



# The Georg Sverdrup Society

## NEWSLETTER

### 2011 Society Program and Annual Meeting Held



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**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, MN, and buried in the Lakewood Cemetery

The Eighth Annual Meeting of the Georg Sverdrup Society was held in Minneapolis October 8, 2011, in the Hans Nielsen Hauge Chapel at the Association Free Lutheran Schools.

Dr. Francis W. Monseth, Dean of the Free Lutheran Seminary, gave the invocation.

To commemorate the centennial of the death of Lutheran Free Church co-founder Sven Oftedal, Rev. Raynard Huglen read his translation of an April 5, 1911, *Folkebladet* article on "Professor Oftedal's Funeral." (See also the Sept. 2011 Newsletter for another Huglen translation, "Prof. Sven Oftedal Has Gone Home.") Rev. Robert Lee had a display in front of the lectern with a picture of Prof. Oftedal and the original lamp from his study, which today resides in Pastor Lee's office.

Mrs. Marian Christopherson led the "Sverdrup Song-fest"—Lutheran hymns sung in Sverdrup's day. Of special interest was a hymn by U. V. Koren, "Ye Lands to the Lord Make a Jubilant Noise." Both Rev. Koren and Sverdrup graduated from the same seminary in Norway. Koren became president of the Norwegian Synod in America (1894-1910) at the time Sver-



Rev. Lee presented his paper on "Lay Preaching and the Augsburg Confession." Note Sven Oftedal's lamp in the foreground.

drup and Oftedal were founding the Lutheran Free Church. Other songs were "Jesus Master at Thy Word" by F. M. Liebenberg, and Luther's "Our Father, Thou in Heaven Above," translated into Norwegian by M. B. Landstad.

In keeping with the 2011 focus, "Georg Sverdrup and the Role of the Laity," Rev. Lee presented a paper entitled "Georg Sverdrup vs. Gisle Johnson—Lay Preaching and the Augsburg Confession." The paper discussed the significance of Article 14, which limited public preaching to regularly called clergy. Hauge and his followers came into direct conflict with Article 14. It remains an issue in some Lutheran denominations today.

The Seminary Chorus directed by Mr. Andrew Hanson sang "Great Is Thy Faithfulness." Rev. Kris Nyman read his translation, "The Well-

springs of Life," to be published in the 2011 *Sverdrup Journal*. Rev. Philip Haugen of the Association Free Lutheran Schools gave the benediction.

After a coffee break, President Loiell Dyrud called the annual meeting to order in the lower level of the chapel. He announced that Dr. James Hamre's dissertation, "Georg Sverdrup's Concept of the Role and Calling of the Norwegian-American Lutherans: An Annotated Translation of Selected Writings," is now available online through the University of Iowa. It was decided to reprint Vol. 1 of the *Sverdrup Journal*, currently out of print. The members deferred selection of the 2012 topic to the board. Elected to two-year board terms were Rev. Craig Johnson, Mr. Tim Larson, and Mr. Larry Walker.

After the annual meeting, the board met and reorganized. Loiell Dyrud was elected President; Steve Mundfrom, Vice President; Tim Larson, Secretary; and Kris Nyman, Treasurer and Membership Secretary. The date and location for the 2012 Annual Meeting were set for Saturday, October 6, in Fargo, ND. The board later chose "Georg Sverdrup and Controversy" as the topic for 2012.

## GSS Holds Sixth Annual Seminary Discussion Forum in January

A good audience of seminarians, faculty, pastors, and interested visitors were present for the sixth annual GSS Seminary Discussion Forum in Minneapolis on January 27.

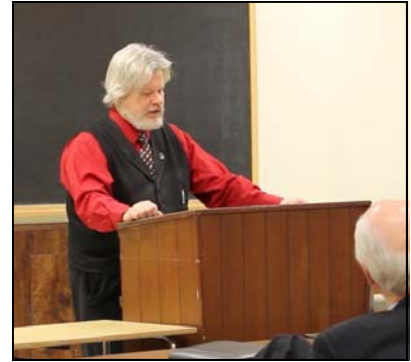
In his welcome, President Loiell Dyrud noted that the Georg Sverdrup Society has been responsible for translating around 400 pages from Sverdrup's six volumes of collected works since the society was organized in the fall of 2003. Added to previous translations, about 750 pages of the 2,250 pages compiled in Sverdrup's *Samlede Skrifte i Udvalg* have been translated into English. Much work remains.

This year's discussion topic was "Georg Sverdrup and Lay Activity" and included papers presented by Rev. Robert L. Lee, member of Association Free Lutheran Schools faculty, and Rev. Micah Hjermstad, AFLC pastor in Ishpeming, Michigan. Mr. Tim Larson, Osakis, Minnesota, opened with devotions, and Mr. Larry Walker, AFLC Schools Librarian, read selections from his recent translations on lay activity.

Rev. Lee read from his paper, "Lay Preaching and the Augsburg Confession." In their doctrinal statements, virtually every Lutheran church body subscribes to the Augsburg Confession. But Article 14 of the Augsburg Confession states,

"nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call." Hence Article 14 was used by Norway's State Church to severely restrict Hans Nielsen Hauge and his followers in Norway, as a strict rendering allowed only "called and ordained" clergy to speak and teach in the church. Though Sverdrup had graduated from seminary in Norway, he was never ordained and would often make remarks such as "We lay people." And though the Lutheran Free Church that he co-founded took a more relaxed position on this issue, many Lutheran denominations today are still struggling with Article 14 and its application.

Rev. Hjermstad presented a paper entitled "The Basis of Lay Activity and Its Application." Divided into two parts, the paper dealt first with "The Foundation of Lay Activity." Hjermstad identified the motivating force behind lay activity: "In short, the source of lay activity is found in the message of the Gospel. According to II Corinthians 5:14, it is the love of Christ that compels us." In the second part, "The Practice of Lay Activity," Hjermstad highlighted areas of lay activity and spiritual gifts necessary for creating "free and living congregations" based on the message of the Gospel.



*Larry Walker reads his translation.*

The morning concluded with a lively panel discussion made up of presenters Lee and Hjermstad, together with members of the laity, Wayne Floan, Keith Grinde, Kevin Olson, and Loiell Dyrud. There was a good deal of audience participation as comments and questions were raised regarding testimony meetings today (or lack thereof), differing needs between rural and urban congregations, and how to encourage lay activity in the congregation as well as in outreach to the neighborhood.

Rev. Joel Rolf, Dean of the Association Free Lutheran Bible School, closed with prayer, and lunch was served. Papers and translations shared at this forum will be published in the *2011 Georg Sverdrup Journal* later this spring.



*The members of the panel from left to right: Mr. Loiell Dyrud, Mr. Wayne Floan, Rev. Micah Hjermstad, Mr. Keith Grinde, Rev. Robert Lee, and Mr. Kevin Olson.*

## “Roots of Faith” Tour, Summer 2012

**Roots of Faith**, a spiritual journey through scenic Norway, will be led by Rev. Robert Lee, church history professor at AFLC Schools and member of the Georg Sverdrup Society. Departing from Minneapolis/St. Paul on July 6 and returning on July 17, the tour will include a cross-country trip from Oslo to Bergen through the Valdres valley, highlighting places associated with the lives of Hans Nielsen Hauge, Georg Sverdrup, Elling Eielsen, and others. For further information, contact Brekke Tours, Grand Forks, ND, email addresses: [Tours@BrekkeTours.com](mailto:Tours@BrekkeTours.com) or Pastor Lee at [rlee@afcl.org](mailto:rlee@afcl.org).



## Selections from “The Church Conflict”

By Prof. Georg Sverdrup

Trans. by Larry Walker

(*Samlede Skrifter*, Vol. 4, pp. 88-93. Source: Editorial in “*Lutheraneren og Missionsbladet*,” 1878, No. 5.)

Lately it has become almost fashionable to complain about “the church conflict,” and we can hardly pick up a newspaper without finding there one or another contributor complaining of schism and disunity.

. . . And I believe it a general rule that everyone who possesses love for his Savior and His congregation is devastated at this conflict and sighs over the fact that our people are so sundered. But they bemoan the schism as a sorrowful necessity. There is, in other words, a fairly widespread opinion in our congregations that if everyone had been united in prayer and labor for spiritual life and the freedom of the congregation, nothing more splendid could be imagined on earth. But as this did not occur, it is better to have conflict, with all its consequences, than to have no struggle. Among two evils, it is better to have conflict—with its passion and zeal—than to have a slumbering church, impelled in a tepid

doze downstream toward the abyss of apathy and death.

. . . It is incontrovertible that in spite of all the injustice and indiscretion that may have followed from the conflict. Nevertheless, the fundamental idea in the opposition to the Norwegian Synod’s pastorate has been to defend basic Christian education (*børnelærdom*) and to assert that Christianity is a spiritual life which starts with revival. And however hard the judgment pronounced on the trend-setting pastors of the Norwegian Synod—of their many tongue-tied followers there is nothing to be said—there is no reason for me to doubt its legitimacy. On the contrary, there is much which testifies to the fact that if the Norwegian Synod’s pastorate had been able to proceed without any kind of opposition, our church life would have been much darker than it now is.

. . . It is far easier in a free church, both for the pastor and the congregation, to go the broad way of Catholicism than to persevere on the free congregation’s road, which is, nevertheless, the only one which God’s Word sets as a

goal. In all fellowships the same temptation lies in wait, to prefer large congregations whose worship consists in going to church and paying the pastor, over living congregations which build themselves up in faith and seriously battle for the salvation of souls and the extension of God’s Kingdom. For all pastors the temptation lies close at hand to prefer the congregations’ money to hard labor for the congregations’ spiritual life. All fellowships are tempted by the devil to prefer outward size to inner truth and power. In short, the friendship of the world is much more pleasant to flesh and blood than its hatred and persecution.

When we consider these serious dangers, which any fellowship, be it never so pure, is subject to, and when we note that in any case there are only some few living Christians who have come over to America, in comparison with the great multitudes of cultural Christians and indifferent worldly people, we make so bold as to suggest that, without church conflict, things here would have

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## 2012 GSS Topic for Study: “Georg Sverdrup and Controversy”

Georg Sverdrup was a controversial figure in his day because he took a firm stand for congregational freedom and life. Within Norwegian Lutheranism, he debated the Norwegian Synod over the issues of predestination and pure doctrine, and the Church of the Lutheran Brethren over the notion of the pure congregation, as well as other issues of the day.

During 2012 the GSS will be studying and translating Sverdrup’s articles on this subject.



**THE GEORG SVERDRUP  
SOCIETY NEWSLETTER**

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**Ordet Blev Rjød**  
*(The Word Became Flesh)*

Directors

- Loiell Dyrud, President
- Steve Mundfrom, Vice-President
- Tim Larson, Secretary
- Kris Nyman, Treasurer and  
Membership Secretary
- Larry Walker, Editor
- Micah Hjermstad
- Craig Johnson

*Prospective members are invited to  
contact the membership secretary at  
P.O. Box 400, Beulah, ND 58523.*

**More Photos  
from the  
Annual Meeting  
Program**

Near right: *Rev. Raynard  
Huglen reads his translation of  
the Oftedal funeral article.*

Far right: *The Association  
Free Lutheran Seminary  
Chorus under the direction  
of Mr. Andrew Hanson.*



# “The Church Conflict” (cont.)

By Georg Sverdrup

indeed looked even worse for the work for the salvation of souls and the freedom of the congregation.

As lamentable as the conflict is, and however much evil it may have worked, nevertheless, one thing has become clearer and clearer, and that is that all fellowships have had to display a great and valuable zeal, both for preaching God’s Word and, so far as is possible, paying heed to the needs and requirements of the congregation. There is among us a living zeal to surpass one another—sometimes in rudeness—but nevertheless often in powerful and honest labor as well. And as much as we may sorrow over partisanship, so much do we rejoice that Christ is preached, even if it is sometimes feigned.

. . . There was a time when pastors in America were occupied with “the foundational text” and with various Latin “patristic” writings, and with these weapons desired to crush the laity and confuse *børnelærdom* for them. Fortunately, that has now become “old news.” The “Open Declaration” and the “National Seminary” have certainly had some significance in this matter. In this there is undeniably a sign of better times. For the congregation will decide in the conflict, and so the pastors must depart from Latin freemasonry. What matters now is that the congregations also truly, with seriousness and diligence, search God’s Word early and late in order to learn how these things stand relative to one another. And that would be a good fruit out of this painful conflict, if lay folk, through the long distress, were awakened

to think independently about ecclesiastical questions.

It is also my opinion that this has both been, and with God’s help more and more will be, the fruit of the church conflict. The conflict among us is a chastening from the Lord for our lukewarmness and drowsiness. If we awaken to proper, living zeal for the Kingdom of God and for true unity in the faith of Jesus Christ, then the Lord’s chastening will not be in vain, and then unity will come of itself. The movement which has now begun in the so-called “laymen’s meetings,” where people from all the fellowships meet without pastoral interference, is the final sign of better times. The congregations are beginning to see that they hold the power in our church. They are beginning to feel that for this reason they also bear responsibility and [have received] great injury through the conflict. They are beginning to contemplate using that power to end the conflict through demanding that *børnelærdom* be set in its proper place. Herein shines a future hope for our church, and I believe that many right-thinking pastors in all the fellowships rejoice over it. Behind the partisanship and the pastoral disputations rises the free congregation, slowly but surely, and in its time it will put an end to the conflict, because it is itself the peace, it is itself the fruit, which God will bring forth among us through schism and hard chastening.