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Robert Olsen

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# Language Usage in Non-Lutheran Danish Immigrant Religions

by  
Robert Olsen

The first worship services conducted in the Danish language on American soil were conducted among the men who traveled with Jens Munk from Denmark in 1619–20 in search of a passageway to the Orient. They traveled in two small ships called the *Unicorn* and the *Lamprey*. Little did they know that in their attempt to find the Northwest Passage to the Orient they would instead journey down the St. Lawrence Seaway and settle on the banks of Hudson Bay. Here they would spend the long, very harsh winter. Cold and disease ultimately claimed the lives of all of the men except Munk and two others. When the ice thawed, the three miraculously managed to return home, and thus the story of their journey was documented. Included among Munk's men was a Lutheran minister, Rasmus Jensen. Sources indicate that he conducted worship, including Christmas services, for the men before he too succumbed to illness and the harsh winter conditions. He died on February 20, 1620, and no permanent Danish settlement came of this venture.

It would be a few more centuries until Danish was used consistently in religious services in America. An important resource for discovering the history of these congregations is the *Censuses of Religious Bodies*, published by the United States Census Bureau from 1906-36. It reports the use of foreign language in worship services in churches across the US. The 1906 report lists 464 congregations conducting services either exclusively in Danish (358) or in combination with English. Denominations represented included Seventh-day Adventists, Baptists, Congregationalist, Friends (Quakers), independent congregations, Lutherans (six different groups not only Danish but Norwegian as well), Methodists, Moravians, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Salvation Army, Free Mission, and Evangelical Covenant. The 1916 report included many of the same denominations (a total of 439) but 213 were listed as using only the Danish language in worship. The *Censuses of Religious Bodies* reports issued in 1926 and 1936 were not

as detailed with information. Numerous Lutheran, a small number of Baptist, and a few Latter-day Saint congregations continued to use the Danish language well into the 1950s, with an occasional Danish language service still being held today.

Many denominations conducted missionary work among the Scandinavians. Depending on the size of the group the work often was divided into Swedish groups separate from the Danish-Norwegian groups, which were also known as Norwegian-Danish and Dano-Norwegian, depending on which group constituted the majority. The Union of Calmar had linked these three countries in 1397 under the rule of Queen Margrethe I of Denmark. The Swedes withdrew in 1523, but the union between Norway and Denmark lasted until 1814, when that union was dissolved by the Treaty of Kiel and Denmark was forced to cede control of Norway to Sweden. This did not prove a popular relationship, and in 1905 Norway voted to separate from Sweden and elected Prince Carl, the second son of Denmark's future King Frederik VIII, as their king, with the name Haakon VII. He was married to Maud, the sister of King George V of Great Britain (his first cousin); their son, Alexander Edward Christian Frederik, later became King Olaf V.

With this in mind let us examine the Danish-language denominations, using information about the newspapers/journals and hymnal/songbooks they published in the Danish language for use in their churches. Additional information comes from a few of these denominations that also established schools for the training of ministers in the Danish language. In his book *Banebrydere for Kirken i Amerika* (Pioneers for the church in America), Rasmus Andersen asserts that the oldest Danish congregation with a Danish minister was St. Mark Episcopal Church in Waupaca, Wisconsin. Martin Frederik Sørensen, son of Rasmus Sørensen, a Danish emigration promoter named after both Martin Luther and King Frederik of Denmark, was the fourth graduate of Nashotah, an Episcopal seminary in Nashotah, Wisconsin. The school's first graduate was Gustav Unonius, a Swedish immigrant known for establishing St. Ansgar Episcopal Church in Chicago. Sørensen was called to Waupaca in 1856 but it is unclear whether St. Mark Church, which still exists today, was a fully Danish congregation. Sørensen ministered to Danish-speaking Episcopalians and other

Danish-Norwegian groups in that area until 1870, when he relocated to St. Peter Episcopal Church in Sycamore, Illinois.

### **The Baptist Church**

Aside from the Lutherans, the only group to establish a completely Danish conference in America was the Baptists. At the peak in the late nineteenth century there were approximately five thousand Danish Baptists in the United States. The first Baptist congregation was established in 1839 in Copenhagen, almost ten years prior to the Danish Constitution (*Grundlov*) of 1849 that granted religious freedom, although the Lutheran Church remained the state church. Baptists in Denmark still experienced discrimination, and in 1856 a group of them emigrated and established a church in Abbott Township, Potter County, Pennsylvania. However, this did not result in a permanent settlement or church, as many of these Baptists went further west. The first permanent Danish Baptist church in the United States was established on November 10, 1856 in Raymond Township, Racine County, Wisconsin. That church still exists today but it requested and was granted withdrawal from the Danish Baptist General Conference in 1914, when it joined the American Baptist Church, at which time the language of worship changed to English.

According to Peter Sørensen Vig's history *Danske i Amerika* (Danes in America; 1908), the first Danish language book printed in America is believed to be a small hymnal edited and published in 1867 by Lars Hauge Jørgensen, an early Baptist minister. Jørgensen was baptized in Denmark and called to serve the Raymond church, where he arrived in July 1858, was ordained on February 27, 1859, and served until 1862. Several other Danish Baptist churches were established in the next few years, but Clarks Grove Baptist Church in Minnesota is considered by many to be the "mother" church among Danish Baptists. Except for the Harlan, Iowa Baptist church, Clarks Grove was the largest of the Danish Baptist churches.

Numerous other hymnals and songbooks were published in the Danish language, most of the early ones of which were edited and published by Danish pastors. It was not until 1897 (although some sources say 1887) that an official hymnal was released for use by Danish American Baptist churches. It was entitled *Salme- og Sange for de*

*Dansk-Norske Baptistmenigheder i Amerika* (Hymns and songs for the Danish-Norwegian Baptist congregations in America). The only other official hymnal released by the conference was entitled *Missions Sange*, published in 1916. Early Danish American Baptists likely used hymnals from Denmark, such as Hans Brorson's *Troens Rare Klenodie* (Faith's rare jewels), and *Troens Stemme* (The voice of faith) by the founder of the Baptist Church in Denmark, Julius Købner.

Danish Baptists in America also published Danish-language newspapers. In 1866 Pastor Jørgensen published a small Danish Baptist newspaper called *Missionæren* (The missionary). Unfortunately, it ceased printing after only eight issues, none of which appear to have been preserved. Other equally short-lived newspapers included *Elieser*, which appeared once in 1872; *Ungdommens Vejleder* (A guide for youth), published for a short time twice a month beginning in October 1878 by N. P. Jensen; and *Nordstjernen* (The north star), also published by Lars Jørgensen, which only appeared once. The first church official newspaper for Danish Baptists in the US, called *Olivebladet* (The olive leaf), was published in January 1877 in Chicago, Illinois. This newspaper was first edited by H. A. Reichenbach, but after about a year and a half N. P. Jensen assumed the role of editor and publisher. H. P. Dam also served intermittently as editor. Ten years later the official newspaper for Danish Baptists changed its name and became *Vaegteren* (The watchman). It was published until 1935, when it became an English language publication. There were numerous other publications issued by the Danish Baptists, including journals for the women and the young people in the church, such as *Søsterbudet* (The sister's messenger).

Conferences for like-minded churches began as early as 1864 and were held until 1882. In 1883 the conference was divided into eastern and western conferences. Additionally, state conferences were held over the years, and so by 1909 there were at least eight different "conferences" among the Danish-Norwegian Baptist churches, most of them small, weak, and isolated. At that time there were forty-eight Danish Baptist churches and almost as many Norwegian Baptist congregations in the US. It was then that discussions began about creating a conference of Danish churches. In November 1910 the first meeting of the General Conference of the Danish Baptists in America

occurred in Harlan, Iowa. The thirtieth and final conference was held at Clarks Grove, Minnesota in August 1958. Of the eighty-four Danish congregations that had been organized over the years, only fourteen remained when the conference was disbanded, and the remaining congregations joined the American Baptist Conference.

The Baptist Union Theological Seminary in Chicago, Illinois was established in 1863 for the training of workers in the Baptist church. With the growing numbers of Scandinavian Baptists in the Midwest and particularly around Chicago, a Scandinavian department was established at the seminary as early as 1873. In about 1884 this department was split into Dano-Norwegian and Swedish sections. The primary instructor for the Danish students was the Reverend Professor Nels Peter Jensen. In 1877 the seminary moved to an area known as Morgan Park, where it continued to grow, becoming the seminary of the newly founded University of Chicago when John D. Rockefeller funded the organization of that renowned institution of higher education. Around 1912 after much discussion the Danish Baptist Seminary chose to affiliate itself with Des Moines University in Des Moines, Iowa. With the death of Professor Jensen in 1925 (and the unstable situation of the university in Des Moines) the seminary moved back to Chicago, where it was affiliated with the Northern Baptist Seminary, located at 3300 Washington Avenue on the west side of the city. The Danish Theological Seminary was listed as late as 1928-29 as a department within the larger seminary, but as the need for Danish-speaking workers in the church had declined drastically, the seminary ceased to exist at about that time. The Northern Baptist Theological Seminary eventually moved to the suburb of Lombard, west of Chicago, where it still exists today. On a personal note, I used to work next door to the seminary, and they shared their library with Bethany Theological Seminary, a school of the Church of the Brethren. I made several visits to the archives there and was able to gather some records. After the dissolution of the Danish Baptist General Conference the archives were held at the Clarks Grove, Minnesota church until they were moved to the Baptist Memorial Home in Harlan, Iowa. In 1960 and 2008 the archives were moved again, first to the American Baptist Historical Society at the Colgate Rochester Crozier Divinity School

Library in Rochester, New York, and then to the campus of Mercer University in Atlanta, Georgia.

### **The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints**

The largest non-Lutheran group of Danish immigrants to find a church home in America belonged to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, commonly known as Mormons. The first Dane baptized into that faith was Hans Clemmensen in Boston about 1842. Hans eventually left the faith, but before doing so, he baptized the sailor Hans Hansen, who in turn baptized his younger brother Peter O. Hansen in 1844. P. O. Hansen later became a very prominent member in the proselytizing done by the church in Denmark in the early 1850s. In 1844, P. O. Hansen moved to the Mormon town of Nauvoo, Illinois where Joseph Smith brought his people after their expulsion from Missouri. It is believed he is the only Dane to have known Joseph Smith personally. While there, he began a translation of the Book of Mormon into Danish. He was also one of the first Scandinavian “Saints” to reach Salt Lake City, arriving there in 1847. He was later chosen to be one of the first missionaries to Denmark and arrived there on May 11, 1850, a month before Erastus Snow was assigned to lead the mission to Scandinavia. The majority of the early converts came from those who had already joined the Baptist faith in Denmark. Over time thousands of Danish Latter-day Saints came to America, many of whom crossed the plains on foot with handcart companies that left Iowa City, Iowa between 1856 and 1859.

The Latter-day Saints produced many Danish-language publications for use in Denmark. 1851 saw the publication of both P. O. Hansen’s Danish translation of the Book of Mormon and a Danish-language hymnal *En Samling af hellige Lovsange og Hymner til Brug i Jesu Christi Kirke af Sidste Dages Hellige* (A collection of sacred hymns for use in the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), containing twenty-six hymns. New and expanded hymnals were published almost every year for many years. Numerous missionary tracts by church leaders, such as Parley P. Pratt and Erastus Snow, were also translated and published for the Saints in Denmark.

October 1, 1851 marked the publication of the first issue of *Skandi-naviens Stjerne – Organ for de Sidste Dages Hellige* (The Scandinavian

star – organ for the Latter-day Saints), which was published under the same name until December 1956 when it became *Den Danske Stjerne* (The Danish star). The name changed again in 1985 when it became simply *Stjerne*, and today it is included in the Danish-language edition of *Liahona*, which is published in Salt Lake City in all languages used by the Latter-day Saints with local information included in the center of the magazine. This publication was primarily oriented at Latter-day Saints in Denmark, rather than at Danish converts who had immigrated to Utah, who developed their own publications.

In Utah, members of the church were encouraged to assimilate as quickly as possible into American culture and to use the English language. Danes were always the predominant group among the Scandinavian Saints. Danes ranked second only to Britons in the numbers of converts to the faith who emigrated from Europe to the United States. Many Danish immigrants settled to the south of Salt Lake City, where they could practice agricultural trades such as farming. The area around Sanpete County is still known today as “Little Denmark.” Local worship services were held in Scandinavian languages for decades, but as an auxiliary to English-language services. The actual number of worship services conducted in the Danish language is difficult to determine, but a Danish meeting was held in the Liberty Stake in Salt Lake City as late as 1984. The first and only official Latter-day Saint hymnal printed and issued in the Danish language in the United States was *Salmer til Brug for Jesu Christi Kirke af Sidste Dages Hellige* in 1888. In 1910 the church issued *Zions Sange* (Songs of Zion) in two editions, one Swedish and the other Danish-Norwegian.

Danish Latter-day Saints still held on to their native tongue, however, and in 1875 a Danish language newspaper called *Bikuben* (The beehive) began publication. It continued to be published until October 1935, when all foreign language newspapers were discontinued in Utah. This of course did not affect the newspapers still being published for use in Denmark. There were several other Danish-language newspapers published in Utah, but none had the significance of *Bikuben*.

### **The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints**

Alongside The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, mention must also be made of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS), which since 2000 has been known as the Community of Christ. After the death of the prophet Joseph Smith the leadership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints fell to Brigham Young, who led the bulk of the church's membership to Utah. However, many members did not feel that Young was the proper successor to Smith and believed that his son, Joseph Smith III, should be the next prophet and church president. Joseph Smith III accepted this mantle in 1861, thereby founding the Reorganized Church. The success of the Latter-day Saint missionaries in Denmark prompted the decision to send missionaries representing the RLDS church to Denmark as well. Two men were chosen in 1867 but for some reason did not go. One was Frederik Hansen, who actually served a mission in England from 1867–70. It was not until 1874 that RLDS missionaries Swedish-born Magnus Fyrando and Danish-born Hans N. Hansen (no relation to Frederik) went to Scandinavia to "open the door" for the RLDS gospel. Hansen only served about six months before returning to the United States, while Fyrando served as a missionary for two years. After Hansen's return, another man, Peter Brix, replaced him in Denmark.

One of the early converts to the Reorganized Church was Peter Andersen, who had become acquainted with the church through Hans Hansen. He came to the United States and was baptized by Hansen at the church in Weston, Iowa. The Reorganized LDS church had great success in western Iowa and eastern Nebraska, due in large part to the fact that quite a few of the Saints heading to Salt Lake City became disenchanted with all that they had been told and promised. Many left the group in the "Winter Quarters" in Florence, Nebraska, just north of Omaha. Others had returned to this area from Utah for similar reasons. Andersen was ordained a priest in 1881, and a year later he was appointed by the general conference to return to Denmark. Due to a lack of funds and other conditions he was unable to make the journey but continued to work among his countrymen in western Iowa. He was ordained an elder in 1883 and in October 1884 he published the first issue of *Sandhedens Banner* (The banner of truth),

a Danish-language church newspaper published in Lamoni, Iowa, the headquarters of the church and later also the home to Graceland College (now University). He was then sent west to Logan, Utah, where, in 1887, he was married.

In 1893 Andersen, by then ordained a seventy, was called on a mission to Denmark. The publication of *Sandhedens Banner* continued sporadically, but Andersen was also responsible for publishing two hymnals while he labored in Denmark. The first was a small volume of 108 pages containing 96 hymns entitled *Salmebog til Kirke-og-Husandagt* (Hymnal for church and home worship), and the second was a small book primarily for use in missions and Sunday school. Peter Brix had previously published *De Helliges Harpe, en Samling of Salmer og Aandeliger Sange for offentlig og privat Andagt* (The harp of the Saints, a collection of hymns and spiritual songs for public and private worship) in 1879. Andersen returned to the United States in 1904, but the strain of his mission and publishing the newspaper took its toll, and he died of heart failure in 1920, at age sixty.

The RLDS work continued in Denmark, and years later Andersen's grandson Richard would also serve a mission to Scandinavia and would also edit the newspaper founded by his grandfather. By then it consisted of mimeographed copies, and publication finally ceased in about 1972. Notable as well is that a grandson of the first missionary to Denmark (the son of Hans N. Hansen's son John), Francis E. Hansen, would serve in the presiding bishopric of the RLDS church for twenty-two years, the first six years (1966-72) as an assistant and then from 1972 to 1988 as presiding bishop, whose office handles all of the finances of the church and its properties.

### **The Methodist Church**

Since the Methodist church was not represented in Denmark in the early nineteenth century, Danes first encountered the faith in the US. The Dane Christian Edvard Balthor Willerup arrived in the Port of New York on August 25, 1836 aboard the ship *Presiosa*. He was not yet twenty-one years old, having been born on October 6, 1815. He encountered the Methodist church in Savannah, Georgia around 1839 and was ordained into the ministry on the Bethel Ship in late 1850 by Bishop Edmond Store Janes. He was called to serve a group of Nor-

wegian-Danish Methodists in southern Wisconsin who desired a man who spoke their native language. There, in 1851, the first Scandinavian Methodist church in the world was built. This congregation still exists and still worships in the old stone church built over 165 years ago. Willerup later returned to Denmark, where he died in 1886, but the groundwork for the Scandinavian Methodist church had been laid. This branch of the Methodist church was always heavily Norwegian, with only about 10 percent of the pastors serving it being Danish.

In 1868 the first Norwegian-Danish Methodist newspaper, *Missionæren*, edited by the Norwegian Andrew Haagesen, was issued from Chicago, Illinois. The same year, a hymnal was released entitled *Salmebog med Melodier og Noder for Den Biskoppelige Methodistkirkes Norske og Danske Menigheder* (Hymnal with melodies and sheet music for the Episcopalian Methodist Church Norwegian and Danish churches). Unfortunately, the plates for the hymnal as well as all copies of it were destroyed in the great Chicago Fire of 1871. In 1872 a new hymnal was released under the same name.

During those years a group of Methodist ministers in the Chicago area met to discuss the need for theological training for workers in Dano-Norwegian. They decided to establish a Norwegian-Danish department at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, which had been founded in 1870. Later, the increase in students prompted a need for the department to have its own building, so in 1884 a building was erected near the campus for the purpose of training ministers for the Norwegian-Danish Methodist congregations. It was later used for student housing, and in 1984 it was sold and converted into office space. The building still stands today and was declared a historical landmark by both the state of Illinois and the city of Evanston. By the 1930s the need for foreign-speaking ministers was no longer acute, so in 1934 the Norwegian-Danish Seminary and the Swedish Seminary of the Scandinavian Conference of the Methodist Church formed the Evanston Collegiate Institute. In 1950 the school was renamed Kendall College to honor Curtis P. Kendall, the founder of Washington National Insurance Company, where many of the students at the Institute had found employment. Business programs began in the 1970s, and the school of business was created in 2007. A school of culinary arts was established in 1985. Degrees were also offered in hotel, res-

taurant, and hospitality management. In 2005 the college purchased the former Sara Lee Research and Development Building on Goose Island in metropolitan Chicago and moved there from Evanston. In essence, Kendall College exists today because of the generosity of the Scandinavian Methodists over eighty years ago.

In addition to the above-mentioned Dano-Norwegian hymnal, the first edition of *Israels Sange* (Songs of Israel) was published in 1890 with a second edition in 1897. Other lesser known but popular song-books appeared over the years as well. One of the last Dano-Norwegian hymnals was released in 1922, under the title *Evangeliske Toner* (Evangelical notes). The music editor for this publication was the renowned F. Melius Christiansen, of St. Olaf College fame.

The previously mentioned newspaper *Missionæren* was followed by *Den Kristlige Talsmand* (The Christian spokesman), a publication that began in 1877. The Norwegian-Danish conference on the East Coast issued *Østens Missionær* (The missionary of the east) commencing in 1911, and the West Coast conference issued *Vidnesbyrdet* (The testimony). In January 1922, under Danish-born editor P. M. Peterson, the three papers merged and became *Evangelisk Tidende* (Gospel tidings), which lasted another eighteen years until it was absorbed into the English-language Methodist church paper *The Gospel Advocate* in 1940. When the Norwegian-Danish Conference of the Methodist Church was dissolved in 1943 there remained a desire by some to remain connected, so a little newsletter called *The Fellowship News Bulletin* was established. It carried news from persons and churches associated with the old conference until it finally ceased publication in 1972.

Speaking of the dissolution of the Norwegian-Danish Conference in 1943, it should be noted that the conference was formed in 1880, with the first general session for the conference being held at Trinity Methodist Church in Racine, Wisconsin. Perhaps ironically, the final conference in 1943 was held at the same location. The total number of churches hovered in the nineties from 1900 until 1916, with the most reported congregations listed at ninety-nine in 1907–08. The conference was divided in to two districts, Chicago and Minneapolis. At the end there were still fifty-eight churches reporting as members of the conference. Membership numbers surpassed six thousand members in the 1930s and fell slightly below five thousand members at the end

in 1943. This would seem to indicate that there were more Methodists than Baptists, as stated earlier, but one must keep in mind that Norwegians were always the larger component of this branch of the Methodist Church.

### **The Moravian Church**

In 1849 a group of Danes and Norwegians gathered in Milwaukee and formed a Moravian congregation under the leadership of A. M. Iverson, a young Norwegian who had just completed his theological training. He did not wish to go to Germany to a Lutheran school but instead chose to answer a call to the small group in Milwaukee. The group of twelve Norwegians, four Danes, and two Swedes completed the organization of the first Scandinavian Moravian congregation on October 22, 1849. In 1853 the group relocated to Ephraim on the shores of Green Bay in Door County, Wisconsin. With Iverson's departure for Illinois, the Moravians of Door County appealed to Christiansfeld, a Brethren community in Southern Denmark, for a pastor. The call was answered in 1864 when John J. Groenfeldt arrived in America on August 14 of that year. He had been born barely ten miles from Christiansfeld in November 1834. Married two months before emigrating, Groenfeldt and his wife had seven children during their time in Wisconsin, one of whom died as an infant. Groenfeldt's wife died in 1879, leaving him with six children, the eldest of whom was only fourteen at the time. He married again four months after his wife's death. He served the congregation at Ephraim as well as other Scandinavian congregations in the nearby region until 1883. His oldest son, John, and his second son, Samuel, both attended and graduated from the Moravian Seminary in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Groenfeldt served congregations regularly until about 1904 and then continued to perform pastoral functions among the Scandinavian Moravians until his death in 1917.

Groenfeldt's oldest son, who later Americanized his name to John Greenfield, was born in Ephraim in 1865 and attended college and seminary in Pennsylvania. After graduating in 1886 he returned to Wisconsin to assist his father but then did missionary work in Missouri and later in Kansas, where he edited and published a Danish-language journal called *Det Glade Budskab* (The joyful message). First

published in 1891, it ran for a few years in Kansas before Greenfield's return to Ephraim, Wisconsin, where he published it until 1895. He also issued a re-print of the Scandinavian hymnal *Harpn* (The harp), which was published in Ephraim, Wisconsin in 1894. From 1905 until 1915 Greenfield served congregations in Pennsylvania and New York and was a provincial evangelist until 1932. He retired to Florida, where he died in 1941. He is well known in the Moravian Church for writing the book *Power on High*, which is still used in the church today.

John Greenfield's brother Samuel Groenfeldt was born in Ephraim in 1867 and also attended college and seminary in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. He returned to Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin and served the congregation there until 1909, when he too served as a provincial evangelist. Failing health forced him to retire from his work, and he returned to Wisconsin, where he died in 1927, leaving a wife and two sons. His younger son, John S. Groenfeldt, followed in the footsteps of his grandfather, father, and uncle when he entered the Moravian ministry. He rose through the ranks of the church and from 1966 until his retirement in 1992 served as president of the governing board of the Moravian Church, Northern Province, headquartered in Bethlehem.

The quaint little Moravian Church in Ephraim still stands today, and its steeple can be seen as you enter this charming town on the banks of Green Bay. At the turn of the twentieth century there were six Scandinavian Moravian minsters, four Danish (the three Groenfeldts and Christen Madsen, possibly a relative of the Groenfeldts), one Swede (whose wife was Danish), and one Norwegian.

### **The Evangelical Free Church**

One of the earliest "free" churches to come out of the congregational churches in the Chicago area was the Salem Evangelical Free Church, which dates its origin to 1884. The church in Chicago was predominantly Norwegian for many years, and twelve of the original seventeen founding members were Danes. Historically the church was always predominantly Norwegian and was served primarily by Norwegian pastors trained at the Norwegian-Danish department of the Chicago Theological Seminary. It served the Norwegian-Danish Free Church population for many years and gave birth to other churches in Chicago as well. Today that church, built in 1908, is still at the same

location but is now called “Iglesia Evangelica Libre Salem” and serves a predominantly Spanish-speaking congregation.

In 1884 the Chicago Theological Seminary, the oldest seminary in Chicago, established a Norwegian-Danish branch. At the time the seminary supported the needs of the Congregational churches (now known as the United Church of Christ). A desire to minister to the growing population of Scandinavians in Chicago prompted the establishment of a Norwegian-Danish department as well as a Swedish department. P. C. Trandberg was hired as a professor for the Danish students and taught there until 1890, when he was dismissed for being “too Lutheran.” At that time, he opened up his own seminary, the Lutheran Free Seminary, which he directed until 1893. Between 1884 and 1893 Trandberg trained a total of forty-eight students at Chicago Theological Seminary (twenty-four Norwegian and twenty-four Danish) and another fourteen students (twelve Danish and two Norwegian) at his private seminary between 1890 to 1893. The Norwegian-Danish institute continued at Chicago Theological Seminary until 1916 under the tutelage of several different Norwegian instructors.

Another group separated from the seminary in Chicago in order to establish the Norwegian-Danish Bible Institute in Rushford, Minnesota in 1910. This school was called Rushford Home until the school moved to a larger, better equipped facility in Minneapolis in 1916 and changed its name to Trinity Seminary. It operated in Minneapolis until 1946, when it merged with a Swedish group in Chicago, just as the Norwegian-Danish and Swedish conferences of the Evangelical Free Church had begun to merge. Building on associations dating back to 1910, the merger took place in 1950. The seminary remained in Chicago until it relocated to Deerfield, Illinois, a northern suburb of Chicago, in 1963. Trinity International University and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School exist today on the campus in Deerfield. In 1890 this group began a publication for Norwegian-Danish speaking congregations called *Evangelisten* (The evangelist), which was published until 1953. In 1906 the group issued a hymnal entitled *Evangeli Harpe* (The gospel harp) for use in the Norwegian-Danish congregations.

### **The Scandinavian Alliance Mission**

The above-mentioned Salem Free Church in Chicago also included the Salem Mission House, where the Swedish minister Fredrik Franson committed to sending one hundred missionaries to China in answer to a call from Hudson Taylor and commissioned by the Evangelist W. L. Moody. Organized in September 1890, it came to be known as the Scandinavian Alliance Mission (SAM). By 1896 nearly one hundred missionaries had been sent out to China, Japan, Africa, and India. Franson died in 1908, and the search for a new director began. The South American work had begun in 1906 when two Danish-born missionaries –T. J. Bach and his roommate at seminary, John S. Christiansen–arrived in Venezuela. They and their wives, both named Anna, served in South America until 1928. During the twenty-plus years that these men and women served in South America a total of fifteen children were born, five to T. J. and Anna Bach and ten to John and Anna Christiansen. Several of these children followed in the steps of their parents and served as missionaries in later years. One of the Christiansen girls, Irene, served the Sudan Interior Mission for thirty-eight years.

Bach and Christiansen's missionary work left an impressive legacy. When Bach and his family returned to the United States, he was appointed general director of the Scandinavian Alliance Mission. A week after being installed as director, he lost his beloved wife, Anna. SAM was renamed The Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM) in 1949. Currently, there are almost six hundred missionaries serving under the banner of TEAM. Bach fulfilled his duties until retiring in 1946, but he remained active in the organization until his death in 1963. After John S. Christiansen and his wife returned from Venezuela in the late 1920s, they authored a book called *Under the Southern Cross*, published in 1932, that detailed their twenty-five years of missionary work in South America. The Christiansens later returned to Venezuela and served there until 1950. They were home on furlough when John was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and was not allowed to return to their mission. He died a few years later, in 1954. Both Bach and Christiansen are buried at Mt. Olive, a cemetery founded in Chicago in 1889 by the Scandinavian American community.

The only other work done by this denomination was in Mt. Pleasant, Utah, where the Reverend Duncan J. McMillan established a church and a school in 1875, which still exist today. Although neither was exclusively Danish, it is very likely that Danish students and congregants attended, as Mt. Pleasant is located in the center of Sanpete County, an area heavily populated by Danish immigrants who came to the United States through the effort of the Mormon Church and is still referred to today as “Little Denmark.” Numerous Scandinavians in the area had become disillusioned with the Mormon Church, and had left it. He conducted services in English, Danish, and Swedish and is believed to have published small hymnals for worship in those languages, although no copies have survived.

### **The Seventh-day Adventist Church**

Scandinavian involvement in the Seventh-Day Adventist church seems to have started with John Gottlieb Matteson, who was born in Tranekær on Langeland, Denmark in 1835 and came with his parents to Wisconsin in 1855. Here he became involved with a group of Danish Baptists and was ultimately convinced to go to Chicago to enroll at Douglas University, a forerunner to the University of Chicago and the Baptist Union Theological Seminary. Here he met a young Norwegian woman, Anna Sieverson, and they fell in love. Matteson was overwhelmed by the cost of schooling and the thought of supporting a wife, but Anna told him to continue school and she would work. That first summer he was notified that a small Baptist church at Bloomfield, Wisconsin was in need of a pastor. The congregation could not support him fully, so he also earned a teaching certificate and taught school at the nearby Brushville School, where he bought a parcel of land, built a log cabin, and began his life with his wife Anna. In the fall of 1862 their first child was born, a daughter named Matilda. Soon the nearby Waushara Baptist church requested Matteson’s services. This church was the second Danish Baptist church in the United States, established in 1858. He was ordained a Baptist minister on September 25, 1862. Soon after that he began Sunday services in nearby Poy Sippi. Here he learned of a man named Cady who kept Saturday as the Sabbath. Matteson agreed to visit the man and “set him straight.” However, after several discussions with the Cady family Matteson too

adopted the “true” Sabbath as described in the Book of Genesis, that “on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day.”

When Matteson told his wife of the revelation he had had to begin keeping the Sabbath on Saturday, she feared he would lose his congregants in the Baptist churches he served, but to their surprise, all but one family in the Bloomfield church followed him into the Adventist church. He then established a second church, considered the oldest Danish Adventist church in America, in Poy Sippi, Wisconsin. This church was active until the late 1990s, when it disbanded due to a significant decrease in membership. Soon after Matteson began preaching among the Seventh-day Adventists in Poy Sippi, a group of Norwegians living in the Oakland community between Cambridge and Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin asked him to come preach among them. They had founded a congregation in 1855 but had no one to preach to them in their own language. Christian Willerup from the Methodist church in Cambridge had attempted to preach to them and even considered them Methodists, but theological differences divided them. Matteson visited the Oakland community and was given an offer to serve them. The Matteson family had already moved to Mackford, Wisconsin, where John reached out to other Danish-Norwegian communities in southern Minnesota. While he was away from home the Olsen family in Oakland sent a message to Anna Matteson that they had completed a two-room dwelling for them where she and the children could stay when her husband was away preaching the message. In mid-November 1865 she set out for Oakland. This became his home base from which he went out to places across Wisconsin and Minnesota and beyond. Other Danes were called to preach the word through the inspiration of this man. In 1870 he published the first of his Danish-language hymnals entitled *Psalmer og Lovsange, til Aandelig Opbyggelse* (Psalms and songs of praise for spiritual edification). The hymnal was expanded in 1873 and again in 1874.

These early Scandinavian Adventist churches were all small rural congregations, and during these early years of the church other men, particularly Danes, were ordained into the ministry of the church. Matteson had written numerous tracts about the church which began to be distributed in many places. A man in Chicago read one of his

tracts and wrote to Matteson suggesting he come to the city. There he gathered together a group of believers, and in the summer of 1871 this group purchased a lot at 269 West Erie Street upon which they would build a chapel. Work began on the building, but one Sunday a policeman stopped by to ask what they were doing. When he was told they were building a chapel he informed them they could not work on Sunday and ultimately Matteson was arrested and taken to the police station. With no way to prove it was lawful to work on a Sunday and unable to locate a copy of the state laws, work ceased. No one expected that there would be a fire that very night, October 8, 1871, that would destroy over three square miles of the city, killing three hundred people and leaving one hundred thousand people homeless. After the fire, the Chicago Adventists completed the chapel, at a cost of \$2,000, and voted to join the Wisconsin Conference since Matteson belonged to it.

Matteson was engaged in printing and education as well as chapel building and proselyting. He first appealed to Ellen White, whose teachings are the basis of the Seventh-day Adventist faith, for money for a Danish-language newspaper to spread the “true” gospel, but she felt there were no resources for such an undertaking as there was no one available to set the type and do the editorial work necessary for such a task. Undaunted, Matteson learned how to set type and began publishing *Advent Tidende* (Advent times), the first issue of which appeared in January 1872 in Battle Creek, Michigan, the base of operations for the church and home to the printing facilities. Two years later it would become the location of Battle Creek College, which moved in 1901 and is today known as Andrews University. It should be noted that the president of Andrews University from 1994 until 2016 was Niels-Erik Andreasen, a native of Denmark born in Fredensborg. He had previously served as president of Walla Walla University in southeastern Washington state from 1990 to 1994.

During the 1870s and 1880s, Matteson crisscrossed seven states spreading the gospel of the church, and his paper circulated as far away as Scandinavia, which drew Matteson’s attention. With their older daughters in school in Battle Creek and a family in Neenah, Wisconsin looking after their boys, he and his wife set sail for Europe. Aboard the steamship *Pomerania* they headed to Hamburg and then to

Vejle, Denmark. They made progress in both Denmark and Norway, establishing several congregations, but in 1888 Matteson received a call to become the editor of the Danish periodical and made arrangements to return to the United States, arriving in Battle Creek on June 12, 1888. In October of that year he spent time in Minneapolis for a Bible conference, and in December he attended the general conference session. In early 1889 he conducted a mission school in Chicago. Unfortunately, his health was beginning to deteriorate. When Union College was founded in Lincoln, Nebraska in 1891 he was invited to teach Bible studies and homiletics in the newly founded Danish-Norwegian department there, but his persistent lung trouble forced him to seek relief in Southern California, where he died of tuberculosis a few weeks after his arrival.

Nevertheless, Matteson's legacy lived on in the many men and women who followed after him. In 1909 it was decided that the foreign language departments at Union College had grown to the extent that new homes needed to be found for them. The Danish-Norwegian department found a suitable place at Ansgar College in Hutchinson, Minnesota, which was renamed the Hutchinson Danish-Norwegian Theological Seminary. Classes were held there from 1911 to 1928, but as the need for workers trained for Danish-language work declined, the school merged with the state academy at Maplewood. The Maplewood Academy still operates there today, although the school building was torn down in 1988 and replaced with a new administration building. The November 30, 1911 issue of the Danish-language Adventist newspaper, called *Evangeliets Sendebud og Sandhedens Tidende* (Gospel messenger and truth journal), included a map and the location of fifty-eight Danish-Norwegian Seventh-day Adventist congregations, primarily in the Midwest but including several Pacific Coast congregations as well as one in Texas. The smaller churches have mostly ceased to exist or merged with larger churches, but there are still congregations today that owe their birth to the work of John G. Matteson.

### **The Salvation Army**

The Scandinavian Salvation Army began in New York in 1887 when four Swedish-born laundresses in Brooklyn, New York received

permission to open a Swedish language corps. The Salvation Army had begun work in Sweden a few years earlier in 1882, spreading to Denmark in 1888 and Norway a year later. The Scandinavian Salvation Army in the United States was predominantly Swedish, but many Norwegian corps were established as well. Only one Danish corps was founded in America, the Cragin #12 Corps in Chicago, Illinois, located at 1632 North Pulaski Road in the Humboldt Park area. Most of the corps leaders were Norwegian, but one was Christian Dragsbak, who was born in Denmark and served the Cragin Corps for several years. He later lived in retirement in Rockford, Illinois, where I had the privilege of interviewing him many years ago when I lived near there.

Several other prominent Danish men (and women) also served in the Salvation Army, including Emil Marcussen and Harold Madsen, who both served in the Western Division, as well as the renowned band leader, Emil Soderstrom. Madsen and his Swedish-born wife Anna served in Washington state, Chicago, Minneapolis, Moline, Illinois as well as the Western Territorial headquarters. He was also the divisional director of the Scandinavian Division. Soderstrom was a well-known musician and band director, perhaps best known as the composer of the music for a radio series broadcast on WMAQ, Chicago, and NBC. The series, *The World's Great Novels*, ran from 1944 until 1948. He was a staff arranger for NBC in Chicago for eighteen years. After serving many years on the high seas, Lieutenant Corporal Marcussen joined the Salvation Army in Oakland, California. He was promoted to captain in 1890, and in 1893 he received his first call to his native Denmark where he met and married his wife, Sophie. When they returned to the United States they served in New York, Cleveland, Chicago, and San Francisco. In 1940 he was made a Knight of the Order of the Dannebrog by King Christian X of Denmark for his social service work in Denmark as well as among Danes in the US. Marcussen's grandson, Paul Marshall (son of Emma Marcussen and John Marshall, who served the Salvation Army together for many years) served as territorial archivist of the central region of the Salvation Army for many years, retiring in 1989. The Cragin #12 Corps merged with the Irving Park (Norwegian) Corps in about 1953.

### **The Presbyterian Church**

The only Danish-Norwegian Presbyterian Church I know of was located in St. Paul, Minnesota at 196 Thomas Street. In Presbyterian church records it is called "Golgotha" but in R. Arlo Odegaard's book *With Singleness of Heart*, he identifies it as "Calvary." The church appears to have been founded by Jens Pedersen, a student of P. C. Trandberg in the Danish-Norwegian department of the Chicago Theological Seminary, sometime in the early 1890s. The first resident pastor of the church was Matthias N. Andreasen, also a graduate of the Trandberg-led Danish-Norwegian Department of the Chicago Theological Seminary. He was called in 1893, but in 1897 he joined the United Danish Lutheran Church organization and later served as its president from 1921 to 1925. The church was served primarily by Danish pastors educated there and was listed in the annual reports of the Presbyterian Church for almost thirty years. It was last reported in the 1919 reports. Very little is known about the church and there is no indication that it ever produced any Danish-language publications such as newspapers, journals, or hymnals issued by the denomination.

### **The Friends Church**

It is difficult to trace Danish membership in the Friends Church (often called Quakers), since their congregations are made up of small groups of like-minded people who primarily gather in homes and depend on lay leadership, creating a lack of church records. In his article "Little Copenhagen," Thomas P. Christensen, author of *Danes in Iowa*, tells of a small Danish Quaker community in central Iowa near the present-day town of Randall. The group was led by a man named Christian Paulsen Christiansen, who had been influenced greatly by the itinerant Danish lay minister Mogens Abraham Sommer. The Norwegian Unitarian Kristofer Janson, traveling from his parishes in Hanska and Minneapolis, Minnesota, occasionally addressed the group, as did Sommer himself. Little Copenhagen never resulted in a permanent settlement, although some of the original settlers lie buried in an old Danish cemetery there. Many of the group members left and settled among the American Quakers of Springdale, just east of West Branch, Iowa (birthplace of President Herbert Hoover, the nation's only Quaker president).

Danes participated in various other Quaker groups in the area as well, as I know from my family's history. My grandfather's elder brother married a woman who had been born in Little Copenhagen and moved to West Branch, where my aunt and uncle lived on a farm bordering the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library. My aunt had an older sister buried in the old Danish cemetery in Little Copenhagen. They often visited Quaker friends at Stavanger, a Norwegian Quaker settlement just south of Le Grand, Iowa, about fifteen miles from where I grew up. There were likely Danes among that group as well. The Norwegian Friends operated a school there for many years and the church remains active today. In his book *The Quakers of Iowa*, published in 1900, D. C. Mott refers to the conservative Wilbur Friends in West Branch, affiliated with the Friends General Conference. Since the Conservative (Wilburite) Friends are very loosely organized and rely primarily on lay leadership there are no records to document the use of any foreign language. Information presented would seem to suggest that worship was likely held in the Danish language for a time. West Branch was also home to a Friends church which belongs to the Regular Society of Friends. This congregation included members of Danish descent. Bethany Lutheran Church in West Branch was affiliated with the Danish Lutheran Church.

### **Other Churches**

Danes were involved in many other denominations, even if no officially Danish-language churches were established in those traditions. Kristofer Janson, the above-mentioned Unitarian minister serving congregations in Minnesota, edited and published a small Dano-Norwegian hymnal *Psalmebog for Kirke og Hjem* (Hymnbook for church and home), containing about three hundred hymns, in 1883. After his return to Scandinavia and his death in Denmark, he was succeeded by another Norwegian Unitarian minister, Amandus Norman, who in turn published another hymnal in the Dano-Norwegian language (with the same title) in 1923. Today the small rural Hanska Unitarian Universalist Church still exists and continues to honor and cherish their Scandinavian heritage.

Danish-born Charles Anderson was responsible for the use of the Danish language in worship in the Swedish Mission Church. He was

educated at Illinois State University, and after his ordination he associated himself with the Northern Illinois Synod of the General Lutheran Synod. In the article "Concerning the Scandinavians in the Western States" published in *The Lutheran Observer* on December 18, 1868, he questioned why the General Synod was not doing anything to minister the vast number of Scandinavians in the Midwest. It was likely due to this that he was called to serve the Second Lutheran Church in Galesburg, Illinois, which had splintered with the First Lutheran Church. Anderson left Galesburg in 1873 and was instrumental in establishing the Keokuk Mission Institute in Keokuk, Iowa where he served as the principal. This school later became Ansgarius College and relocated in 1874 to Knoxville, Illinois, where Anderson secured funding to build a four-story brick building with thirty-nine rooms to house the school, classrooms, and students.

By that time Anderson had founded the Scandinavian Lutheran Ansgarius Synod of the United States, of which he became president. It was a rival to the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Mission Synod established a year earlier. The school was conducted in the interest of the Evangelical Lutheran Church but did not prove to be a success and was closed a few years later. Anderson resigned as president of the school and the synod in 1878 and devoted himself to business so he could pay off the school's debts. When he accomplished this in 1882, he returned to the Swedish Lutheran Church as pastor of Immanuel Lutheran in Rockford, Illinois. By 1890 the original Ansgarius College building had become the home to St. Alban's Academy, an all-boys boarding school affiliated with the Episcopal Church. This school moved to Sycamore, Illinois, where it operated until 1938. Anderson eventually relocated to Idaho in about 1907 and died there in 1910. His obituary listed him as a soldier, teacher, preacher and lawyer. He was born a Dane but worked among Swedish immigrants and others during his life. His work among the Mission Friends laid the foundation for the Evangelical Covenant Church established in 1885 in Chicago, which operates North Park University and Theological Seminary.

## Conclusion

Both the 1906 and 1916 *Censuses of Religious Bodies* indicate that almost 75 percent (three out of every four) of Danish congregations

reported the use of the Danish language in worship, though numerous historians believe that only somewhere between 10 and 25 percent of all Danes who came to America affiliated themselves with any religion. In his article "History of the Danish Settlement in Hill Township, Cass County, North Dakota," published in the *Collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota*, Volume 1 1906, Waldemar C. Westergaard stated that, "Though the state religion in Denmark is Lutheran, there is hardly a member of the settlement who now professes the old faith. ... The immigrants have gone through their period of severe discipline in the catechism of the Danish Lutheran Church...and... many on their arrival express freely their dislike for the compulsory religious study. [Therefore, they] have never been in any haste to join any new church organization in this country." This was likely true in other areas of the country as well. Paul C. Nyholm also expressed a similar view in his doctoral thesis, *Americanization of Danish Lutheran Churches*, published in 1963.

I read something on the internet recently (and we all know that if it's on the internet it must be true), that of the Scandinavians, Danes are the most individualistic, while Norwegians are the most nationalistic, and the Swedes tend to be scared to be different. Many conclusions can be drawn from a statement like that, but to a point it does seem to be in sync with much of the information stated here. But we also know that we are *not* Scandinavians—we are Danes!!!