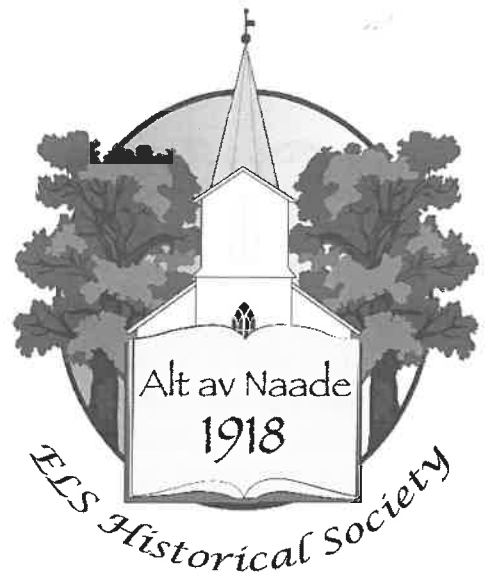


Oak Leaves

Newsletter of the ELS Historical Society

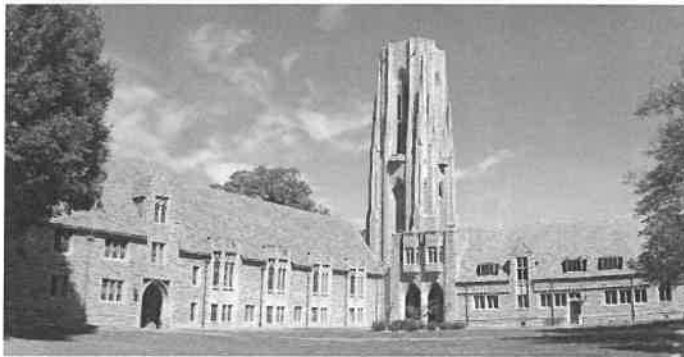


Volume 26

Fall 2022

Issue 4

THE KOREN FORBUNDET AT CONCORDIA SEMINAR



Concordia After 1926

Some time ago, the Synod Archivist sent me a copy of a page from the 1940 ConcordiaSeminary St. Louis yearbook. One page showed a club with a picture of six men and a professor—the club was called “The Norwegian Club,”but the text accompanying the picture reports:

“Officially known as the *Koren Forbundet*, this club is one of the more practical organizations since it fills a definite breach in the curriculum for those students who are preparing themselves to assume membership in the Norwegian Synod [ELS]. The group meets twice a week and devotes its time to the study of the Norwegian New Testament and the *Luthersk Tidende*.”

Unfortunately, we have only a poor reproduction of the picture which is not printable. The caption under the picture lists the names: Walther Gullixson, John Ylvisaker, Prof. J. T. Mueller[their faculty advisor], Luther Vangen, Milton Otto, Nils Oesleby, and Ray-

mond Branstad, familiar ELS names. Norwegian Synod students at St. Louis continued until the synod began its own seminary in Mankato in 1946. They also had a radio program in Norwegian on KFUE. There were Norwegians in St. Louis and the Koren Club members also made friends among them.

Concordia St. Louis was not the only Synodical Conference seminary to host Norwegian Synod ministerial students. Four attended the Wisconsin Synod Seminary (Thiensville) and three attended Missouri’s “practical seminary” in Springfield, Illinois (later moved to Fort Wayne).

When the reorganized Norwegian Synod in 1922 looked to the Missouri synod for pastoral training, they were simply repeating what the Norwegian Synod had done over sixty years before. In 1856, the old Norwegian Synod, soon after it was organized, had sent pastors Nils Brandt and J. A. Ottesen to visit several Lutheran seminaries in the U. S. to see whether any of them would be suitable for the synod train men for it’s the pastoral ministry. They came back



New Seminary Under Construction 1926

THE CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE IS BACK!

After a break of two years, we are excited to announce the return of the Christmas Open House at the Ottesen Museum. Mark your calendars for Tuesday, December 6, 2022, from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m. when we will again meet to celebrate this special season.

This year's theme will be the theme that we had planned for last year, "The Seminary Presidents Preach." Originally planned to celebrate the 75th anniversary of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, we will hear excerpts of sermons from all of its Deans and Presidents, from Dean Norman A. Madson to newly installed Seminary President Timothy Hartwig. Each excerpt will be accompanied by a hymn verse either included in the sermon or that fits with the theme.

Of course there will be Christmas treats and a chance to view the displays at the Museum. Many things have changed or been added in the last couple of years, so this is a great chance to see what is new at the Synod's Museum.

For questions or more information, please contact Museum Director Becky DeGarmeaux at museum@blc.edu

The Seminary Presidents Preach
Christmas Sermons from Bethany Seminary Presidents

ELS Ottesen Museum
Christmas Open House

2:30 - 5:30 pm
~~Tuesday, December 7, 2021~~
4 Browns Court
Mankato, MN

New Date!
Tuesday, December 6, 2022

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

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

*Oak Leaves is published quarterly by the Evangelical Lutheran Synod Historical Society,
6 Browns Court — Mankato, MN 56001*

FROM THE EDITOR

Sunday, June 26, 2022 at 7p.m.

Bethany Lutheran College

After twenty-six quarterly issues of *Oak Leaves*, with this issue your editor signs off. Beginning with *Oak Leaves* Vol.27, No. 1, The Rev. Timothy Erickson will be the editor.

A member of the Historical Society and a son of the ELS in the Thompson, Iowa congregation, Rev. Erickson was ordained in 1978 as assistant pastor at Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Madison, Wisconsin, followed by service at Saude and Jerico Lutheran churches in Iowa. He served in the South American Mission field in Peru and Chile from 1982 until 2018. He brings with him an understanding of the ELS in its historical context as well as its growth and outreach in the mission fields. He and his wife live in retirement in Dodge Center, Minnesota. We wish him well, especially as he guides *Oak Leaves* as a communicator of our synodical heritage.

In this final issue, we have lots of old stuff. For one thing, during the years surrounding the one hundredth anniversary of the Synod, we published from the *Lutheran Sentinel* and *Luthersk Tidende* that would help to illuminate the spirit of those who set off on a risky journey “Following the Old Paths” as Bjug Harstad termed it at Lime Creek in 1918. In addition to that, we noticed that many pastors who joined the synod in 1918 and the following years, are barely remembered now. Many of them were retired pastors without congregations. In order to increase some awareness of those less known confessors, we have tapped into some of their writings especially in *Luthersk Tidende*. Most of their funerals were noted in the church papers through the early 1940s. In this issue we focus on two of them.

Celebration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, we have thought again of the thirty-eight years that the little Norwegian Synod sent students desiring to study for the ministry to the German seminaries of the Wisconsin and Missouri synods. That was the second time that Missouri graciously

hosted the Norwegian boys. This issue contains a brief account of the relationship and a list of the seminarians who were synod members at the time they began their studies and as candidates of theology filled pulpits in the little, but growing Norwegian Synod. For a couple of decades, the synodical leadership consisted mostly of men who had studied at the seminaries of our sister synods.

This issue also contains little snippets from a feature labeled Kirkenyt or Church News in *Luthersk Tidende* and *Lutheran Sentinel*. Items are selected because a name or event is referred to that says something about synodical and congregational life in the 1920s.

This issue will feature these early pastors from the synod:



J. A. Thorsen



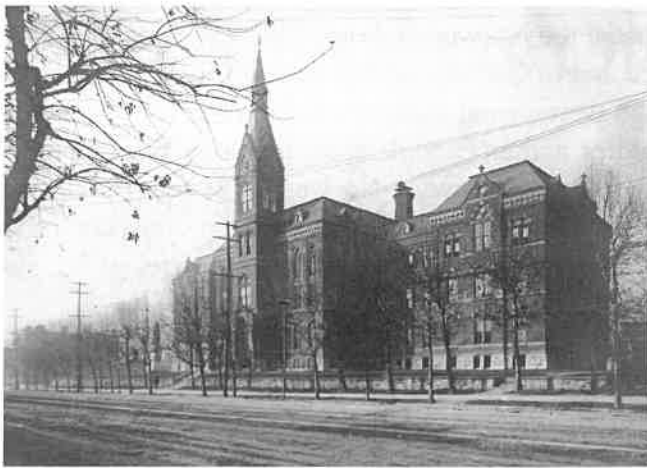
Peder Forseth



M. K. Bleken

Thanks to those who have made contributions to the contents of *Oak Leaves* the past years—Ted Gullixson and Craig Ferkenstad from the ELS archives and Becky DeGarmeaux from the museum, as well as others who have sent items or made suggestions. Many thanks also to the officers and members of the Board of Directors of the ELS Historical Society. Above all, thanks to our subscribers and readers.





Concordia Seminary Before 1925

with the report that Concordia in St. Louis would be suitable. Nils Brandt wrote in the trip report that at St. Louis they had not learned anything new: "We can truly say that we found the same faith in which we were raised as well as the same idea of how a Lutheran free church ought to be ordered." What they found in Missouri, they said, "is the genuine Lutheran spirit.... [T]hey have the symbols [Book of Concord] and the writings of the oldest and most famous Lutheran dogmatists on their side." With that, 127 Norwegian Synod men were trained at St. Louis until the synod opened its own seminary in Madison, Wisconsin. One of those trained at St. Louis was the first president of the Reorganized Norwegian Synod, Bjug Harstad. He had the privilege of studying under C. F. W. Walther.

When Harstad and other pastors who could not accept the Norwegian merger met to form the Reorganized Norwegian Synod in 1918, one of their first decisions was to appoint a committee to arrange with the Missouri Synod's Concordia College in St. Paul, Minnesota to set up a program to prepare Norwegian Synod students for study at a theological seminary. They also specified that the synod would provide a teacher to look after the Norwegian students enrolled there. The Committee met with the Board of Education for Concordia St. Paul and was well received. The program was arranged, S. C. Ylvisaker was called to be the Synod's representative. Later, a second man was added, Oswald Overn. When Ylvisaker accepted a call to Madison, Wisconsin, he was replaced by Oliver Harstad.

At the 1922 synod convention at Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Madison, the synod resolved to authorize "negotiations with the Missouri Synod through its committee to establish, if possible, an arrangement for a Norwegian professorship at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. As soon as some Norwegian synod young man had finished the course at Concordia College, St. Paul, the usual route to theological training was to enroll at St. Louis. Due to a severe shortage of pastors, no Norwegian professorship was established at Concordia, St. Louis; nevertheless, by 1946 thirty sons of the Reorganized Norwegian Synod men were graduated from the Missouri Synod seminaries and three from Wisconsin's Thiensville seminary. The first, Stephen Sande, a young man from the Scarville, Iowa congregation had attended his first year of seminary at the Norwegian Synod's seminary in Hamline (St. Paul), Minnesota, but when the merger took place, he transferred to St. Louis and in 1920 became the first candidate of theology ordained in the synod.

The table below shows the large number who finished their theological studies at St. Louis as well as those trained at Springfield and Thiensville. It also shows the men who began their studies at St. Louis, but in 1946 transferred to Bethany Lutheran Seminary in Mankato. This table does not show the larger number of men (127) who were trained at St. Louis between 1857 and 1876 when Luther Seminary was founded in Madison, Wisconsin.

Last Name	First name	Home Cong.	College	Seminary	Grad/Ord
Aaberg	Ted	Parkland, Wa	Bethany	StL, BLS	1949
Anderson	Einar	Fairview, Mpls. Mn	CSP & UM	StL	1930
Anderson	Paul	Beaver Creek, Mn	BLC	StL	1945
Branstad	Raymond	Center, Ia	BLC	StL	1943
Dale	Morris O.	Scarville, Ia	CSP	StL	1928
Galstad	Martin	Tracy, Mn	BLC	StL	1932
Guldberg	Gottfred	Holton, Mi	BLC	Springfield	1945
Gullerud	C. M.	Norseland, Mn	CSP	StL	1932
Gullerud	Arvid	Norseland, Mn	DMLC	Thiensville	1947
Gullixson	G. A. R.	St Paul, Chicago, Il	CSP & StJn	StL	1931
Gullixson	W. C.	St. Paul, Chicago, Il	BLC	StL	1940
Harstad	Adolph	Parkland, Wa		StL	1926
Johnson	Iver	Parkland, Wa	BLC	StL & BLS	1948
Lec	Sophus	Northwood, Ia	CSP	StL	1927
Madson	Juul	Princeton, Mn	BLC	Thiensville	1945
Merseeth	Alf	Bagley, Mn	BLC	StL	1946
Mommsen	Lloyd	Cottonwood, Mn	BLC	StL	1937
Oesleby	Nils	New York, NY	Bronxville?	StL	1940
Oesleby	Christian	New York, NY	Bronxville	StL	1939
Petersen	Joseph N.	Scarville, Ia	BLC	Thiensville	1945
Quill	Grant	Albert Lea, Mn		Springfield	1947
Ranholt	Joseph R.	Cottonwood, Mn		StL	1927
Sande	Stephen	Scarville, Ia	Luther	Luther & StL	1920
Strand	Ahleert	Norseland, Mn	CSP	StL	1927
Teigen	Bjarne	Princeton, Mn	CSP	StL	1935
Teiste	Torald	Princeton, Mn	BLC	StL	1939
Teiste	Hans	Norway	California	StL	1930
Tiernasel	Neelak	Saude, Ia	CSP	Thiensville	1932
Twell	Milton	Starbuck, Mn	CSP	StL	1937
Unseth	Eivind	Waterville, Ia	BLC	StL	1937
Vangsen	Luther	Clearbrook, Mn	BLC	StL	1944
Wosic	Carl	Volga, SD		Springfield	1963
Ylvisaker	Erling	Zumbrot, Mn		StL	1927
Ylvisaker	Paul	Zumbrot, Mn		StL	1928



JORGEN ANDREAS THORSEN

“Senior Among the Synod’s Pastors”

In previous issues, we have featured some of the lesser-known pastors who joined the Reorganized Norwegian Synod in the years after the synod was organized in 1918. Many of them were already retired and were without congregations; a few of them served independent congregations which did not join the synod.

Bjug Harstad was not the only former district president in the old synod to join the little synod. Another was Jørgen Thorsen who was vice-president of the Minnesota district and then briefly served as president while Harstad taught for a year at Luther Seminary in 1890-91.

In Memoriam—Jørgen Andreas Thorsen
Lutheran Sentinel, Nov. 5, 1924

The sad though not unexpected news has come of the death of the Rev. J. A. Thorsen, the senior among the pastors of our Synod. He was born at Krageroe, Norway, 86 years ago, became a teacher and served in this capacity in the public schools of Arendal, Krageroe, and Christiania. He then came to America [1867] and took up the study of theology at Concordia Theological Seminary, St. Louis, graduating in 1869. He served the East and West St. Olaf congregations near Byron, Minn., without interruption until 1916, when he retired from the ministry. He moved to Rochester, Minn. and in 1919 to Minneapolis. He died at St. Paul Hospital on Wednesday October 22 and was buried at the St. Olaf cemetery Sunday October 26. He is survived by Mrs. Thorsen, five sons and nine daughters. Loved and respected by all as a true pastor, Rev. Thorsen was also a staunch and consistent defender of the faith, fearless because he knew in whom he believed; and it was with a whole and happy heart that he joined our synod in order that he might add his efforts that the gospel he loved might be preserved inviolate for future generations. Another pioneer of the faith has gone but the message which comforted and saved him is ours, to comfort and save us. Blessed be the memory of Pastor J. A. Thorsen.

The following article by Pastor Thorsen appeared in the Church paper of the Norwegian Synod, as the discussion of Opgjør or the Madison Agreement was beginning. Many who at first approved and voted for the agreement later had second thoughts and became members of the Minority in the Synod. Thorsen was one of first to state clearly and publicly the errors in Opgjør. We include Thorsen’s article here since it gives a snapshot of the early phase of the debates which led to the 1917 merger.

SOME INFORMATION AND COMMENTS CONCERNING THE UNION MATTER

Luthersk Kirketidende, 1913, p. 1258

J. A. Thorsen

Certainly no one among us would fail to rejoice wholeheartedly that the Norwegian Lutherans in this country could be united into a church body and thus in full faithfulness work together for the building and strengthening of the kingdom of God here at home and among the Gentiles. Unnecessary obstacles should not be put in place for such a union to come about.

But we also certainly agree that a true union should be based on true agreement. We should understand each other and have full trust in each other. It should be obvious so far as possible that we be like-minded, having the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” etc. (Phil. 2: 2). Otherwise, what none of us wants could all too easily happen.

The *Opgjør* from Madison has suffered a most unfortunate fate in that it is subject to completely different perceptions and understandings. Here are some examples:

Prof. Stelhorn of the Ohio Synod, who during the whole election controversy was one of the most adamant against the Missouri Synod and thus also of the Norwegian Synod, finds in *Opgjør* his doctrine and that of like-minded people. He writes: “Our readers will im-

mediately see that these Norwegian Union Theses in all essentials accept our position.”

Stellhorn therefore understands *Opgjør* to say that the Norwegian Synod in all its essentials has given up its earlier position on the doctrine of election and has gone over to that of their opponents. *Lutherische Zionsbote* [Lutheran Messenger of Zion] a paper put out by the General Synod, asks: “What is now the final result of a long, fierce and somewhat bitter controversy?” And the answer: “The result is just this, that they basically permit everything to become old.” That is to say, a compromise has taken place, whereby both parties in all essentials hold fast to their old positions.

Professor Dr. F. Pieper of the Missouri Synod finds in *Opgjør* a satisfactory starting point for true union. He believes that when a few things can be corrected, *Opgjør* will be able to form a sound basis for church union. His words are: “As far as the agreement among the Norwegian Lutherans is concerned, for restoration of complete agreement it is necessary to negotiate further based on *Opgjør* Theses 5 and Theses 2 and 3. And after having examined this further,” he says “friendly and patient negotiations are needed. Then surely all will accept the doctrine of Scripture and the Lutheran Confession.” (Excerpted by Pastor Wiese from Dr. F. Pieper’s *Zur Einigung, “Toward Union”*)

At the Synod’s district meetings in 1912 the first point of *Opgjør* was accepted by a large majority in light, however, of the explanation given by the members of the Union Committee. Several who spoke and voted for *Opgjør*, said they did so because they believed they found in it the Synod’s old doctrine of election. As President Dr. Stub has said over and over again in our church paper that he finds in *Opgjør* the old doctrine of Election that the Norwegian and Missouri synods defended during the election controversy. Neither he nor others have thought that they engaged in a compromise.

So, what is the United Church’s understanding of the Madison *Opgjør*? In the report of the annual meeting in Fargo, where the synod’s position on the union matter was decided, we only read that *Opgjør* together with the other union theses was unanimously accepted. There is nothing about anyone, as was the case in our

synod, demanding anything further. From other quarters, however, we know that Dr. Schmidt did not vote for *Opgjør*.

Since then, we have seen through the United Church’s paper *Lutheraneren* how some in the United Church understand *Opgjør*. In *Lutheraneren* for October 2, 1912, Prof. Kildahl writes: “Any who knows anything of the German Missourian doctrine of election had to know in advance that when the Norwegian Synod approved the document that came from Madison, the Norwegian Synod had to break with Missouri.” And in the same paper for April 30, 1913, Kildahl writes: “Dr. Stub has all winter persistently emphasized that the Norwegian Synod now stands where Dr. Walther and the Missouri Synod stood at the beginning of the election controversy; for that reason I think I should not have written the way I did. For the sake of truth, I think I should declare that I do not agree with Dr. Stub when he says that. It is not against the doctrine which is found in *Opgjør* that Dr. Schmidt and a number of others have fought all these years.

Therefore Kildahl’s understanding of *Opgjør* is that it includes the doctrine which Schmidt defended all through the election controversy and thus the pastors in the Norwegian Synod, who would rather be deposed from their office than assent to Schmidt’s doctrine, have been completely blind to what the truth is.

Whether many or all in the United Church have the same understanding of *Opgjør* as Kildahl is not easy to know. No one has, so far as I know, publicly opposed him. Privately, statements going in the same direction as Kildahl’s have not been infrequent.

From an editorial in *Lutheraneren* for December 25, 1912, it appears that in any case, there are some in the United Church who have the same understanding as Kildahl. The editor writes: “If any in the Norwegian Synod think with Dr. Stub that that they have not changed their view but stand where they stood ever since the beginning of the controversy, then they ought not in such a circumstance throw us into confusion. There are men in our synod (the United Church) who have been involved in the controversy from its very beginning, and who on their side have an equally

strong belief that they have not shifted their opinion or position.”

That is their understanding. It is a completely different reading of *Opgjør* which is to form the basis for the union and cooperation of two warring parties. Is it possible to completely close ones eyes to such a clear fact? Isn't it our duty to let our church members see what their position really is? Wouldn't it be altogether too easy for the union, the merger, to become the beginning of strife and misery instead of peace and cooperation? Such a thing has happened before. We should believe that it was thought to be the best when three church bodies united to form the United Norwegian Lutheran Church [which included the “Anti-Missourians,” but not the Norwegian Synod]. But what happened rather quickly? A very offensive controversy broke out, and ended in a new split. [Some left in 1896 and formed the Lutheran Free Church, and others in 1900 to form the Lutheran Brethren.]

Let us proceed cautiously. The work for union has borne rich fruit; it is on the right track. There is in large part mutual good will and earnest desire to understand each other. When I think about what the position was thirty or forty years ago and see what it is now I have to say: the Lord has done great things among us. Therefore, it is important for us at the present time to use these favorable circumstances in a fair and equitable manner. And we do so when we, in prayer to God in the name of Jesus, seek to help one another to “think the same, have the same love, be like-minded, of one mind.”

The *Kirketidende* editor added a note:

Regarding different understandings of *Opgjør*, which is talked about so much, Dr. F. Pieper aptly says: “The circumstance that Dr. Stellhorn and others claim that they too could accept the Norwegian theses (i.e. *Opgjør*) has not the least to do with the correctness or inaccuracy of these theses, their clarity or ambiguity. *Opgjør* must be judged exclusively according to what it says itself, and not according to the praise or the blame of a friend or foe. “ (Der Lutheraner, Missouri Synod, August 5).

Therefore, read *Opgjør* and see for yourself what it contains. In order to be able to get acquainted with the

Union matter, one should get the synodical report for this year and read it, the case is being presented from both sides. The matter cannot be repeated in *Kirketidende* now. The synod report from last year will also help one to understand the matter. The synod reports are available in our Publishing House for 25 cents each—Editor. (tr. ett)



MARTINUS KRISTIANSSEN BLEKEN

At the end of 1922, the young synod suffered the loss of one of its most learned, able and active pastors; M. K. Bleken served two congregations in northeast Iowa. At the time, the Jerico and Saude congregations had not yet joined the synod, though that had been Bleken's intention. In the obituary, Bleken's good friend, John Moldstad, commented that he had virtually "worked himself to death." Following the Tidende excerpts about Bleken, we reprint a letter written by Peter Forseth who had come to assist Bleken during his illness. Forseth's letter refers to President H. A. Stub's efforts to bring the congregations into the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America ("the Merger," later ELC). The Tidende and Sentinel had printed a lively and harsh exchange of letters between Bleken and President H. A. Stub. Gullixson did visit the parish and the result was that H. M. Tjernagel was called to serve the congregations, and in his pastorate the two congregations became faithful and supportive members of the synod. On previous occasions we have printed articles written by Pastor Bleken. His many articles in Tidende and Sentinel show a skilled writer, a keen mind, and a humble grasp of biblical and confessional theology.

Obituary of Pastor Bleken

Pastor Martinus Kristiansen Bleken was born July 26, 1865 in Faaberg South Gudbrandsdalen to Kristian Larsen and his wife Mathea, nee Johnson. When he was four years old his father died and he was raised at the farm named Bleken. At the age of eight he came to America. From his youth he was a remarkable Christian marked by seriousness and piety. He burned

with a desire to serve the Lord. From 1885 to 1889, he studied with great diligence at the old Galesburg University. In the fall of 1889, he enrolled at Luther Seminary where he diligently and faithfully taught himself Greek and Hebrew and took the exams for the theoretical department. He became a Candidate of Theology in 1892. The same summer he became a pastor in Deerfield and Madison [Wisconsin]. He was the one who supervised the construction of Our Savior's Church in Madison, Wisconsin. From 1897 to 1906, he was pastor of St. Johannes congregation, Cortez and Richmond Streets, Chicago. He built a large and beautiful church and won a wide circle of friends. In January 1906, he was called to be professor in Norwegian and religion at Luther College, Decorah, Iowa. In 1910 he accepted a permanent call to Little Turkey and Crane Creek congregations at Saude and Jerico, Iowa. He served faithfully all these years and virtually worked himself to death.

On October 24, 1900, he was married to Ida Evenson from Calmar, Iowa, who was a nurse in Chicago. She died June 17, 1921. Of their children, three are living: Margaret, Winifrid, and Hans. [Winifred was raised by Pastor and Mrs John Moldstad.]

Pastor Bleken was a friendly man with an uncommonly attractive personality. His characteristics were humility, meekness, patience, love for his fellow men, self-sacrificing-obedience to God's Word a heartfelt, childlike piety with an unshakable faith and an all-surpassing love for God. He loved God and his fellow men, enemies as friends, and was faithful to the end. He faced many great controversies, was very often misunderstood, and was often persecuted.

Lutherske Tidende, December 27, 1922,

"Pastor Bleken's Confession of Faith"

On Sunday afternoon, November 5, after he had suffered his first stroke, Pastor Bleken spoke the following to Prof. S. C. Ylvisaker as his confession:

"I believe that I am a poor sinner, whose only refuge is Jesus Christ and him crucified, the Christ that I, in weakness but with the power God bestows, have tried to preach to others. I believe that I am a sinner

saved by Jesus' blood, which cleanses from all sin, also from mine. In the hour of death, Jesus is my only refuge and comfort. With thoughts of my children, I stand in hope in the same Jesus who has promised to be the father of the fatherless. Just like God has been a faithful father to me who had at the age of four lost a dear earthly father, so also will God be with these who I leave behind. In my work, I have tried to conform myself to God's word and revealed will, even if it was not always according to people's wishes and mind. I have not wanted to get anything unnecessary and bear no ill-will against anyone. Concerning the position of our synod, I am convinced that it is correct. God's word is clear and cannot lie. Because our synod has been founded on everything in God's word, it also has God's blessing."

The following Wednesday, November 8, he again had a stroke. Since then, he no longer was himself. The evening before he died, [December 6] he seemed, however, to understand the Scripture reading and prayer. He folded his hands and it sounded as if he prayed the Lord's prayer, and he said "Now I am ready to go." "Nu er jeg faerdig at reise"

Lutherske Tidende, December 27, 1922,

Peter Forseth's letter to Pres. G. A. Gullixson.
(The letter was written in English, but the italicized sentences were in Norwegian.)

Dear President Gullixson:

There will be a joint meeting of Saude and Jerico congregations at Jerico Thursday January 4th, '23, chiefly for the purpose of calling Rev. Bleken's successor, and you are expected to be there. It is their custom always to have the president to lead such meetings. What to do at this meeting will chiefly rest with you. You will find that you have to deal with very nice and peaceful people. They have great respect for the ministry of the gospel; thus, they are willing to follow the lead of the pastor I think they also have great respect for the synod, and they will have especially great respect for you as the president of the synod, but also personally both on account of previous knowledge and on account of the sermon you preached at Rev. Bleken's funeral. Now, you see, these people used to think that "*the pastor always does what is right.*" But after the union they

changed their mind: some thought [President] H.G. S. [Stub] was wrong and M.K. B. [Bleken] right. Others thought the opposite, or that S. was right and B. ignorant. For these reasons the average member of these congregations would in their heart like to have an answer to this question "Was Rev. Bleken right?" I think you gave a very firm and convincing answer for which I from the bottom of my heart am thankful not only to you but also to God.

You probably know the conditions here from oral or literary communication with Rev. Bleken. I talked over these things quite thoroughly with Rev. Bleken. His plan was in short this: first to act so that no one would have reason to leave the congregation and then have them vote on this "*We consider the present Norwegian synod [the Reorganized synod] as the same Norwegian Synod to which we have always belonged.*" "Now the question is—are we neutral or do we belong to the synod"?

It would be fine if you would come to New Hampton the morning before (Great Western [Railroad] is the most convenient; Milwaukee also stops there) and then you would get a chance to talk these things over with some of the best men. If you let me or O.O. Vaala, New Hampton know, you will be taken proper care of.

Last Sunday we had a pleasant surprise—the whole congregation went into the basement and asked my wife and I to take dinner with them, and under my plate was a check from the congregation of \$50. The Ladies Aide at Jerico will have a bazaar Dec. 29 under the leadership of my wife who is the president of the aid. The aid was almost like dead when I came. We tried to get it started, but it seemed impossible before I got married.

With best regards from my wife and
[signed] P. G. Forseth]

About Pastor Forseth

Peder Christiansen Forseth was born in Norway in 1881 to pastor Johan Arndt and his wife Christine. He immigrated in 1905—after education at Wittenberg Academy and Luther College, he enrolled in Luther Seminary graduated in 1916. After ordination

he served congregations in Alberta and Saskatchewan, and New Era, Michigan until joining the Reorganized Norwegian Synod in 1922.

When M. K. Bleken, pastor of the Jerico and Saude congregation became seriously ill, Forseth was sent to serve as assistant. After Bleken's death in 1922 he continued to serve the congregations until Pastor Helge M. Tjernagel accepted the congregation's call. After teaching for a year in the Somber congregation's school, he served as home missionary in Suttons Bay and Traverse City, Michigan. In 1923, the President Gullixson's synodical report says that Forseth had moved from Saude to do mission-sarbeide [mission work] in Michigan. For the next few years, his address is given as Suttons Bay and Traverse city, but he was not pastor of any synod congregations in the area. After 1931, his name no longer appeared on the clergy roster of the Synod, with no mention of a new location in the president's report.

In *Luthersk Tidende*, an article by Forseth appeared May 3, 1922, under the Title "A Pastor's Confession":

"Already in Norway, I learned that the liberal theology was deviating from the truth, both with regard to the Bible's verbal Inspiration, faith, and other Christian doctrine.

"In America I learned that they had had a controversy concerning the doctrine of election. In order to join a congregation, I had to seek out a congregation belonging to a synod, which held to correct teaching of biblical doctrine, which was involved in this controversy. After a year of thorough study, I came to the conviction that the synod taught and believed fully and completely that the Bible is God's verbally inspired word and that a sinner is saved by grace by God's mercy and Christ's merits, completely without any of our own merits. Therefore, I joined the synod. However, I continued to study the Norwegian-American church controversy through which I also learned to know the synod's blessed, deceased fathers and their opponents, together with the controversy did not only involve the doctrine of election, but mainly was about conversion and salvation by grace alone. It also became clear to me that the strife involved not only that man can learn not by reading books, but mainly that one must believe those things taught by the Holy Spirit.....

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

Church News

Luthersk Tidende and *The Lutheran Sentinel*,
1922.



The Synodical Conference congregations these days are building a “Lutheran Memorial Hospital” at a cost of more than \$300,000 dollars [2022: \$5.3 million]. On Sunday a festival was held in the partially-finished building so people could see the large project. Speeches for the occasion were given by pastors, G. Theiss, A. W. Bartling, J. A. Moldstad, E. T. Haertel, and A.H. Raub There were songs by a large choir and music by St. Paulus congregation’s band. Many thousands of people were present. (*Luthersk Tidende*, October 18, 1922)

—Evanger congregation in Fertile, Minnesota is building a beautiful church which they hope can be used at Christmas time. On Sunday October 29, pastor O. M. Gullerud preached for their mission festival, and the offering gathered was for home missions. After the worship service the congregational meeting was held. It was resolved to form a parish of Evanger (Fertile), Ada, Twin Valley, and Rindahl congregations. A call committee was elected to meet with similar committees of the other congregations. A noon meal was served by the women of the congregation. At the afternoon service, Pastor John Hendricks gave an interesting lecture about his work as a traveling missionary.

—At the congregation meeting at Albert Lea’s Our Savior on October 6, it was resolved that Albert Lea and Hartland should be two separate parishes.

—The fiftieth anniversary of the organization of the Synodical Conference was held on Sunday afternoon November 5 by the Twin Cities congregations in St. Paul. The celebration was held in St. Johannes congregation in St. Paul. Pastor G. A. Gullixson was the preacher for the occasion. (*Tidende*, November 15, 1922)

Rev. and Mrs. J. A. Moldstad attended the golden wedding of Mrs. Moldstad’s parents, Mr. and Mrs. Hans Halvorson, at Durand, Ill., November 10.... Mrs. and Mrs. Halvorson were married in Christiania [Oslo] by Bishop J. C. Heuch. [Heuch was a conservative theologian and Bishop in Norway in the second half of the 19th century. A student of the popular conservative theologian Gisle Johnson, he was well known to the leaders of the Norwegian synod, and authored sermon books often found in the homes of the Norwegian immigrants.] (*Sentinel* November 22, 1922)

The editor of the *Sentinel* [G. A. Gullixson] was invited to preach the festival sermon at a joint service held in St. Paul, Minnesota in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Evangelical Synodical. The service was held in St. John’s Lutheran Church [Wisconsin Synod], Dayton’s Bluff, St. Paul. The spacious church which seats 1800 people was nearly filled... All three synods were represented. (*Sentinel* November 22, 1922)





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IF LENSKI WERE RIGHT

Norman A. Madson Sr.

“Who is Lenski?” someone may ask. So let us clear that up at once. Prof. R.C.H. Lenski was one of the most prolific exegetes in the American Lutheran Church. Much of what he has written is good sound Lutheranism. In fact, we know of no one who is more convincing in his arguments against “the mass conversion of the Jews” than is Lenski.

But he is off in his doctrine of Reconciliation. Lenski insists that the change took place not in God’s heart, but in man’s. And he warns us against those commentators who would have us believe that the change took place in God’s heart when His Son died as our Substitute. Here are his very words: “Beware of the commentators who would put the passive idea into EXTHROI; they do in order to obscure the reconciliation. And while it cannot be exegetically maintained, this view is popular; it makes God give up His enmity. God always loved the world (John 3, 16)” Romans, page 356.

If Lenski were right, we should have to part company with some of our most Scripture-true exegetes. Franz Pieper would have to go by the boards. Here is what he says on this doctrine: “A person is reconciled to someone when he has dismissed from his heart all wrath against him. Now, just so God has for Christ’s sake dismissed from His heart all wrath against men, with whom He was angry because of their sins. God now feels toward men as though they had never offended Him by sinning, as though never a disagreement between God and men had occurred. Here, then, the so-called objective justification is clearly taught:

If God is reconciled with men, He no longer has anything against them, then He has evidently in His heart absolved them of their sins, then He regards them as righteous for Christ’s sake. Hence, according to Scripture, the reconciliation between God and men, their justification, took place before they came to faith. This fact is indicated also by the circumstances of Christ’s death: by His cry: ‘It is finished!’ and by the rending of the veil (for God has actually declared by that miraculous occurrence that every sinner has now free access to Him)” (Missouri, Southern District, 1883). And in his Christian Dogmatics, Vol. II, page 3&9, Pieper has this ‘to say: “The KATALLASSEIN of Rom. 5,10 and 2 Cor. 5,19 does not refer to—let this fact he noted—any change that occurs in men, but describes an occurrence in the heart of God. It was God who laid His anger by on account of the ransom brought by Christ.

”If Lenski were right we should have to revamp some of our treasured hymns. Luther, in his classic Nun freut euch liebe Christen g’mein [Dear Christians One and All Rejoice] would have to be accused of false doctrine when he says: “Er wandt zu mir das Vaterherz, i.e.” He turned to me a Father’s heart.” And what about Brorson’s cherished Christmas hymn: “It moved His Father’s heart to see”? But fortunately Lenski is not right on this fundamental doctrine. We shall continue to sing cheerfully with Luther and Brorson about the Father’s heart, which was changed by His Son’s atonement. We shall abide, also in our Dogmatics class, by Pieper’s plain statement: “It was God who laid His anger by on account of the ransom brought by Christ.” That is Scripture teaching, which alone shall establish articles of faith in our Lutheran Church.

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