

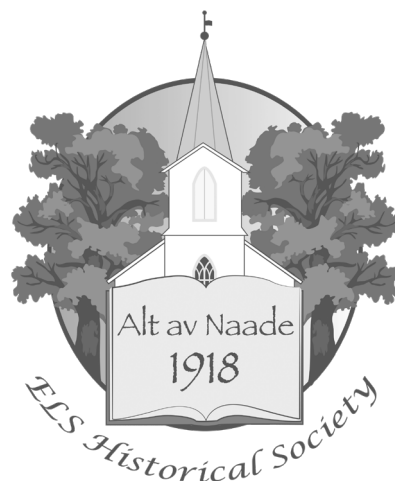
# Oak Leaves

Newsletter of the ELS Historical Society

Volume 22

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Issue 1



## SOME FOOTNOTES, GRACE NOTES, AND BLUE NOTES

### TO A PERIOD OF NORWEGIAN AMERICAN HISTORY, 1916-1918, TORALD N. TEIGEN



Torald N. Teigen

*This article was one of three convention essays presented to the 1968 ELS Convention on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the synod. The convention theme was "Sound the Trumpet of Jubilee," with this essay titled "The Trumpet Call to Freedom." It has been edited to fit this format. The original is found in the 1968 Synod Report.*

At the close of the synod meeting in Minneapolis on May 24, 1916, it appeared that there would be a clean break in the Norwegian Synod. The statement issued by the large minority of the Synod soon after the convention expressed the hope of still avoiding a split, and though it did not venture to make definite predictions as to what might happen, it did suggest that "if the difficulties cannot be removed, there will be enough congregations which will remain in the synod so that it will be able to live and assert its great principle: 'The Word alone and Grace alone'" (Quoted in *Grace for Grace*, p. 114).

Expressions in several private letters of the time are illustrative of the general sentiment among minority people. Mrs. C. K. Preus wrote to Miss Hannah Ottesen from the convention in Minneapolis: "Most are going into the union and there will be few left, but, God be praised, enough to keep the synod going with God's help. It is good to see that Otto (Ottesen, brother of Hannah) is standing firm."

The Rev. H. M. Tjernagel wrote to his brother-in-law

telling of his visit in June that year at Stanwood, Washington, his former congregation and the home of his wife:

I enjoyed my visit.... Once in a while the pleasure was marred on account of the present church controversy. However, there were a great many that agreed with me in being outspoken against the present union movement with *Opgjør* as basis. I am, as you may know decidedly opposed to *Forening* (union) on the present basis and will not be a member of "the new church body." I have cast my lot with those who will try to keep the Synod going and remain true to what it has stood for since its organization. (In a letter to Ole Brue, July 9, 1916.)

When the "Invitation" of the Union Committee to the minority to enter the merger on the basis of the negotiations of Pres. C. K. Preus and the Rev. I. B. Torrison was presented to the meeting of minority men at West Hotel in Minneapolis on Jan. 17-18, 1917, seventy-two voted for it, seven against, and seventeen did not vote. Of the seven who voted against the resolution five were pastors: B. Harstad, I. Blækkan, J. A. Moldstad, H. Ingebritson, and C. N. Peterson (C. N. Peterson in a letter to Aanestad, Jan. 31, 1917).

At the close of the West Hotel meeting on Thursday afternoon, Jan. 18, the Rev. I. Blækkan of Rockford, Washington, went with the Rev. C. N. Peterson, a schoolmate, to Peterson's home in North Minneapolis to spend the time till he should board the West Coast train, which was to leave at 11:00 that night. In the evening Peterson went with Blækkan to the Union Station to say good-bye to Harstad who would take the same train for Parkland, Washington. At the depot they discussed the events of the meeting and, since the seriousness of the situation seemed to them to warrant further discussion, Harstad and Blækkan decided to take a

*continued on page 4*



## Proclaim His Wonders

*A Pictorial History of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod*

A pictorial history has been published in commemoration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the reorganization of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

This 312 page volume includes more than 400 photographs from the history of the synod. This is who we are. This is what we look like. Here are the wonders which God has done.

A sample of the book may be viewed on the synod's website at: [els.org/els-100](http://els.org/els-100)

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Oak Leaves welcomes articles of both Synodical and local significance for publication. Articles may be edited for style, clarity, or length to allow for publication. Each issue will be deposited in the archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

**Check out the Historical Society website**  
<http://www.els-history.org/>

## FROM THE SOCIETY PRESIDENT

What was it like to gather under the Lime Creek oaks in June of 1918? What was going through the minds of those present? What hope could they have for the future when so much of their cherished past was destroyed? They were not large in number, and they were not without cares, but they had the pure Word of God. We hope you can join us this June as

we revisit the events of 100 years ago. Our synod has changed much since those days, but we still stand where those faithful few stood. We are “**Still Under the Oaks,**” rooted in the unchanging Word, through which God grants grace and salvation.

- Peter Faugstad 🍁



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# CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE REVIEW

Sixty-four people braved the cold, the wind, and icy roads to attend the eighth annual Christmas Open House at the ELS Ottesen Museum. The theme for the Seventh annual event was “Christmas with the Luther Family” and explored some of the ways Martin and Katie Luther might have celebrated Christmas in their home as well as dispelling some myths about Christmas practices in the sixteenth century.

Guests were able to sample spritz, stollen, springerle, and lebkuchen, treats which all have their roots in Germany from before Luther’s time and may well have been prepared by Katie.

The Museum’s Christmas tree was decorated only with apples. Despite the popular myth, Luther did not invent the Christmas tree. But around his time, trees were sometimes decorated with apples to signify the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. This practice was one which lead to the modern version of the Christmas tree.

A special highlight of the day was the singing of all fifteen verses of “From Heaven Above to Earth I Come,” Luther’s famous Christmas hymn. Luther wrote the hymn for his children and some of the local university students to sing in his home on Christmas Eve of either 1534 or 1535. For our event, local homeschool children sang many of the verses, accompanied by keyboard, violin, and flute.

Many thanks to everyone who came to the Museum. We hope to see many of you next December as we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the ELS. 🍁



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## PROCLAIM THE WONDERS GOD HAS DONE

In commemoration of the centennial of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, the ELS Historical Society has produced the medallion pictured to the right.

**Order it from the ELS Ottesen Museum for \$15 (or \$10 dollars for members of the ELS Historical Society) plus \$2.50 shipping (6 Browns Court, Mankato MN 56001).** 🍁

hotel room and stay over till the next noon. Peterson came to the hotel again at 8 o'clock the next morning and they consulted till train-time. (C. N. Peterson in a letter to his brother, Jan. 24, 1917, and to Mr. Romnes, Jan. 26.) What was clear to all three was that the document presented by Preus and Torrison "did not grant the minority the least bit more than the original *Opgjør* did, namely, the right themselves to stand on the 'first form' of the doctrine of Election, while they thereby granted the other the right to organize the new church body on the basis of the unchanged *Opgjør*, which with its unreserved acceptance of the second form becomes the official confession of the new church body" (C. N. Peterson in a letter to his brother, Jan. 24, and to Mr. Romnes, Jan. 26), and that "by going along with the others into the merger on such a doctrinal basis they would be as good unionists as they are." (Peterson in a letter to J. M. Johnson, Newman Grove, Neb., Jan. 31, 1917). Among the things that ought to be done, in the thinking of these men, were the following:

First: the Rev. C. N. Peterson was immediately in contact with the Rev. O. T. Lee and the Rev. Henry Ingebritson in Northern Iowa, and with many others. Peterson was at that time without a congregation. He was a member of the Board of Directors of the Synod's Pension Fund and had charge of the business management of *Retledning og Forsvar* (Guidance and Defence), the paper of the original [larger] minority, including the mailing list, and probably knew more minority-minded people than anyone else. Carbon copies of letters he wrote have been preserved and we are fortunate in having copies of 167 letters written during the year 1917. They are a valuable source of information concerning the activities of the minority after the West Hotel meeting in Jan. 1917, until the organization at Lime Creek in June, 1918.



C. N. Peterson

Second: To establish what the Union Committee's view was, the Rev. Henry Ingebritson wrote to the Rev. Peder Tangjerd, a United Church member of the Union Committee. Tangjerd responded in a letter under date of Feb. 7, 1917, that he knew of no "new *Opgjør*", that since the *Austin Agreement* is not a "new *Opgjør*" it cannot be considered a "commentary on *Opgjør*," that the Union Committee simply "take cognizance of the three reservations of the minority," and that "as a basis for union of the three conferring church bodies is to be considered *Opgjør* and nothing else." He added:

The positions represented by *Opgjør* and "a Request" are given mutual recognition inasmuch as they are

given unassailed room in one and the same church body – in other words: They are not regarded as church divisive; and we mutually recognize those who take this stand as brethren in the faith without positively adopting the other's opinion in the matter.

Third: the Rev. O. T. Lee obtained a copy of the St. Louis Faculty Committee letter of Jan. 9, 1917. C. N. Peterson made copies which were circulated among interested parties (Peterson in a letter to O. T. Lee and to B. Harstad, Jan. 27, 1917).

No advice could be found in the letter to go into the union. At the suggestion of his fellows C. N. Peterson made a trip to St. Louis where, together with the Rev. Nachtsheim, the Missouri Synod pastor of Immanuel Lutheran church in North Minneapolis, he discussed the whole matter with Profs. Pieper, Dau, and Graebner (Peterson in a letter to B. Harstad, Feb. 11, 1917 and to I. Blækkan, Feb. 15, 1917). The most detailed and penetrating discussion of this entire matter to date is found in *A City Set On A Hill*.

Fourth: It was seemingly not known for sure at the time whether R. B. Anderson would welcome articles in his paper *Amerika* from the minority of the minority as he had from the original minority. Pastors Harstad and Blækkan thought it would be well that, since the Rev. Peterson was without a call and needed to find work, he should try to get work with *Amerika*. The Rev. Peterson wrote to R. B. Anderson asking if he might get work with *Amerika*, reading copy, mailing, or whatever, suggesting that besides writing a little for the paper he might be able to get pastors and lay people he knew to write articles for *Amerika* about "what those who continued to stand on the Synod's old doctrine and principles and practice ought now to do." (Peterson in a letter to R. B. Anderson, Jan. 23, 1917)

After several exchanges of letters R. B. Anderson wrote:

If this less[er] minority can make use of *Amerika*, I shall be glad. I do not understand why the paper is not used more than it is since all the while all the other papers have been closed. Suppose that you, dear Pastor Peterson, were appointed to edit the religious articles in the paper. You could be a sort of "clearing house," and everything having to do with the church controversy could be sent to you in Minneapolis before being taken into *Amerika*. The friends of the minority could then work for the distribution of the paper. It would lighten the load for me if there were someone to whom I could send all articles before they were taken into *Amerika*. But I would have it clearly understood that I cannot compromise with *Opgjør*. I cannot make use of a clear-



ing house assistant who would compromise with *Opgjør*. The minority must stand firm as a rock, however small it may become. (To Peterson, Jan. 30, 1917)

C. N. Peterson did not feel qualified to act as such a “clearing house” (Peterson in a letter to Harstad, Feb. 9, 1917). It seems also that the minority people did not care to have that much of a *carte blanche*, nor to be that closely identified with a secular paper. At any rate, the “clearing house” arrangement never went into effect. Nevertheless, articles began to appear in *Amerika* from the pens of Pastors P. A. Widvey, B. Harstad, O. T. Lee, and G. P. Nesseth and a great number of laymen. The pastors, with the exception of Widvey, were reserved in their expressions about the results of the West Hotel meeting and about the action of the members of the minority who had resolved to accept the invitation to go into the union on the basis of the *Austin Agreement*. They faced the reality that the *Opgjør* basis of the union and directed their remarks in the main to that situation.

On April 13, 1917, a boxed note appeared in the columns of R. B. Anderson’s paper and was repeated in every issue thereafter for several months:

#### TO THE MINORITY

Each week cancelations come in from subscribers who belong to the majority. They give as a reason that we have opened our columns to the minority. Will not you good minority people now take the trouble to get us some new subscribers from your camp so that we can be compensated for those losses? It seems to us that this is your duty.

There is no reason to believe that R. B. Anderson was misrepresenting the case. Some, at least, of the letters announcing cancelations appeared in the columns of the paper.

R. B. Anderson was a controversial character, (and still is). He had a way of espousing unpopular causes, as well as a way of alienating many a good friend, often over trifles. Be that as it may, when he wrote on theological matters, as he did quite often in things pertaining to *Opgjør*, he did not hesitate to admit that he was not especially qualified to speak on the subject. And still his expressions bear the marks of perceptiveness and orthodoxy. One could not wish for better than his brief article on “Naadevalget” (The Election of Grace) which is filled with gospel warmth (*Amerika*, March 29, 1912). His article, “Unity-Not Union” (Sept. 6, 1912) leaves nothing to be desired — indeed, Prof. F. Bente picked that one up, and several others, reprinted them in translation in *Lehre und Wehre*, the theological magazine of the Missouri Synod, and commended them with the remark, “They hit the nail on the head”

(*Lehre und Wehre*, Nov. 1912, p. 511).

As said, Rasmus B. Anderson was a controversial character. His political positions, his feuds, and often seemingly unwarranted “jabs” put him in the “dog-house” with a lot of VIP’s, some of whom (including some ecclesiastics) weren’t exactly paragons of nobility either. It has been debated whether his paper was more of a liability than an asset to the cause of our Synod fathers under the circumstances. The fact is, though, that he opened his columns to let a minority, to whom the press was otherwise closed and who had been stigmatized as being “ruled by a carnal party spirit and sinful suspicion” (*Ev. Luth. Kirketindende*, Dec. 1, 1915), express their unpopular convictions, but genuinely Scriptural and Lutheran. And for this, we in this fiftieth Anniversary year hold also him in grateful memory.

*Amerika*’s position in regard to the union question took its toll, and was no doubt part of the reason R. B. Anderson had to bring it to a conclusion in 1922.

We have earlier alluded to the reserve with which the writers of the remnant of the minority referred to the minority people who decided at the West Hotel meeting to accept the invitation of the Union Committee to come into the merger on the basis of the *Austin Agreement*. There is an interesting sidelight on that. During the first days of February 1917, the Rev. C. N. Peterson attended two meetings at which he had occasion to see a good number of majority people. Writing to Bjug Harstad, Feb. 8, 1917, he reported, “In the last three days I have met with members of the Pension Committee, so I have had an opportunity to hear how the majority people look at it. They are inclined to make great fun of the whole thing as a colossal turn-about, and as a step to insure a place ‘on the band-wagon’.” The minority people possibly had some reason to think similarly, but their expressions on the matter through the years consistently assume that the leaders of the minority and others with them were deceived. It remained for ALC piety of the 1960’s to express the judgment:

In this way the churches prepared the way for the acceptance of the Synod minority into the new church, thus allowing the minority to fulfill its real desire for union without losing face. (Nelson, Fevold, *The Lutheran Church Among Norwegian Americans* Augsburg, Mpls., 1960, p. 221)

On April 24, 1917, the Rev. Bjug Harstad drafted the following letter:

Dear Brother:

The time goes by without the little remnant of our Synod having united on something definite. Is there not

a danger of lukewarmness? Ought we not in concert make a definite declaration at our next Synod meeting?

We are all men who have one time taken our oath of office; we have with deliberate thought accepted the constitution of the Synod and declared ourselves agreed in the doctrine and principles of the Synod; and since then we have found nothing in God's Word that makes it our Christian duty to change anything in it. Even if it should come to pass that I should stand alone, I cannot go along into the new body. I therefore move that all who are able make the following declaration to the Synod Convention:

1. That we cannot for the sake of our conscience go along into the new body on the present basis, but
2. We stand firmly on the old confession and organization, which we have the Christian freedom to defend and work under as heretofore.
3. We therefore lay claim to our Synod's constitution with its seal and motto: "Gegraptai", it is written.

In order not to create difficulties among ourselves the declaration ought to be as brief as possible and still contain enough so that we have not given up anything as members of the corporation, then as time goes on see what can be done.

If the members of the other body then put us out by keeping the Synod alive and going, we will be at our post.

Dear friends, let us unite on something very soon. It is getting late.

Carbon copies were made of this letter by C. N. Peterson and sent to all who were known not to have voted for the *Austin Agreement* and to some of whom it was known that they had voted for it at the West Hotel but had changed their minds. Peterson sent an accompanying letter suggesting that since they ought to consult together it would be well if they all put up at the same hotel. Let him know and he would make the arrangements. One by one letters came in from men who were in general agreement with Harstad's motion. Peterson made the arrangements for rooms and a meeting place at the Aberdeen Hotel not far from the St. Paul Auditorium. At a meeting of the minority at the Aberdeen Hotel on June 7, C. N. Peterson reported that he had received word of agreement from forty-three men, and expected more in the day's mail.

In the meantime there were other developments. May 18-20 there was a meeting of the Circuit Young People's

Association and Choral Union at Scarville, Iowa. Prof. W. H. T. Dau was there to speak on "The Lutheran Church as a Singing Church." There it was learned that the Synodical Conference Committee (Pieper, Dau, and Schlueter) intended to be at the convention of the synod in St. Paul, June 6-9, 1917, and that to date they had not been able to get Dr. H. G. Stub to agree to a meeting with them. Several days later a letter was sent to Prof. Dau signed by seven men of the minority within convenient reach requesting the Committee to meet with the minority men at the Aberdeen Hotel on the evening of June 5. In a few days they had an affirmative reply (Peterson in a letter to Dau, May 24, 1917, and to I. Blækkan, May 29).

*Amerika* for June 1, 1917, carried a translation of the letter by Pieper, Dau, and Graebner dated Jan. 9, 1917. This was accompanied by some remarks by Henry Ingebritson, among other things:

With the permission of the respected gentlemen in St.



Pres C. K. Preus

Louis printed herewith is the advice which Prof. Preus and Pastor Torrison brought from them at New Year's time. It should have been published long ago, since it is the official advice—the only thing we can go by. We ought also to have gotten to hear this at the minority meeting in Minneapolis last January—and to hear it in translation. In this advice, as everyone can see, no one is advised to go into the new church body. On the contrary....

At the meetings at the Aberdeen Hotel held during "off hours" from the synod convention June 6-8 the minority agreed to the first two points of Harstad's proposal and resolved to make a statement read at the convention. The opportunity to read them into the record never came. Saturday, June 9, dawned and people of the three uniting church bodies marched from three directions to meet at the St. Paul Auditorium amid band-playing and banner-waving. The Norwegian-American secular press quite forgot about World War I and the Germans and covered the merger meeting with voluminous enthusiasm. The treatment by the large *Minneapolis Tidende* was typical. Front page banner headline: "THE GREATEST GATHERING AMONG NORWEGIANS IN AMERICA." Headline two: "The Norwegian Lutheran Church of America." Then four lines across the page: "The Church body of nearly a million members, 3000 congregations, 1200 pastors, owns or controls 26 seminaries, colleges, and academies, with 192 teachers and 4,500 students, 16 hospitals, 9 orphanages, 7 homes for the aged; the institutions have a combined worth of \$15,000,000.

On the front page also was a large picture of the sixteen member Union Committee representing the United Church, Norwegian Synod, and Hauge Synod. Page two carried a brief history of the three church bodies. It was noted that some leading men in the Norwegian Synod had for some years found the *Opgjør* unsatisfactory but further negotiations during the last few months of 1916 had cleared up matters to their satisfaction. Then, "There is still a very little minority within the Norwegian Synod, as well as within the Hauge Synod, who have shown a reluctance to go along with the merger; but none of these movements are of sufficient significance to hamper the great common work, and the accomplishment of the union matter occurs under circumstances which the most zealous friends of union could not consider more fortunate."

The next two issues of *Minneapolis Tidende* devoted generous space to news from the merger convention. The June 14 issue carried an elaborate description of the parade of the three bodies to the St. Paul Auditorium as well as a picture of the officers of the merged church. It included also this note, "At the time the union meeting was held the church bells in the congregations of the three bodies were rung—throughout the whole land, from the Atlantic to the Pacific coasts, from Texas to far north in Canada." A curious editorial noted that "the 9th of June has become a memorial day both for the Norwegian people in general as well as for Norwegians in America." It compared June 9, 1917, to June 9, 1880, when the Norwegian Parliament resolved to amend the Norwegian Constitution over the veto of the king, "as a mighty assertion and ratification of the work of independence from the 17 of May, 1814." "June 9, 1917, will hereafter stand as a significant memorable day especially for Norwegians of America. With the merger of the three church bodies, special interests and duplications in church work will be eliminated, and one of the beneficial effects will be that there will be more unity in civic and social matters among Norwegians of America."

News of the merger, however, did not completely dominate the columns of *Minneapolis Tidende*. Tucked away in another part of the paper was a little article with the title, "Against the Union." It noted that about twenty pastors and a like number of laymen had in these days been meeting in the Aberdeen Hotel and had resolved to organize themselves to continue in the old paths, had elected some officers (inaccurately giving the names), and had resolved to put out a paper. It noted also that the minority men had been in conference with three men from the Synodical Conference, which consisted of the German bodies, Missouri, Wisconsin, and Michigan Synods. The discussions had been concerned with various points in *Opgjør*.

One paper of the Norwegian-American secular press was distinctive in its coverage of the merger news. The merger made the front page in Rasmus Anderson's *Amerika* for June 15, 1917, but in the following manner. At the head of the left hand column was a black cross followed by an article reading in part:

THE NORWEGIAN SYNOD, sixty-four years old, born 1853, died in St. Paul Saturday the 9th of June, 1917. The patient for many years had been bedridden. The sickness, however, was not at all fatal; but the doctors who had been appointed to attend him neglected their duty. They failed to give him the proper care, and the medicine they prescribed contained poison. The physicians are guilty of "malpractice."... The same day the old Hauge Synod also died. The cause of death was the same ...



Rev J.A. Moldstad

The United Church changed its name and swallowed the two corpses. But, as one will see from Pastor Moldstad's report in this issue, it was not able to swallow the whole body of the Norwegian Synod.... The false doctrinal form—*intuitu fidei*—has won out all along the line....

Let us now finally get clear lines and clear stand-points. We will now get to see how many there are who in spite of persecutions sufferings, and all kinds of adversities will be faithful to the eternal revealed truths, even if it leads to the poor house.

The first authoritative, published report on the actions of the "remnant" was written by the Rev. John Moldstad:

#### From the Synod Meeting in St. Paul, Minn.

The minority in the synod at the convention in Minneapolis last year insisted that three things must be corrected in *Opgjør* before they could with good conscience go into the new church body.

Efforts were made to correct certain offensive things in *Opgjør* in that a committee brought before the Union Committee a motion that three corrections be made. The Union Committee felt itself "for certain reasons" prevented from following this plan, but still invited the minority to be along in the union. A part of the minority thought they ought to go along on this invitation. But many could not go along into the new body unless the said corrections were made. Another thing that caused the minority to have even more mis-



givings about entering the merger was the circumstance that the Hauge Synod's insistence that its "understanding" of certain points in the "Conditions of Union" should be tolerated was accepted by a large majority in the Synod. Among the points in the "Understanding" was participation with the heterodox in church work, something the Synod has always regarded as in conflict with God's Word.

The minority therefore held meetings at the Aberdeen Hotel in St. Paul, Minn., where among other things the following points were adopted: 1. For our conscience sake we cannot go along into the new body on the present basis; 2. We remain standing on the old confession and organization which we have the Christian liberty to defend and work under now as before.

A temporary administration was elected: the Rev. B. Harstad, president; the Rev. J. A. Moldstad, vice-president; the Rev. C. N. Peterson, secretary; and the Rev. O. T. Lee, treasurer.

In God's name we intend to stand fast and not turn aside from the good paths which earlier have been followed in the Norwegian Synod. Our purpose is to try to preserve the Synod's old principles, doctrine, confessions, and free churchly government.

It is our intention as soon as it can possibly be done to set forth our program. Minneapolis, Minn., June 11, 1917 J. A. Moldstad (*Amerika*, June 15, 1917, front page.)

Prof. Franz Pieper in July reported on the Norwegian merger and said, among other things, "There can be no talk of unity in the Lutheran doctrine in the new body, because the *Opgjør* which expresses not only Lutheran doctrine, but also un-Lutheran, is not changed. Let us hope that the last word is not yet spoken, but that yet finally the standpoint of the minority will be acknowledged as the right one and will be handled accordingly" (*Lehre und Wehre*, July, 1917, pp. 333-334).

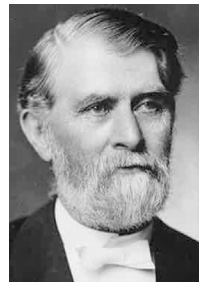
Prof. F. W. Stellhorn, the leading Ohio Synod exponent of the "Anti-Missourian" position on the disputed doctrines, wrote his friend, 79 year-old F. A. Schmidt, in St. Paul, on July 5, 1917:

The twenty men of the minority who remain outside of the new body are fully right according to their "Missouri" standpoint...How Preus and others could join the new body without having gotten the changes in

*Opgjør* demanded by their consciences, and how the others can accept them according to their standpoint as brethren in faith, I do not understand. Maybe they will sometime still make a public explanation of that. That is one of the flies in the ointment.

On Oct. 27 Stellhorn wrote again to Schmidt:

It amazes me how things stand with your minority [those who entered the merger— ETT] and with your general president (H. G. Stub): they still seem to me to halt to a certain extent between two opinions. Hopefully they will cause no special unrest. Those of the minority who stood fast command my respect, however wrong their position is. (The Stellhorn letters are in the Schmidt Papers, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Mo.: Microfilm # 490.)



Rev. M. F. Wiese

The Rev. M. F. Wiese (1842-1933) one of the greatest scholars of the old Norwegian Synod, an irenic gentleman, saw *Opgjør* soon after its birth in Madison in 1912, didn't like it, but took explanations in good faith and voted for it at the Eastern District convention in 1912. Later he became more convinced of its untenability and made his contributions on the minority side of the discussion from 1912-1916, letting his name also appear as "Publisher" of *Retledning og Forsvar* in 1916. At the West Hotel meeting in January 1917, he voted for the *Austin Agreement*. On June 18, 1917, he wrote a touching letter to his good friend, Prof. C. K. Preus, expressing his amazement that the Hon. Lauritz Swenson, representing the minority, had told the Union Committee that it was not the intention of the minority that the *Austin Agreement* should be published etc. (For details of that phase, see *A City Set On A Hill*). He continued:

He certainly had no authority for that from the Minority — as far as I can recall. I regarded our resolution as a document that was to be published so that also those of the Minority who were not present at Minneapolis could know what we had decided there.

I was heartily willing to go along to the extreme limits in order to avoid a split, but I did not want to be along on any secret maneuvers. Our cause was honest before God and men; and since it concerned a doctrinal matter for which the Norwegian Synod had suffered and contended, it demanded a public confession. On the basis of the *Austin Agreement* I was determined to go along into the new church body, until J. Nordby



and Kvale explained to me (right after Easter) that my understanding of that agreement was wrong. Also I am now convinced that the change in Para. 4 cannot be defended. I believed before that a good construction could be put upon it.

I have now experienced a good deal of what it means to be a “scape-goat.” Perhaps you also have experienced a little in this regard? Among us people are astonished, grieved and indignant over what the “Minority” has ventured to do in St. Paul. You can believe that your old friend Tarje Tvedten is not mild about it. And no wonder! In my opinion an offense has been given by our trusted men such as has no parallel in the history of the old Norwegian Synod. I cannot yet regard it as anything but church politics (something our Synod has always shied away from), and a faithlessness in the confession of the divine truth. And not to forget myself: after about fifty years’ service in the Synod, I have by my vacillating position lost the confidence of my friends and won scorn and contempt in return. That is probably just what I have deserved. Ottesen, your father (my unforgettable, fatherly friend), V. Koren, [J. B.] Frich, etc. would certainly turnover in their graves if they could hear that while our opponents do not find that our demands for change in *Opgjør* are contrary to the Scriptures and the Confessions, we in return have publicly voted that the same *Opgjør* shall stand “unchanged and unabridged as a basis etc.”—the *Opgjør* which we for about five years could not accept with good conscience. Do you really believe that God will bless such conduct? But enough about that. It will grieve you to read this; but it also grieves me to write it. I believed, I can assure you, that if there was anyone I was sure would stand fast, it was you. This influenced me not a little that I also finally voted for our resolution at the West Hotel, but not gladly.

This is an exceedingly severe trial for us. God guide and counsel for Jesus’ sake.

Your devoted, M. Wiese

Prof. C. K. Preus died on May 28, 1921, at the age of over sixty-eight years. At his passing, the Rev. John A. Moldstad wrote an appreciative article about him that is illustrative of the attitude nourished among the remnant toward one who had been their respected leader, and a beloved teacher of most of them. It reads in part:

Prof. Preus was a noble character—“one of nature’s noblemen.” With his great talents both as a speaker and as an administrator one might have feared that he

would become greedy of honor and vain; but he did not seek his own. His greatest desire was to be true to God’s Word and will both in doctrine and in practice. During the days of the Election controversy he, together with his father, suffered himself to be deposed by the Norway Grove congregation rather than subscribe to an un-Scriptural and false doctrine concerning the Election of Grace. When the whirlwind of the union matter broke over the Synod and the lamentable *Opgjør* came into being he was one of the first to see the false and sinful in that compromise. At the District Convention in Willmar he was the only one who voted against *Opgjør*, and at the Iowa District Convention he fought and witnessed manfully for the truth of God’s Word. He continued his steadfast fight as one of the Minority’s leaders until the fall of 1916. We regret with great sorrow that he, among many others, let himself be deceived by the so-called Austin Agreement and fooled into the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America. He believed the letters and the assurances that were given him and thought that he with good conscience could go into the new body. He was much interested in our little church body and heartily sympathized with us in our work. He had come into the new body and thought it therefore his duty to stand there for a time and to witness for the truth. He said repeatedly: “We testify and fight for the same within the body as you do outside,” and “we stand as you.” He, as many others, expected the enthusiasm for the union to pass over and that the church people would wake up, and that there would be a new alignment, and that those who wanted to hold fast to God’s Word would then be united. At the district meeting in Decorah in 1918 he fought and testified courageously against the “National Lutheran Council” and got only contempt and evil words for it. Now his life’s journey has ended, and the sun has gone down. His was a long and rich activity—nearly forty-five years. May God in grace grant that his testimony may sometime be heard and bear fruit! The Lord comfort his wife and children and bless for them his memory.” (*Evan. Luth. Tidende*, June 1, 1921, p. 757-759.)

#### LUTHERSK TIDENDE

As indicated earlier, the Minority meeting at the Aberdeen Hotel on June 9, 1917, resolved to put out a paper of eight or sixteen pages, to be called *Luthersk Tidende*. It was to appear twice a month. B. Harstad was to be listed as the “Publisher” and C. N. Peterson, who lived in Minneapolis, the Managing Editor. Peterson was to have fifty dollars a month for his work. It contained an article by Harstad, “Why the Minority could not go along into the new Body”;

an article by O. T. Lee, “What is Now the Minority’s Position?” showing the unionistic character of the Hauge Synod’s “understanding” of the *Articles of Union*”; an article “Faithfulness, if otherwise genuine, never makes peace with sin,” signed “W,” presumably Wiese; another article by O. T. Lee entitled, “Ought We Hold Fast to The Doctrine of the Confessions Regarding the Election of Grace as the True Doctrine Revealed by God?”

The format of the paper was simple: *Luthersk* – a picture of a little church – *Tidende*. The little minority was laying claim to being a continuation of the old Norwegian Synod. It should like to have had an organizational continuity — but if that was not possible it would be content to have the more important spiritual continuity. Since 1872 the old respected organ of the Synod had been called *Evangelisk Luthersk Kirke Tidende* (Evangelical Lutheran Church Times). That paper was still in existence after the merger took place, and the minority knew it could not use that name, but wanted to approximate it. On July 3, C. N. Peterson wrote to O. T. Lee saying that someone else had made the suggestion and he thought it would look quite well if they had a cut made with the picture of a church between *Luthersk* and *Tidende*, “It would then be *Luthersk Kirketidende* without our having taken the old name. What do think of it, Pastor Lee?” He added that it would cost \$3.00 to have the cut made, \$1.50 if he were fortunate enough to get the painter, B. Gausta, a member of Our Saviour’s in Minneapolis, and a strong minority man until the cave-in, to draw the picture. And ‘twas done. The little church attracted the attention of some VIPs and stirred up some ire, too. On Sept. 25 of that year President H. G. Stub and the District President were at a meeting of Harstad’s congregation at Parkland, Washington, in a first move to get Harstad deposed because his congregation had not declined to go into the merger. In a speech at the meeting Stub said:

By the side of great organization, the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, a teeny weeny church body has been established. I don’t know what they will call themselves. I know that a little paper is being published, which is called *Luthersk Tidende*. They have not dared to call it *Kirketidende*, but have placed the picture of a church between *Luthersk* and *Tidende*. Such manner of procedure I do not like. This is not the right way to proceed, to give *Luthersk* with a painted church and then *Tidende* as the name of the organ published by the new church in definite opposition to the new church body, the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America. (Stenographic Report of the Meeting, tr. by Chr. Anderson)

Harstad could truthfully answer that he had nothing to do with the picture being put there. “But who would have thought that this would have caused such difficulty?” Stub: “Why did they not name it *Kirketidende*?” Harstad: “Yes, that we could just as well have done if we had wanted to. The one who was taking care of the printing placed it there, and I did not know anything about it. But what harm might it cause? I beg of you to consider seriously: What is the use of such things in the church? To forbid free-born American citizens to choose for themselves in such things, when they do not encroach on the rights of others, does not serve any good purpose. It is deplorable that we shall not have liberty in the church even if we do not have anything else. I want to have my Christian liberty.” (Ibid.) The little church in *Luthersk Tidende* remained and did duty in the masthead for many years to come. Only the next year it got another beautiful word to keep it company. At the convention in Lime Creek in 1918 the Synod resolved to call the paper *Evangelisk Luthersk Tidende*, the *Evangelisk* printed in nice gothic type over the little church. And so, there it was after all: *Evangelisk Luthersk Kirketidende*; and so it was called until its demise in Dec. 15, 1953 — in which issue the sainted Christian Anderson wrote a reverent little history of that beloved tidings of so many years. Just one little footnote: The familiar picture of the little church did not stay with *Evangelisk Luthersk Tidende* til the very end. Until March 15, 1951 *Evangelisk Luthersk Tidende* was printed on the presses of the John Anderson Printing Co. in Chicago. After that company closed, *Tidende* was printed by *Decorah Posten* in Iowa.

Publishing the *Tidende* was a major project of the little minority until the Convention in Lime Creek in June 1918 — and a major project thereafter, for that matter. C. N. Peterson was the managing editor. He wrote very little in the paper himself, but saw the material through the press and took care of the mailing. The material was supplied in the main by Bjug Harstad, O. T. Lee, M. F. Wiese, I. B. Blækkan, Henry Ingebritson, A. J. Torgerson, Emil Hansen and a few pastors whose names, for wise reasons, presumably, were withheld from the public. Some laymen wrote good articles, too, and we note the names of Lars Isakson, Knud Helle, Jacob Lunde, C.S.N. Peterson, Arnold Jacobson. Two thousand copies of the first issue were printed and seventeen hundred sent out immediately. A paid ad was also inserted in R. B. Anderson’s *Amerika*. And subscriptions began to come in. As mentioned before, C. N. Peterson kept in touch with a good many people, lay and learned. He wrote in answer to requests for information, passed on news of developments, and plugged the paper. I have translated one letter in its entirety and insert it here because it covers a good deal of ground and it will serve well in

telling the story of those troubled days. It also gives an idea of the philosophy and the hopes of the men who were determined to stand by the doctrine and on the principles of the Old Synod. It is a letter to Mr. Peter G. Tjernagel of Story City, Iowa, and is dated July 24, 1917.

Dear Friend:

Thanks for your welcome letter. ...

The organization of the minority consists in this, that a number (seventy-four) of pastors and congregation members have subscribed to two paragraphs which were given in Moldstad's article in *Amerika*. They elected the following officers: B. Harstad, President; J. A. Moldstad, Vice-President; O. T. Lee, Treasurer; and C. N. Peterson, Secretary. There were in all, twenty-three pastors who took part in our minority meetings in St. Paul, and there are fifty-three pastors and professors of whom we have the hope that they will stand outside, and when all is in order will go with the minority.

But the whole procedure at the big meeting was such that there was no opportunity to learn who went along and who did not. There was no roll call and it was simply announced that there were so and so many pastors and representatives from each church body with the right to vote. This was likely done so that no opportunity should be given for such as did not want to be regarded as voting members of the meeting to make a disclaimer.

Besides, there were so many of the minority pastors who expected opposition in their congregations and who rather wanted to have the opportunity to take up the matter with their congregations according to convenience when they came home then that their names should come before the public amid the enthusiasm of the great jubilee. And so it was agreed not to publish more than the names of those who were elected to offices.

The result is that no one knows, or can know until after the next meeting how large or how small the minority is. Whether we will hold a meeting this fall or not until next spring is still undecided. The likelihood is that our meeting will be called for the same time as the large body will hold its meeting. Thus an opportunity will be provided for congregations to elect representatives to the meeting of the minority rather than to the meeting of the new body. Likewise those minorities in congregations, who think they cannot go along with

their congregations into the new body will elect representatives to our meeting, etc.

For the present it is important to try to reach people with information that the new body was organized in an illegitimate way and that it has a doctrine of election that does not harmonize with the teaching of God's Word in this matter....

Our people who understand what right and truth is ought to stand fast on the foundation of truth and not let themselves be tricked into this confusion, but at the same time they ought not to be hasty in leaving congregations which were carried along by the union intoxication. As long as one has any hope of being heard, he ought to stand and testify for his fellow congregation members.

The only way in which we can expect to get our testimony before the people is through our paper *Luthersk Tidende*, and therefore it is important that all who are interested in the cause of the minority try to get as many as they can to subscribe to the paper. If we can get enough subscribers to keep the paper going until next summer we can, hopefully, organize ourselves better and take up a more definite work. For the present, the best way you can help us is to gather all the subscriptions you can....

With fraternal greetings,

Yours,

C. N. Peterson

*Luthersk Tidende* went its modest way. The number of subscribers grew, though not spectacularly (four-hundred by year's end). Good doctrinal and devotional articles graced its pages. It brought news of the struggles in a number of congregations and notes of encouragement from individuals in many states, listed financial contributions to the cause, wept at the seemingly untimely passing of the able Rev. O. T. Lee on March 30, 1918, and rejoiced at his *salige hjemgang*, [blessed departure] and finally announced on April 1, 1918:

Pastors and members of congregations who desire to continue in the old doctrine and practice of the Norwegian Synod will, God willing, hold their annual meeting in the Lime Creek congregation, Pastor H. Ingebritson's charge, June 14, and following days.

And so it came to pass ... 



# Annual Meeting • Evangelical Lutheran Synod Historical Society

YOU ARE INVITED TO CELEBRATE  
THE CENTENNIAL OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

*“Still Under the Oaks”*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_ # of Persons: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I am interested in transportation from Mankato to  
Albert Lea if available.

Send to ELS Historical Society, 6 Browns Court, Mankato, MN 56001

**3:00 p.m** - Program: Revisiting the  
1918 Convention

Our Savior's Lutheran Church,  
Albert Lea, Minnesota (320 W.  
College St.)

**5:00 p.m.** - Catered lunch served  
by Our Savior's Ladies Aid

**6:00 p.m.** - Travel to Lime Creek  
Lutheran Church (16 miles South,  
Highway 69)

**6:30 p.m.** - Brief service in the Lime  
Creek Lutheran Church

**Registration fee: \$15**  
(includes lunch at Our Saviors)

**Registrations due by June 1**

Oak Leaves  
ELS Historical Society  
6 Browns Court  
Mankato, MN 56001

Evangelical  
Lutheran  
Synod

