



Oak Leaves

Newsletter of the ELS Historical Society

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Issue 1

Historical Society meets at Koshkonong

By Geoffrey Anderson

The ELS Historical Society held their annual meeting on June 14, 2003, at Western Koshkonong Lutheran Church, Cottage Grove, Wisconsin.



There were several speakers, including Erling Teigen and Sigurd Lee, present and emeritus faculty at Bethany Lutheran College. Western Koshkonong is Professor Lee's home church. Prof. Erling Teigen of the theology department gave a historical/social summary of the Norwegian Lutheran Church *in toto*, going back to pre-Reformation times. It included the fact that Norway was so often under foreign rule, most notably the nearly half-millennium under Denmark—sometimes referred to as the 400 Years Night. Lutheranism, in its official capacity, came to exist in Norway and Denmark in 1537 when Johannes Bugenhagen installed the Wittenberg Church Order.

Although Danish rule ended in Norway in 1814 with the Treaty of Kiel (an indirect result of the Napoleonic wars elsewhere in Europe), the same treaty ceded Norway to Sweden as it

did Greenland and Iceland to Denmark. After a brief "war"—really a skirmish with no casualties—Norway came under Swedish rule and would remain so until 1905. In essence, from the late medieval period onward, Norway was in turn ruled by Sweden, Denmark, and, briefly, Germany.

Concurrent with historical events was the impact of socio-philosophical movements, which affected the theology of Lutheranism in northern Europe as well as that of other faiths of the time. For instance, Rationalism or the Age of Reason, running from the late 17th century onward, affected the Danish and ultimately the Norwegian clergy through their bishops, to the extent that it predominated through the Lutheran clergy at the time.

On the grassroots end of change within the church, Hans Nielsen Hauge (1771-1841), disturbed by what were termed "lazy pastors" (official clergy of the State Church), affected Norway to the point of social disruption. Although Hauge was sent to prison in 1804, among the first large wave of Norwegian immigrants in the 1840s were Haugeans who spread their social theology through the upper Midwest, among other places. Due to the law of the land in Norway, only the representatives of the official church were allowed to teach, preach, and administer the sacraments. Haugeans promoted lay preaching.

As an economically backward country with an almost pure agrarian economy, what was to be the emigration of almost 1,000,000

people began in the last half of the 1830s. It would continue well into the 20th century. In the U. S., Norwegian Lutheranism subdivided into synods, emphasizing the basic tenet of Faith and Grace across a spectrum of congregations. Here J. W. C. Dietrichson, who was influenced by N. F. S. Grundtvig, maintained the idea if not the organization of one national church, emphasizing the means of grace and the Living Word (the Grundtvigian error held that the baptism covenant with the Apostles' Creed was divinely inspired). However many Norwegian immigrants chose other forms of worship and belief as they became Methodists, Presbyterians, and further west, Mormons.

Norwegian soldiers and sailors, who had served with the Danes during the Napoleonic wars, had been POWs in Britain. There they were befriended by Quakers and returned to Norway with that faith. Some of the very small Norwegian Quaker community reestablished themselves in the New World, where they joined a considerably larger and older Quaker community. The first ship of Norwegian immigrants in 1825 was a group of Quakers on the ship *Restauration*.

Still other Norwegian immigrants joined the older, more established German Lutheran communities. The old and strong tie between the ELS and the Missouri Synod has its roots in this kind of assimilation, beginning in 1847. The United States was a very different social experience for the Norwegians in the first generation as it provided freedom of worship and upward socio-economic mobility not possible in the Norway of the time.



Pastor Ottesen's chasuble

1851 marks the beginnings of the Norwegian Synod, forerunner to the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (once commonly called the "Little Norwegian Synod"). Three pastors met at Rock Prairie, and organized the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church in America on the basis of a constitution prepared by J. W. C. Dietrichson. Because of the Grundtvigian error in the constitution, that meeting was later regarded as preliminary and the Norwegian Synod was officially organized in 1853 after the arrival of H. A. Preus, G. F. Dietrichsen, N. O. Brandt, and J. A. Ottesen. Pastor A. C. Preus was elected the first synod president.

Sigurd Lee, professor emeritus, provided a concluding lecture about the local history of Western Koshkonong, noting the families that originally made up the congregation and the families that joined at a later time.

A special gift was given to the Ottesen Museum during the meeting: a gun that Pastor Ottesen had brought with him from Norway, presented by Lloyd Juve.



President emeritus George Orvick receiving Ottesen's gun

Prof. Lee, along with President Emeritus George Orvick, also conducted an afternoon bus tour of churches and historical places in the Koshkonong prairie area between Stoughton, Deerfield, and Cambridge. 

Geoff Anderson, nephew of Prof. Lee, attended the meeting as a visitor and kindly consented to write a review article. Geoff lives in Stough-

Festive Synod Convention

The 2003 ELS Convention celebrated the Norwegian Synod sesquicentennial. After the Sunday afternoon service, the Ottesen Museum was dedicated.

Professor Bukowski's painting for the convention depicted the 1844 gathering at the Koshkonong oaks with a table and chalice superimposed, and the title: "Can God Furnish a Table in the Wilderness?" President John Moldstad preached on this theme for the Wednesday evening communion service, which used the "Bugenhagen" lit-

urgy, page 41 in the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*.

On Tuesday evening Professor Erling Teigen repeated his Historical Society presentation, which included the singing of several Scandinavian hymns. A reception followed, with Scandinavian treats provided by the Norseland congregation.

Pastor Craig Ferkenstad presented the essay on the heritage of the Norwegian Synod on Wednesday and Thursday, focusing on doctrine, missions, fellowship, and education.

The Many Churches of Koshkonong

The first church buildings at Koshkonong were log cabins, both at East and West.



First East Koshkonong Lutheran Church (first Norwegian Lutheran congregation organized in America). This building is from 1893. Note that the pulpit is "inside" the altar.

At West Koshkonong, a very sturdy eight-sided church was later built. Around this the present West Koshkonong Church (ELCA) was built.



West Koshkonong (ELCA)



East Koshkonong (ELCA)

Controversies in the 1880s caused division in the congregations, resulting in East Koshkonong Lutheran Church (ELCA), and Western Koshkonong Lutheran Church (ELS).



Western Koshkonong Lutheran Church (ELS)

The Dane County Historical Society has erected a memorial plaque describing some of this intricate and intriguing history.



All four churches have beautiful historical displays that are worth a visit if you're ever in the vicinity of Madison, Wisconsin.

Origins of the Ottesen Museum

From a collection in the archives entitled:

The Ottesen Museum: A Jubilee Project

Carried On by the Women's Organization of the Synod Lutheran Church 1941-1943

Author and Compiler of this material seems to be Cora Kloster.

How It All Began

A group of women attending the Annual Convention at Bethany College were talking in the lobby on the evening of June 15, 1941. The topic of conversation was the Jubilee which was to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the organization of the first Norwegian Synod in the United States and the 25th anniversary of the Synod.

This Jubilee Synod was two years away but plans were already being made. Time had been allotted on the Convention program for making plans as well as for interesting talks reviewing the history of the Synod since its organization. The women had been at these meetings and were enthusiastic over the coming event. Several voiced the opinion that some project should be undertaken by the women to show their interest.

What should or could it be? The Ottesen Museum seemed to be the answer. The idea once voiced seemed to have been in the minds of many. After more talk on the subject it was agreed to try to get as many as possible of the women present at the convention to find out what plans could be made.

As a result a meeting was held in the Bethany College Parlor on the morning of June 16, 1941. A report of this meeting was printed in the July 12, 1941 issue of the *Lutheran Sentinel*. ...

Report of Women's Meeting During Synod Convention

A number of the women gathered here to listen to the proceedings of the Annual Convention found they had been thinking along the common line of the need for a women's organization to do something to create an enthusiastic interest in the coming Jubilee.

With this idea in mind, sixteen women met in the Bethany College parlor Monday morning, June 16, 1941. It was generally felt

by the women that the Hannah Ottesen museum should be put into shape and put on display in such a way that visitors may appreciate its true value. The name "Ottesen Memorial Room" was chosen temporarily for the display.

The following officers were elected: President, Mrs. Guldberg; Vice President, Mrs. Theiste; Treasurer, Mrs. E. Hanson; Secretary, Mrs. P. G. Kloster.

A committee consisting of Mrs. Christian Anderson, Mrs. Justin Peterson, Mrs. E. Hanson and Mrs. Thoen was appointed to contact officials to find out what arrangements might be made, and also to collect items of interest - particularly domestic — that might also be used for creating interest in the coming Jubilee.

Mrs. N. S. Tjernagel was appointed to assist Mrs. Kloster in preparing a letter setting forth the purposes of the organization to be sent to all pastor's wives or presidents of Ladies' Aids for the purpose of inducing all the women of the various "Ladies Aids" of the Synod to join the organization.

C. Kloster, Sec'y.

Lutheran Sentinel, July 12, 1941

Mrs. J. E. Thoen was appointed by the organization to get together and locate all the Ottesen things as she is the only one who knows what the things are.

What Happened Next

The Working Committee contacted the Board of Regents and received a promise that a room would be set aside at Bethany College for the housing of the Ottesen Museum. A room was tentatively ascribed to that purpose but when school opened in the fall it was found that room was necessary for student occupancy. On Bethany Day some of the officers and some of the committee talked the matter over with Dr. Ylvisaker and it was agreed that Classroom 8 would be a very satis-

factory place for the museum provided the Board of Regents felt that it could be permanently assigned to the project and money enough could be raised to make the necessary repairs and to redecorate the room. At a later meeting of the Board of Regents Classroom 8 was given over to Ottesen Museum.

Now difficulties began to loom ahead. The times were restless. It became difficult to get together and those who did get together felt it might be well to defer completion of plans until the Annual Convention of 1942 when it might be possible to have a general meeting to talk things over. The change of place of meeting for the Convention made that impossible because few women attended except on Sunday and that day was too crowded with other events to make a general meeting possible. However those officers and members of the working committee who were there agreed that letters should be sent out to the various Ladies' Aids asking their cooperation. These letters were sent out in July, 1942.

[We omit the letter here.]

To Continue

Responses to the request for cooperation came slowly, too slowly for the committee to feel justified in going ahead in getting the room put into shape as that involved much work and considerable expense. Like most projects, more was involved than had been anticipated, prices had gone up, wages had increased. There had been no definite understanding as to whether the Board of Regents would take on part of the work of getting the room ready. Jubilee time was approaching. At the suggestion of the committee the following letter was sent to the Board of Regents.

[We omit the letter here.]

And Then—

On September 29th, 1942, Mrs. Peterson, Mrs. Thoen, and Mrs. Hanson, members of the working committee met at Bethany College. The Board of Regents met that day also and acted on the proposal made by the women that

the Board help finance the redecoration of Classroom 8. They could not promise to take over the entire work of redecorating the room but promised to share the expense with the women. The Board chose Rev. Justin Peterson and Mr. Christian Olson to represent them and they together with Mrs. Peterson and Mrs. Thoen were authorized to go ahead and investigate the cost and secure some one to do the work.

At that time only fifty-eight dollars had been received in response to the appeal sent to the Ladies Aids. The Bethany Ladies' Aid of Mankato decided to donate work instead of money which was very acceptable as few members other Aids could get to Mankato to help with the work.

In October Mrs. Guldberg resigned her position as president of the womans organization as her work made it impossible for her to take on extra duties. Her resignation was accepted but it was not felt necessary to appoint a successor at that time as the work of carrying on had been entrusted to the committee consisting of Rev. Justin Peterson, Mr. Christian Olson, Mrs. Peterson and Mrs. Thoen.

In order to try to stimulate interest in the project Mrs. Hanson, the treasurer, wrote a report and appeal which appeared in the November 12, 1942, issue of the *Lutheran Sentinel*. ...

[We omit the article here.]

The Committee

Having been given authority to go ahead the committee went to work. They secured a man to repair the ceiling and floor. The ceiling was covered with nu-wood and painted. The floor was leveled and new flooring laid where it was necessary. By Thanksgiving this part of the work was finished.

Then new troubles arose. The walls presented a problem. The old black-boards were smooth, the old plaster rough. Nu-wood or ply-wood would solve the problem but it was expensive. The question was whether or not they dared go ahead with the funds on hand in

the hope that more would be contributed. Nothing more was done till January when the committee again met with the Board of Regents and the decision was made to finish the walls with ply-board to the height of the blackboards and paint the rest.

By this time about one hundred dollars had been contributed by various Ladies' Aids and it was decided to send out another letter urging contributions from those who had as yet not responded.

[We omit the letter here.]

The Finish

Though decisions were made and the Committee was ready to proceed, worries were not yet over. Transportation difficulties held up necessary materials and it was feared plans might again have to be changed, but everything turned out well and by April 15, 1943 the room was finished and ready for occupancy.

This meant another period of hard work for the committee. There were all the museum pieces to be put into shape and arranged. Again Mrs. Thoen and Mrs. Peterson took on the responsibility and with the help of members of the Bethany Congregation and everything ready and in place when the Annual Convention — The Jubilee Convention — convened at Bethany College May 29, 1943.

The Ottesen Museum was waiting for visitors.

Visitors

The doors of the Ottesen Museum were open to visitors between sessions throughout the Annual Convention and most of those attending the convention visited at least once and many came several times. Much surprise was expressed at the number of things on display both in the Ottesen Museum and in the General Museum. Those who had not seen

Class-room 8 since its transformation were likewise surprised and pleased.

A number said they had articles which should be in the museum and promised to send them. This gives promise of future growth.

All visitors to Bethany are welcome at the Ottesen Museum. There is much there to arouse interest in the history of our Synod and its people.

A Word of Appreciation

On behalf of the Women's Organization I wish to leave a word of appreciation for the members of the Working Committee who so willingly took on responsibility and gave time and effort that this project might be a success. Especially do we appreciate the untiring efforts of Mrs. Peterson and Mrs. Thoen without which the project could not have been completed in time.

We also wish to thank the Board of Regents for their encouragement and help. We hope we may be able to reimburse the Board for the financial help given and thus make the Ottesen Museum truly a women's project—a project that will help carry on the history of our Synod. Thank you all.

The Women's Organization.

(signed) Cora Kloster, Sec.

Officers' Meeting

On the evening of May 30th, 1943, the officers and working committee held their last meeting and arranged to call a meeting of all the women present at the convention for the purpose of electing officers and making future plans,—the meeting to be held in the reception room on second floor at 1.30 P.M. Monday, May 31, 1943. 

Cora Kloster was a member of Forest Lutheran Church in Forest City, Iowa.

Some Recollections from My Youth and My First Years in America

Part One of Three

By Ulrik Vilhelm Koren

(Original title: *Nogle Erindringer fra min Ungdom og fra min første Tid i Amerika*)
Originally printed in *Symra* (Vol. 1, 1905). Also in Koren's *Samlede Skrifter*. Vol. 4.

Translated by Mark DeGarmeaux

When I was asked early this spring to write for this yearbook¹ some memoirs from my “pioneer” days here in this country, I promised, with the condition that I might have some time. I find that I have neither time nor strength to write a new work of this kind, but since I do not want to cause the publishers embarrassment, and I am told that they are expecting a contribution from me, I have found some modest lectures that I gave in 1888 to teachers and students at Luther College, which I will offer the yearbook’s publishers, along with some elaborations and additions, if they think that they can use them.

I greet you this evening not as “my ladies and gentlemen”, but as my dear friends!

I remember that as a child — (or was it as a young student?) I once saw — and heard the elderly Rosenkilde tell fairy tales.

He sat in a corner of the scene where there was placed an old-fashioned green screen such as was used by the chimney corner in the past.

He sat in a comfortable high-back easy chair, and in a roomy dressing gown. That was the grandfatherly, homey, pleasant atmosphere that was to help the listeners to the illusion that they were now sitting there like children to hear stories.

It’s not always fairy tales Grandfather tells, when he sits in a situation like the one described with a group of young people around him. In fact it is just as often his own real experiences.

As a teacher in Christ’s Church and in a

gathering like this, I don’t have fairy tales or embellished stories to tell — but that’s why that picture came to my mind, because it would help me during my modest narrative which I have here thought to give you if that family-like, pleasant, unforced feeling might enter our being together this evening.

I stand here not as what one calls a “lecturer”, (I have neither practice nor time to write and hold a lecture), but in an inartistic, straightforward narration to bring forth for you from my memories what could give you a picture of the pioneer days of our church and thereby to help you to understand the present a little as well. Unfortunately I don’t have notes from those days. I have no diary to present. I must help myself with what Øhlenschläger one time called “the hymnbook of his memory.”

Indeed in times past it was the hymnbook which people liked to bring forth in most cases. And there weren’t many books among most people. In it many a flower or other notes were pressed, to which, for the one who knew them, were attached dear memories. I also have such a “hymnbook of my memory”, which I now want to page through a little and then tell one thing or another from it. I would rather sit in a corner in confidence and ease, but now I get to stand here — and this was the introduction.

I.

Since it is *my* memories from pioneer days that I am supposed to present here, then it will be significant to understanding them that I at least somewhat explain the presuppositions with which I came here to this country.

I am from Bergen, from an old Bergen

¹ *Symra*, first published in 1905, was periodical established to promote understanding and awareness of Norwegian history, literature, and culture on both sides of the Atlantic.

family, from which there were pastors in the Bergen diocese already over 200 years ago.

My education began in 1832 when I was put into “Lancaster School”, a now-forgotten, but then new type of school introduced from England, based on the mutual instruction of children, in that the older ones are used to teach the younger which is why the school is also sometimes called Exchange-School [Vexel-Skolen]. It was very delightful, I thought. While I was in this school, Oscar I made a visit to Bergen in 1833. He was crown-prince at that time, and we had “*Prince Holiday*” for eight days.

Then I went to “*Realskolen*”. There I had Lyder Sagen as a teacher. Later I was his student, as long as I went to Latin school. My first textbook in *Realskolen* was “Thieme’s First Nourishment for Healthy Human Understanding”. The name shows what kind it was.

In 1837 I went to Latin school. We had happy days there, especially in the first half of my attendance, while we still held on to the old building with memories all the way from Gjeble Pederssen’s days (the Reformation). It is a known truth that we got certain grades at Sagen’s influence. But neither he nor any of our other teachers was a Gamaliel at whose feet we could sit in spiritual understanding. The clergy in the city at that time were of two kinds. Some were Rationalists. Others were of the Hersleb-Stenersen type. In the Bergen diocese Rationalism had not been able to force itself in as strongly as in the dioceses of Kristiansand and Akershus, for example. Bishop J. N. Brun’s powerful and commanding voice had prevented that. So they had been able to keep Kingo’s hymnbook, or (in some places) Guldberg’s. In my childhood and adolescence there was little of public testimony which could bring about awakening in respect to Christianity. For my confirmation I was prepared by an otherwise very well-meaning Rationalist pastor. On the church floor I was asked what kind of blood there is in fish. The fact that it was “red and cold” was a testimony to God’s wisdom, and then came the next boy.

We got no concept of the difference between Christians and “the world” — which was understandable under the condition of the state church at that time. The Haugianers, of which there were not a few in Bergen, worked repulsively by their separatism and judgmental attitude. An outsider had little opportunity to get to know their good aspects. It wasn’t understood that the Christianity of the state church essentially gave occasion and temptation to separatism. Yet I was fortunate to observe in my own closest relatives a daily testimony of what it was to be a Christian — through the continual use of God’s Word and prayer and directing all things to God — and that even especially of a true old-Lutheran color. If I were briefly to depict this type of Christianity, I would refer to the old watchmen’s hymn-verse.² (See the complete text in the Synod’s revised hymnbook [1903].)

Then came the time that I should leave home. That is 61 years ago now. And then came my time as a university student. That is a long time ago! It was in the year King Carl Johan died. Henrik Wergeland was living at the grotto. One year later I helped to carry him to the grave. Welhaven strutted around in the streets of Christiania [Oslo] and made his verbal comments or told stories. He really wanted to have someone with him to listen, and this role rather often fell to me in my lot, since in his childhood and youth he had gotten to know many from my family and enjoyed telling recollections from that time and from his schooldays.

Yes — that is a long time ago: the now-deceased Prof. Monrad, Bishop Jørgen Moe, and the University’s senior professor Aschoug were young candidates³ at that time. Prof. Gisle Johnsen was still a student.

The late President H. A. Preus had been a student the year ahead. J. A. Ottesen and I

² Probably referring to the second stanza of *Wake, Awake, for Night is Flying*

³ “Candidates” were students who were ready for finals examinations or had passed them and were ready to begin their careers.

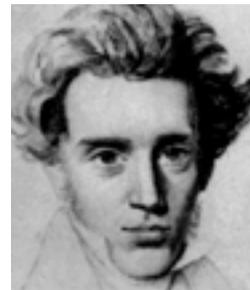
were students together with Pastors N. Brandt, O. Duus, N. E. Jensen, and L. Steen, who have all been pastors in the Synod. Theological studies were for most people essentially “bread-studies”. Still there was regard for Christianity among us as well as among all, but there was little of a deeper spiritual knowledge. As is most often the case, the students led a decent life — yet close to simple foolishness.⁴ This was especially the case in my closest circle of friends, which included Pastor emeritus J. M. Lund (who is still alive), the man of letters Hartvig Lassen and the singer Behrens. The last two died as faithful and humble Christians.

My studies were often interrupted by teaching-work and therefore proceeded slowly. I was influenced little by the theological teachers, until Gisle Johnsen and C. P. Caspari began to hold lectures. In the church circle there was only one more excellent man, W. A. Wexels. Little by little a beginning Christian interest group gathered itself around him. When I came to the University, the city’s two churches (Our Savior’s and Garrison’s Church) stood almost empty. Seven or eight years later Our Savior’s was generally well filled, when Wexels preached. One might wonder what it was that brought Wexels such a flock of listeners. His voice was jarring, his outward discourse anything but alluring. He didn’t use eloquence. He read his sermons, didn’t gesture and hardly looked around while he was speaking. It must have been the deep sincerity which shone from him that drew the listeners and even more that the Word he proclaimed was the old Gospel. His theological direction was a mild Grundtvigianism. This was so little noticeable for those who did not know from other sources Grundtvig’s deviations, that my friends and I had no idea that there was something peculiar or different from old Lutheranism in Wexels’ preaching. Of course, Gisle Johnsen was a constant and grateful listener to Wexels as well.

The emerging Christian life in Christiania at the same time found a place with strong movements in the political world. For a number of years everything had been peaceful in Europe. There had been general peace since Waterloo. The July Revolution and the Polish war for independence had only local effects, which did not last long. Then came the year 1848 with the February Revolution in Paris and the revolts that followed right away in Hungary, Berlin, Dresden, Vienna, etc., and then, what had long had a greater influence among us, the Danish Three-Years’ War with the people of Schleswig-Holstein. It is easy to understand that these events had their influence also in religious matters.

At that time there was an immensely remarkable man in Denmark who in the last 5-6 years had drawn attention to himself. He had another and more powerful influence, but perhaps of shorter duration, some years later when I already was here in this country. But already at that time the influence I had from him was stronger than any I had from other quarters.

That was Søren Kierkegaard, who since then became so famous.



Søren Kierkegaard

If I were to make a speech in a few words about what I learned from him, then it would be difficult to cite the same way one can state what one has gained from most other teachers.

His influence showed itself most in spiritual exercise and self-enterprise, which he called forth among his readers: A most ideal view of life and mankind. An intellectual consideration in all circumstances. A view of the difference between Christianity and the essence of the world. An eye open to all kinds of “shams”, all humbug. Through this a critical

⁴ på enkelte Udskeielser

relationship over against all pretensions of Christianity both in oneself and in — others. Unconditional respect for God's Word and submission to it. By this again a view of the great requirements of the preaching office and of the sad caricatures that so often are found among those who are in the office, — whether it is the kind, good-natured pastor who goes to sleep spiritually while otherwise he eats and drinks and sleeps and carries out the duties of his office like other duties, — or the gifted preacher who “with a speaker's condescending boldness” carries off his listeners in amazement at his beautiful and moving words, while neither he nor they have any use for the whole thing when the speech is over.

With all this came a longing for real and meaningful work and the spiritual struggle that comes with it. *“It is one thing to be able to comprehend the Most High in your own quiet room; it is a totally different thing to sit in the midst of the great copper kettle, with all smiths hammering on it, and still to comprehend the Most High.”* The word is this great copper kettle. *“Out into the world then and to work!”*

S. Kierkegaard didn't bring us the distinct, positive content of faith. As an example, I can refer to the fact that my most trusted friend and I, both disciples of Kierkegaard, came to take completely different paths: he read Grundtvig and became a Grundtvigian; I read Luther and became a “Lutheran”. (“With Luther there is never nonsense,” Kierkegaard had said.) Although troubled that that friend was a follower of Grundtvig, yet I always had to look up to him as a more faithful and better Christian than I.

Where should I turn now to find the work that I was longing for? I was a theological candidate and teacher at Nissen's Latin School. Should I continue to be a teacher for years? What would then become of the Spirit's work out in the wide world? My connection to America was still completely indifferent at that time, even after I had occasionally seen in the newspapers that there was a

need for pastors among the new settlers there, and regardless that I surely knew that two or three of my contemporaries had recently gone over there.

So, one evening late in the winter in January or February 1853, I was sitting in my rooming house in the Raadstue Street in Christiania and the friend I mentioned above visited me. We had a long conversation. I remember that we talked about regeneration, about work and struggle and such things. America was not mentioned. When it got late, and he wanted to go home to his rooming house at Akers church, I followed him — it was a delightful Norwegian winter night, quiet and clear with stars. When we came to the city cemetery, and I wanted to go back, I got a sudden impulse and said: “Maybe I should go to America! There is need of for work there.” He answered neither Yes nor No, and then we parted. For me it was a sleepless night. I couldn't get the new thought out of my head. *There* was work. There was need for workers *there*. What use was it to think about it and talk about it, and then keep sitting and not do it! A day or two went by with deliberations for and against, and then I decided. I wrote to my closest relatives and to some of my friends. All but one of the responses resounded with general and strong displeasure. That one was my now long-deceased mother. From her [Elisabeth, my wife], with whom I was amazed to celebrate my golden anniversary two years ago, I got the answer: “I will very reluctantly leave Norway, but if you want to go, then it is my duty to follow.”



Ulrik Vilhelm Koren and Else Elisabeth Koren
The Koren Collection,
Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum Archives, Decorah, Iowa

Then immediately (still in February) I wrote to Pastor A. C. Preus that I was willing to receive one of the two calls that were being arranged right then among the Norwegian emigrants. The one was in Wisconsin between Madison and Dodgeville. The other was in Iowa, where none of the Norwegian pastors had settled yet. At that time there were six Norwegian pastors in America (i. e., candidates from Christiania [Oslo] University and ordained in Norway). They were: H. A. Stub (since 1848), A. C. Preus (1840), Gustav Dietrichson, H. A. Preus and N. Brandt (1851) and J. A. Ottesen (1852). Of these the last three and the first were my acquaintances from student days. Just at that time they had had a preparatory meeting together with representatives from the congregations to organize a church body — the Norwegian Synod — which was also established in October 1853, some weeks before I arrived in New York.



Photo courtesy of Vesterheim.....

After my correspondence with Pastor A. C. Preus a letter of call was sent to me from some of the settlements in northern Iowa in Allamakee, Winneshiek, Clayton, and Fayette counties. In June I received this letter of call

(according to the congregations' request, issued by the temporary church authorities in Wisconsin).⁵ I then gave my farewell sermon. This was the first time I was in a pulpit, and I was very nervous. The speech was held in the prison in the morning and in the penitentiary (Akershus) in the afternoon. In the morning then I saw only a great mass of heads before me, but not a single face was I aware of having seen. In the afternoon it was better. My old, faithful friend and patron, Councilor Ebbell comforted me by telling me that I had "a sympathetic voice". He said nothing about the sermon. On July 21 I was ordained in Oslo. The next week Jørgen Moe was ordained. The diocesan provost P. A. Jensen, at that time resident chaplain in Aker, — gave the introductory remarks. When I had given my ordination sermon and spoke with him about the trouble my sermon gave me, he also comforted me by saying that I did not need to worry. "Bishop Arup has heard many bad sermons."

These were the only two sermons I had given before I gave my introductory sermon in Iowa.

(to be continued)

U. V. Koren was the first resident Norwegian Synod pastor west of the Mississippi. He served many congregations in northeast Iowa and southeast Minnesota and served as Synod president for many years.

⁵ Koren's note: Postal delivery was slow in those days. A letter from Norway to Wisconsin or Iowa took 4-6 weeks to arrive, and cost, if I remember correctly, 54 cents.

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