



The Georg

NEWSLETTER

April Discussion Forum Scheduled for Radcliffe, Iowa

In this Issue:

April Discussion Forum, Radcliffe, IA	1
2008 Annual Meeting Report	1
Problems In Translating Georg Sverdrup	2
Book Review: Letters From Madagascar...	3
Sverdrup Society Website	3
Photos of 2008 Annual Meeting	4
January Seminary Discussion Forum	4

Salem Lutheran Church of Radcliffe, Iowa, will host the Georg Sverdrup Society's second Discussion Forum of the year entitled "Our Mission Heritage" on Saturday, April 18. The discussion will begin at 10:00 a.m. and continue until 2:00 p.m. Lunch will be served at noon.

Two papers will be presented in the morning: "Martin Luther: The Father of Modern Missions" by Rev. Andrew Coyle, and "Lutheran Pietism: The Mother of Modern Missions" by Rev. Eugene Enderlein.

After a break for the noon meal, Rev. Martin Horn will present "Sverdrup and the Problem of Mission Unity Among Norwegian Lutherans in America." Discussion will follow each presentation.

Rev. Coyle, pastor of Salem in Radcliffe and St. Paul's in Stanhope, extends a welcome to GSS members and friends to join the discussion forum in Iowa.

The telephone number for Salem Lutheran Church is 515-899-2396.



The Sverdrup family coat-of-arms (above) was first used in Norway during the seventeenth century by Lauritz Pedersen Sverdrup.

The 2008 Georg Sverdrup Society Annual Meeting

The Fifth Annual Meeting of the Georg Sverdrup Society was held October 25, 2008, at St. Paul's Free Lutheran Church in Fargo, North Dakota.

The program included the traditional Sverdrup Songfest, with Rev. Robert Lee leading hymns sung during Sverdrup's day. The main speaker was Mr. Larry Walker, editor of *The Sverdrup Journal* and Newsletter, who gave a presentation entitled "Problems in Translating Georg Sverdrup." Walker

illustrated common difficulties encountered while working with Sverdrup's nineteenth century Norwegian. (Highlights on Page 2 of this newsletter.)

In keeping with the society's 2008 mission focus, special music was provided by the Madagascar Missionary Singers, former missionaries Mrs. Ella Borge, Mrs. Karen Knudsvig, and Rev. Carl and Carol Ulrich. They sang three songs in the Malagasy language.

Rev. Terry Olson read a trans-

lation of one of Sverdrup's mission meditations, "A Great Storm," translated by Dr. James Hamre.

In the business meeting, members chose "Sverdrup's View of Pastoral Education" as the topic for discussion and translation in 2009. Rev. Robert Lee, Rev. Martin Horn, Rev. Kris Nyman, and Rev. Terry Olson were elected to the board of directors.

The 2009 annual meeting will

Georg Sverdrup

- Born to Pastor Harold Ulrich Sverdrup and his wife Caroline Metella, nee Suur, at Balestrand, Sogn, Norway, on December 16, 1848.
- Died on May 3, 1907, in Minneapolis, Minnesota USA, and buried in the Lakewood Cemetery

Problems in Translating Georg Sverdrup

By Larry Walker

Based on a talk given at the Annual Meeting of the Georg Sverdrup Society, October 25, 2008, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Fargo, North Dakota.

The translator of Georg Sverdrup—or of any Norwegian writer—faces problems beyond those usually met in foreign translation. These problems arise from the unique character of the Norwegian language itself, a character that springs from Norway's singular geography and history.

There's an old joke that says, "Every Norwegian can speak four languages . . . and three of them are Norwegian." This is often an understatement.

First of all, up until very recent times, every Norwegian spoke a *dialect*, a variant of the language unique to his own region. Norwegians have been historically divided from one another by mountain ranges, rivers, and fjords. People who were not fishermen or sailors might live their whole lives within the space of a few square miles. This isolation fostered tremendous variations in local dialects.

One of my great-grandfathers, a Nordlander who sailed as a cook on a whaling ship, used to say that he could communicate better with some of the Germans in the crew than with some of his fellow Norwegians.

The second language spoken by most Norwegians has been *Bokmål* (book language), the traditional written language. *Bokmål* is essentially written Danish. Because Norway was ruled by Denmark from the mid-fourteenth century until 1814, all books in Norway were written in Danish, and Norwegians grew accustomed to reading a Danish book and understanding it in Norwegian. On top of that, *Bokmål* is actually very close to the dialect spoken in the area around Oslo, the capital, which gives it a certain cultural cachet. This is the language we generally work with in our translation of Sverdrup.

The third language is *Nynorsk* (new

Norwegian), a language actually invented by a single man—the poet Ivar Aasen (1813-1896). An accomplished linguist, Aasen considered western Norwegian dialects the "true" language of the country, and single-handedly constructed a vocabulary and grammar. So popular was his work that *Nynorsk* is the second official national language today, and is preferred by many Norwegians, especially in the west.

The fourth language is usually English or German.

All this is complicated by the fact that *Bokmål*, the language of Sverdrup, has been subject to official spelling reforms over the years. The Norwegian government has mandated gradual spelling changes. "*Sne*" (snow) became "*snø*." "*Begyndelsen*" (beginning) became "*begynnelsen*." The "aa" combination, as in "*gaa*" (walk) became "*gå*." "Th" often became simply "T." Consequently, those of us who learned Norwegian in the later 20th Century are faced with many unfamiliar spellings in Sverdrup's work, sending us frequently to old dictionaries (Danish dictionaries can be especially helpful).

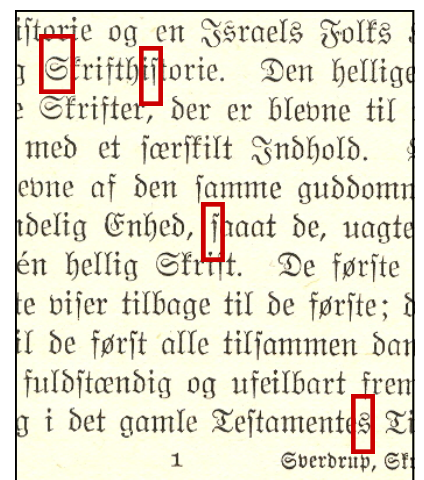
The difficulty is aggravated by the fact that Sverdrup's collected works are printed in the old "fraktur" typeface, almost universal in his time but gradually replaced during the early twentieth century by the kind of typefaces we're familiar with. The modern translator usually has to learn to recognize the letters.

The text reproduced to the right illustrates problems involving the dreaded letter "S." The first letter highlighted is a capital "S," which resembles a "G" to modern eyes. The next is a lower-case "s," which looks for all the world to the modern reader like an "f." The third highlighted letter is in fact an "f," the only difference being that it is fully crossed, while the "s" has just a spur on its left-hand side. Finally (just to confuse you further) the final letter highlighted is a *different* kind of small "s," one used when there

are two small "s"s in a word, and at the ends of words.

It should be no surprise that sometimes the translator comes across a word which neither old nor new dictionaries cover, and which one has to simply guess at, relying on context. This is made somewhat easier by the fact that Norwegian, like most Germanic languages, does not usually rely on Latin for its compound words. Thus you can often break the word down into its component parts and work out its meaning.

One final problem is that Sverdrup sometimes employs idioms (often of a rather flowery, formal nature) that are not familiar to the modern reader. Even our Norwegian-speaking translators frequently have trouble with these. The only solution to this problem is long and hard thought when a phrase doesn't seem to make sense, along with experience in dealing with Prof. Sverdrup's writings as a whole.





Review: Letters From Madagascar Missionary Albert M. Hanson 1919-1925

Allen D. Hanson, son of Rev. Albert and Lillie Hanson, has recently published a book of 52 letters written by his missionary parents while they served under the Lutheran Board of Missions in Madagascar for the Lutheran Free Church. The letters begin in 1917 while Hanson was a student at Augsburg Seminary and follow his marriage to Lillie Hanse in 1918, their six years in Madagascar, and their return to the U.S in 1925 due to illness.

Their early accounts are filled with exciting descriptions of a totally unfamiliar environment. Nearing South Africa, they are struck by the absence of the Big Dipper in the night sky, now replaced by the Southern Cross. During months spent in Durban, South Africa, Lillie has difficulty getting used to the south side of the house as the shady side.

Studying languages in Tananarive (Antananarivo), the capital of Madagascar, they describe the people, flora, and fauna of this beautiful city and are pleasantly surprised by the mildness of the climate even in summer.

They remind us, however, that “Tana” is over 4,000 feet above sea level.

Their early letters always include the reassurance that they have not yet contracted the “fever.” This was “Blackwater Fever,” an often deadly form of malaria. (The Hansons had left for Madagascar days after the news arrived of Ragna Dahle’s death from the disease.)

One also has to smile while reading of their frustrations in dealing with the Malagasy transportation system. Travel in many areas was impossible except by “*filangana*,” a chair carried by four men. Since the economy of Madagascar had improved during the war years, the men of the island no longer wanted to work as carriers. The 15 Malagasy assigned to the Hansons never showed up at one time. After several days spent going between officials and carriers, the full crew finally arrived, and they made the 12-day journey to Manasoa, bouncing in their *filanganas*.

They spent their first years in the field establishing a new

mission station in Bezaha, a semiarid part of southwest Madagascar. As the work increased, their letters became less frequent. Hanson traveled on ten-day trips on horseback in the bush country, while Lillie worked with the Malagasy women at home. It was not long, however, before they succumbed to the dreaded malarial fevers. Lillie also contracted anthrax. The glaring sun burned Albert’s retinas, and he slowly began to lose his eyesight. Yet we never read a complaint from either of them.

Finally, Lillie writes in 1924, “It is difficult to know just what one should do, but if God wants us to work here, He will heal Albert’s eyes. We can’t see it any other way.” By the spring of 1925, the Hansons realized his eyes were not getting better and returned to the states. Though permanently broken in health, they kept in contact with missionary friends and continued to promote missions.

This book also includes reprints of several mission documents, a short biography of

early missionary Mrs. Elizabeth Tou, as well as letters written to the Hansons from fellow missionaries Dr. J. O. Dyrnes, Milla Pederson, Inga Helland, and others.

Of special note is a 24-page reprint from the *Missionary Album* originally published in 1926 by the Lutheran Board of Missions. Pictures and short biographies of early Madagascar missionaries, many of whom died on the field, are included in this album. A fine chapter written by Albert Hanson entitled “Tanosy Funerals” is also included. It first appeared in Frederick Ditmanson’s *In Foreign Fields* (1927), a book dealing with the LFC mission fields in Madagascar and China.

By publishing these letters and documents, Allen Hanson provides the reader with insight into the dedication, sacrifice, and singular effort these early missionaries expended to further the Kingdom of God.

Sverdrup Society Website

Members and friends of the Georg Sverdrup Society with internet connections are reminded to check our website at georgsverdrup.org. It included the mission statement of the society, a list of the current directors, and the following translations:

The Norwegian Lutheran Churches in America (1897),
The Free Church Fellowship (1877-78),

The Lutheran Free Church (1897),

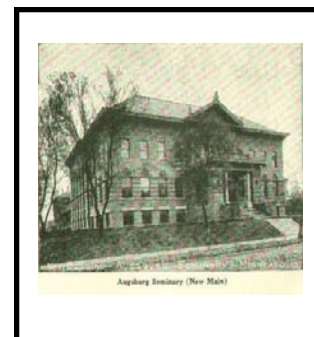
David and Jonathan (1877),

The Principles of Augsburg (1894) delivered on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of Augsburg Seminary, and

A Sermon on John 14:23-31 preached by Professor Sverdrup on Pentecost Sunday, 1902, at Trinity Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, MN.

There is also a link for those who desire to receive further information about the society.

We are grateful to member Nathaniel Olson, Fargo, ND, for maintaining the site. Future plans call for the inclusion of a biographical sketch of Sverdrup plus other translated material.





THE GEORG SVERDRUP SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

317 South Third Street
Kenyon, Minnesota 55946



Ordet Blev Kjød
(The Word Became Flesh)

Directors

Loiell Dyrud, President

Francis Monseth, Vice President

Terry Olson, Secretary

Martin Horn, Treasurer

Marian Christopherson

Robert Lee

Kris Nyman

Larry Walker, Editor

Photos from the 2008 Annual Meeting



Mr. Larry Walker shares "Problems in Translating Georg Sverdrup"



The Madagascar Missionary Singers

L to R: Karen Knudsvig, Carol Ulrich, Ella



Rev. Terry Olson reads Dr. James Hamre's translation of Sverdrup's "A Great Storm"

Annual Meeting Notice

The 2009 Annual Meeting of the Georg Sverdrup Society will be held Saturday, October 10, at the AFLC Schools Chapel, Plymouth,

GSS Holds Seminary Discussion Forum in January

On January 30, the Georg Sverdrup Society held its third annual Discussion Forum at Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary in Minneapolis. This year's topic was "Our Mission Heritage" and included papers by Rev. Andrew Coyle, Rev. Eugene Enderlein, and Rev. Martin Horn. Rev. Connely Dyrud, former missionary to Brazil, opened with a brief devotional.

The first paper was presented by Andrew Coyle, a recent graduate of AFLTS, on the topic "Martin Luther: The Father of Modern Missions." Based on Luther's Creation Theology and his Doctrine of the Two Realms, Coyle showed that, contrary to popular notion, Luther was indeed mission-minded.

Eugene Enderlein, former AFLC Direc-

tor of World Missions, presented the second paper entitled "Lutheran Pietism: The Mother of Modern Missions." Influenced by the pietistic approach of Philip Jakob Spener, August Hermann Francke, and the University of Halle, German Lutheran missionaries Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and Heinrich Plutschau set sail for India in 1705. In his paper, Enderlein established that Lutheran missionaries carried on mission work 100 years ahead of the "great missionary movement" of the nineteenth century, yet Lutherans are rarely recognized for their leadership in this area.

The final paper of the morning was given by Martin Horn, AFLC pastor in Kenyon, Minnesota. In "Sverdrup and the Problem of Mission Unity Among Norwegian Lutherans in America," Horn discussed the rift between

the Norwegian Synod and the Conference (of which Sverdrup was a member) regarding support of Norwegian Mission Society work in Madagascar. The conflict focused largely on doctrinal matters: the Synod believed there had to be complete agreement on doctrinal issues in order to have cooperation in missions, while the Conference and Sverdrup believed all that was necessary for unity was acceptance of the basic truths espoused in the catechism, as had always been the case in Norway. The conflict fractured the mission effort among Norwegian Lutherans in America and resulted in the establishment of two separate fields in Madagascar some years later.

Many participated in the discussion that followed each presentation.