister:
3. Dubuque, Iowa, First Minister: The Rev. E. C. Wolters
4. Dyersville, Dyersville, Iowa Minister:
5. Eden, Nora Springs, Iowa Minister: The Rev. Harm Jans
6. Grundy Center, Iowa Minister: The Rev. C. H. Gravenstein
7. Holland, Iowa Minister: The Rev. John E. Drake
8. Kamrar, Iowa Minister:
9. Lansing, Iowa Minister: The Rev. A. H. Kegel
10. McGregor, Iowa Minister:
11. East Friesland, Ackley, Iowa Minister: The Rev. F. W. Engelke
12. Sherrill, Iowa Minister: The Rev. William C. Laube
13. Union, Stacyville, Iowa Minister: vacant
14. West Friesland, Ackley, Iowa Minister: The Rev. J. J. Agena
15. Winona, Minnesota Minister: The Rev. George E. Reibert
16. Frank Hill, Winona, Minnesota Minister: The Rev. George E. Reibert
17. Zalmona, Waukon, Iowa Minister: The Rev. F. Zisler

The above statistical tables of the three presbyteries (George, Galena and Waukon) were taken from the Minutes of the first meeting of the Synod of the West, Nora Springs, Iowa on August 14, 1912. They differ very slightly, mostly in the name of pastors of various churches, from the list of the three presbyteries when they were organized in 1909. That particular list is found in the *Kalendar* for 1910.

Having achieved their objective of having their own German synod, the pastors and the people set to work as before with their bee-like activity. They undertook the support of the foreign and domestic mission projects, for which they established an annual Missionfest which became very popular among the German Presbyterian churches, sometimes lasting several days, with each day hearing several speakers who presented the missionary messages. The collections on Missionfest days usually proved to be quite generous, and often their amounts were published in *Der Presbyterianer*. This led to a type of a contest among the churches.

In the course of time, many congregations became affluent and built new churches which revealed not only their financial stability, but also the love for their church which nourished their faith with God's Word. Their Sunday school material and other spiritual literature used in their services continued to be produced by their press which was operated by the Convention (the language was, of course, German). However, after World War I, the use of the German language in the services began to be changed to English. At first, only in the Sunday evening services, but gradually it was also changed in other church or congregational affairs, especially those in which the young people participated. In 1922, an English religious periodical, *The Presbyterian Messenger*, began to be published with Professor William C. Laube as its editor. In a

sense, this periodical was a harbinger of things to come. More and more congregations began changing from German to English. In August of 1935, this author witnessed a historic occasion, without being aware of it at that time. It took place at Zoar Presbyterian Church of George, Iowa, where the Rev. J. Kessler was the pastor. The George Presbytery meeting was held at the Zoar Church. The opening business affairs of the presbytery were all transacted in German. Then, before the closing motion and prayer, the moderator of the presbytery began to speak in English, saying this is the last meeting at which German will be used, and called for the motion to end the meeting and concluding prayer. This was done in German with the benediction.

Thus a period in American German Presbyterian Church History ended which had begun over eighty years earlier when a concerned Dutch immigrant tailor-turned-preacher, began training German young men for Presbyterian ministry. This could have happened only in America, as could the decision years later to grant the German church constituency the privilege of conducting their ecclesiastical business in their own mother tongue. It is difficult, if not impossible to evaluate this "religious" experiment. From a purely practical standpoint, there was not much of positive value accrued, but from a religious idealistic point of view, its ultimate positive value was beyond all human calculations.

The Synod of the West continued to function with its various enterprises until 1958, when, with the union of the United Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church in U.S.A. in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the synod was dissolved and its congregations incorporated into the then existing English presbyteries and synods. The passing of the Synod of the West was so peaceful and harmonious that it was soon

practically forgotten that such a church synod actually existed. This showed that, in the wisdom of God, this branch of the Presbyterian Church had fulfilled the function for which it was called forth, and now had been given a larger task in building the Kingdom of God.

The following is the statistical information of the three presbyteries (Galena, George and Waukon) that comprised the synod before it was dissolved in 1958, fifty years after its inception 1908/1909:

Presbytery of Galena

Ministers 7. Churches 11. Total Membership in 1956: 1,181.

1. Alton, IL, Salem, Organized 1865 Minister: The Rev. Mervyn Schultz
2. Alton, IL, Zion Fosterburg, Organized 1857 Minister: The Rev. Mervyn Schultz
3. Bunker Hill, IL, Woodburn, Organized 1875 Minister: The Rev. Mervyn Schultz
4. Bay, MO, Bethel, Organized 1848 Minister: The Rev. H. F. Sinning
5. Elizabeth, IL, Shapville Zion, Organized 1854 Minister: The Rev. P. A. Carlson
6. Forreston, IL, Forreston Grove, Organized 1865 Minister: The Rev. O. Graff
7. Galena, IL, Hill, Organized 1854 Minister: The Rev. Peder Carlson
8. Muscoda, WI, Pulaski, Organized 1862 Minister: The Rev. Peder Carlson
9. Owensville, MO, Emmanuel, Organized 1858 Minister: The Rev. F. H. Sinning
10. Pershing, MO, Salem Hope, Organized 1860 Minister: The Rev. D. Stauffer
11. Shannon, IL, Prairie Dell, Organized 1871 Minister: The Rev. O. Fraff

Presbytery of George

Ministers 26. Churches 24. Total Membership in 1956: 4,546.

1. Arcadia, IA, First, Organized 1894 Minister: The Rev. Douglas Hall
2. Ashton, IA, First, Organized 1893 Minister: The Rev. Walter Morz
3. Avon, SD, Trinity, Organized 1913 Minister: The Rev. R. Williamson
4. Breda, IA, Wheatland, Organized 1874 Minister: The Rev. Hall
5. Carnarvon, IA, Emmanuel, Organized 1882 Minister: The Rev. Lee Ferro
6. Chancellor, SD, Germantown, Organized 1878 Minister: The Rev. P. Johnson
7. Davis, SD, Turner Co. First, Organized 1880 Minister: The Rev. J. Frerichs
8. Ellsworth, MN, Zion, Organized 1898 Minister: The Rev. E. H. Buschman
9. George, IA, Ebenezer, Organized 1909 Minister: The Rev. G. W. Buchin
10. George, IA, Lyon Co. First, Organized 1887 Minister: The Rev. W. Nicholson
11. George, IA, Zoar, Organized 1894 Minister: The Rev. Harry O. Nelson

12. Glenville, NE, Hanover, Organized 1888 Minister: The Rev. L. Hayenga
13. Lennox, SD, Ebenezer, Organized 1888 Minister: The Rev. J. Frerichs
14. Lennox, SD, La Valley, Organized 1913 Minister: The Rev. P. Johnson
15. Marion, SD, Emmanuel, Organized 1889 Minister: The Rev. P. Johnson
16. Reading, MN, Bethel, Organized 1940 Minister: The Rev. W. Hoffman
17. Renville, MN, Ebenezer, Organized 1905 Minister: The Rev. Chester A. Ahrens
18. Rock Rapids, IA, Ebenezer, Organized 1884 Minister: The Rev. E. Buschman
19. Rock Rapids, IA, Zion, Organized 1903 Minister: The Rev. R. E. Niebruegge
20. Rosemont, NE, Oak Creek, Organized 1888 Minister: The Rev. L. Hayenga
21. Rushmore, MN, East Friesland, Organized 1909 Minister: The Rev. John Reiners
22. Rushmore, MN, Emmanuel, Organized 1912 Minister: The Rev. E. Buschman
23. Sibley, IA, First, Organized 1895 Minister: The Rev. Walter Morz
24. Twin Brooks, SD, Zion, Organized 1909 Minister: The Rev. C. A. Ahrens

Presbytery of Waukon

Churches 16. Ministers 23. Total Membership in 1956: 2,782.

1. Ackley, IA, East Friesland, Organized 1863 Minister: The Rev. Calvin Siemsen
2. Ackley, IA, West Friesland, Organized 1873 Minister: The Rev. N. Flink
3. Dubuque, IA, First, Organized 1847 Minister: The Rev. W. D. Martin
4. Dubuque, IA, Centralia, Organized 1864 Minister: The Rev. A. Rumbaugh
5. Grundy. Center, IA, Bethany, Organized 1903 Minister: The Rev. F. Langenberg
6. Holland, IA, Colfax Center, Organized 1871 Minister: The Rev. W. Eekhoff
7. Kamrar, IA, First, Organized 1875 Minister: The Rev. Harold De Vries
8. Kesley, IA, Bethel, Organized 1921 Minister: The Rev. Norman D. Flink
9. Lansing, IA, German, Organized 1869 Minister: The Rev. Albert Kinzler
10. Postville, IA, Bethlehem, Organized 1898 Minister: The Rev. J. M. Bartell
11. Rudd, IA, Eden, Organized 1887 Ministers: The Rev. Richard M. Major
12. Sherrill, IA, Sherrill, Organized 1859 Minister: The Rev. A. Rumbaugh
13. Stacyville, IA, Union, Organized 1874 Minister: The Rev. H. A. Sinning
14. Steamboat Rock, IA, Organized 1915 Minister: The Rev. Arthur Coner
15. Waukon, IA, Zalmona, Organized 1856 Minister: The Rev. Henry Johnson
16. Wvoden, IA, Organized 1919 Minister: The Rev. I. F. Hayenga

Narrative summary of German Presbyterians, with pictures, is available in Alvin J. Straatmeyer, *Child of the Church University of Dubuque 1852-2008*, edited by Joel L. Samuels (Cedar Rapids: WDG Publishing, 2008), pages 2, 4-8, 10, 12-24, 57-60, 102-106, 150, and 151).