

GRANDPA HAAR

Senior Church History

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GRANDPA HAAR

Grandpa Haar (Wilhelm Georg Haar) was a pastor in the Minnesota Synod and District for forty-three years. His story is begging to be told.

Nellingen, Oberamt Esslingen, Wuerttemberg Deutschland. Grandpa Haar was born there and Haars have lived there continuously from at least the 1700's. There's music in those names. It's a beautiful spot on God's earth. But Swabia's praises have been sung by better men than I, who spent but a short week there in 1969. Hermann Hesse spent a good share of his life in Swabia, in Calw, a city not far from Nellingen, and he drew a wealth of inspiration from the forests, rivers, meadow valleys, chestnut trees, and pine woods of his beloved homeland. I couldn't improve upon what he's said. What must surely strike anyone who has read Hesse, and who has visited Swabia, is how little the place has changed. Hesse's rivers and forests and meadows are still there in all their splendor. Apart from an American air base and some bars that cater to American soldiers, Nellingen has changed very little from the time Grandpa Haar lived there. His house still stands. Its barn half, with adjacent manure receptacle, both still in use, and its tiny windows, speak volumes concerning its former and present occupants.

According to the European custom, then and now, the farmers all live in town. Completely surrounding the town are the fields and forests and pastures. Space is not wasted

on roads, which are only single lane paths laid out in orderly arrangement through the fields. Today yet, 64% of the Land of Wuerttemberg is under cultivation and 31% under forestration. Forests and parks are not wasted space to Germans, of course, but roads and shopping centers and parking lots like ours would be. The configuration of the town and its surroundings is medieval. Only a word of Luther's hymn might have to be changed: "A mighty B-52 is our God."

The church, the same one that was there at Grandpa's time, is still the predominant building in town. Now it's got an electric clock on its tower and bronze plaques with dead soldiers names on them, but the brown-gray walls are the same and the dead pastors inside those walls are the ones who confirmed my grandfather and my grandfather's grandfather. Ordinary people can stay in their graves only seven years now before getting dumped into the ocean, but pastors get to grace the insides of church walls forever.

Esslingen hasn't changed much either. It's the larger town only five miles from Nellingen and nine miles SE of Stuttgart where Grandpa went to college, or Gymnasium. The walls and towers, erected by the order of Emperor Frederich II in 1209 to ensure the town's status as a free imperial city, are still standing, though they no longer keep people in or out. Churches dominate the skyline there too. Grandpa's Gymnasium is still functioning.

Of the twenty-three years that Grandpa Haar spent in

Germany we know only a few facts. He was born Feb. 28, 1862, the fifth of nine children born to Maurer Georg Haar and his wife Christine. He was confirmed in 1875 and he remained in school at Nellingen until 1878. He attended the Gymnasium in Esslingen until 1882. After being graduated from Esslingen he entered the military. He was honorably discharged after a year's service. The next two years, those immediately preceding his emigration, he spent as an instructor in an orphanage near Ludwigsburg, perhaps twenty-five miles from home. It was there that he made the acquaintance of Robert Mayer, a young Lutheran from New York, who was visiting relatives. Mayer informed him of the condition of the Lutheran churches in America, of its prospects and its needs for more pastors. He gave him several copies of Der Lutheraner. The desire to enter the ministry was aroused. Grandpa left Germany and entered the one-year-old Practical Theological Seminary of the Minnesota Synod in November, 1885.

These facts, many of which are based only on Grandpa's obituary, written by a friend and printed in the Gemeinde-Blatt, actually raise more questions than they answer. Were Grandpa's motives for coming to America as simple and spiritual as they are portrayed? Why did he not attend a German university, Tuebingen, for example, or a mission society school, such as Barmen or Basel? Having obtained his information about America from Der Lutheraner, why did he choose New Ulm over St. Louis? The questions cannot be answered

conclusively, but some fairly accurate surmisals can be made.

The Wuerttemberg of the 1880's was as politically and economically stable as it had been for a long time. The fact that Grandpa had to serve only one of the compulsory two-year Prussian army stint attests to that. But political and economic stability in Germany is a very relative thing. In 1866 Wuerttemberg, under King Charles I, took up arms on behalf of Austria, but three weeks after the battle of Koeniggraetz its troops were decisively beaten at Tauberbischofsheim, and the country was at the mercy of Prussia. The Prussians occupied the northern part of Wuerttemberg and peace was made in August, 1866; Wuerttemberg paid an indemnity of 8,000,000 gulden and concluded a secret offensive and defensive treaty with Austria's conqueror. On the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 Wuerttemberg's troops took a creditable part in the battle of Woerth and in other operations of the war. In 1871 Wuerttemberg became a member of the new German empire, but retained control of its own post office, telegraphs, and railways. Along with Bavaria it was also granted special privileges with regard to the army and the taxation of beer and brandy. Perhaps it was not even in the official Prussian army that Grandpa served. At any rate, he served during a time of peace, a rarity indeed in Germany. "Jeder Deutsche muss drei Kriege erfahren," has become proverbial over there. I am told that Grandpa Haar, throughout his life, exhibited an intense loyalty to

the fatherland, particularly during the two World Wars. The characteristic Heimweh, so much discussed in early numbers of the Gemeinde-Blatt, was present also in Grandpa. By his fellow Swabian, Hesse, he would have been branded a typical reactionary churchman. But whose reaction to the world's milieu was more effective in the long run, Hesse's withdrawal to a Swiss mountain village, or Grandpa's emigration to America? Only eternity will tell.

Economic factors can be ruled out when considering Grandpa's reasons for emigrating. The 80's marked a German emigration almost equal to that of the 30's, 40's, and 50's, it is true, and economic motivations were doubtless the primary ones, but to say that Grandpa came to America for economic reasons would be absurd. After twelve years in the ministry he was making fifty dollars per month. With Pastor Paul Dowidat of Minneapolis he did engage in some land speculation by buying mortgaged property in northern Minnesota, a fruit farm in Florida, and ten acres of oil land in Texas, but only the land in Minnesota ever paid off. Perhaps it was his thirteen children that disabused him of any inclination to be a soldier of fortune!

Exceedingly difficult is it to empathize with the economic and social realities of a pastor's life in Grandpa's time, and yet, it is not so difficult for one who grew up in the same congregation served by Grandpa for thirty of the forty-three years of his ministry. I was a beneficiary of gifts brought to the parsonage by children and grand-

children of the people who brought similar gifts to Grandpa. The description Koehler gives of parsonage life at the time evokes a hundred experiences shared by this writer either personally or vicariously.¹ The "parsonage pig" and the "parsonage milk" I have eaten and drunk. The Platt-Deutsch ditty, "~~Pastor sine Kaujaujau,~~" a favorite, I'm told, at many earlier pastoral conferences, I have sung. It was, and is in scores of rural parishes, all part of the bargain. The people read their Bibles and they know about providing for their servants of the Word.

Yet, many other customs and arrangements have passed out of the picture. In a farming community the pastor was himself a farmer. This suited Grandpa's predilections to a tee -- we recall that a German Maurer was also a Bauer -- and he assumed the dual role unflinchingly for the last thirty years of his ministry. The parsonage property included a barn and a shed, and these were put to their proper use, housing cows, horses, pigs, chickens, ducks and geese. When the teacherage became run-down beyond repair, it was turned into the pastor's granary. Every summer two or three crops of hay were wrested from the church cemetery and from road sides by the sweat of the brow. It was following Paul's advice to the letter, becoming all things to all men. You could really trade shop talk with the man. "How are your cow-beets doing?" "Not as high as they should be for this time of year."

Some of Grandpa's homely and frugal ways bring more

than a *smile* to our faces. He always covered both sides of all brown paper bags with tightly packed lines of German script. While making calls, the customary appurtenances to the rear of his buggy were the feed sacks, which were expected to be filled by the visited members. And like most pastors of the day, he was a Homeopathologist, if you will, a purveyor of the most popular folk-medicines, and he made some money selling them. The big four were "Alpenkrauter," a laxative, "Hinvong," a green, minty liquid that was mixed with water and taken to cure coughs and colds and stomach aches, "Lady Pinkham's Medicine for Women," and "Kuhn Salve," an all purpose "panacea ointment" for minor wounds, burns and infections. The latter was popularly named after Pastor Albert Kuhn Sr., the fourth Paeses of the Minnesota Synod (from 1876-1883), and Grandpa's predecessor at his last parish, Salem in Greenwood (which Kuhn served from 1882-1899). Pastor Kuhn's fame as a medicine man was so great that not only was a salve named after him, but his successor, Grandpa, was forced by popular demand to enter the medicine business, because people had come to rely upon the pastor for such service.

Another service the pastor had to provide, by Minnesota state law, was the drawing up of wills. It, too, afforded an additional source of income.

A most curious scenario, and one that reveals much about the prevailing economic conditions and the proper pastoral response to those conditions, was the one that

was played out in the Salem parsonage barn several times a day. Grandpa's children claim he had his cows trained to eliminate in a bucket. This served a twofold purpose: the bedding under the cows was kept clean and dry; and immediate applications of the garden's requisite fertilizer was effected. Even in his retirement years he would perform this task day and night, at night while dressed in his old, dark night-shirt.

A family of thirteen children presents unique economic problems and potentials. Feeding, clothing, educating, and simply caring for that many children are superhuman tasks. But Grandpa Haar coped with the problems and realized the potentials in such a family. Since he was not himself superhuman, he required the help of a supporting cast, which included, first of all, his beloved wife, Louise, and then also, his unmarried sister, Rosine, whom he summoned from Germany shortly after the children started arriving. Providing for the physical needs of the children meant growing much of the food at home, and large expenditures of time and effort on the part of the women in cooking and sewing. Homemade root beer and dandelion, rhubarb, and grape wines were produced. "Tante" (Rosine) had learned to make excellent sausage from another sister, Barbara, who had married a Pforzheim butcher.

The potential in such a large family lay in using the older children as co-laborers, and not only in the menial tasks. Farmers, of course, were noted for this, but so

were ministers. Grandpa realized the value of education, Christian education, and he provided it for his children, though it meant a great deal of expense and travel over long distances, especially to New Ulm. But the knowledge acquired by the children was also put to use in the congregation. The children acted as Sunday and summer school teachers, and as organists. The boys were naturally sent to New Ulm to prepare for the ministry -- no questions asked. The girls took various routes. The oldest daughter, Louise, was sent to the Women's Seminary in Red Wing, where she was given basic courses in Christian teaching, and most important of all, in organ playing. Charlotte, the seventh child, went to Mankato to study nursing. Two went to Winona State and two to New Ulm to become day-school teachers. From the comments Koehler makes regarding the difficulties and scarcity of education for women, we appreciate Grandpa's efforts all the more.² Children can also provide for a man when he is unable to provide for himself. Grandpa realized this throughout the last fourteen years of his life, most of which he spent in the home of his oldest son, William.

To sum up this chapter on the material considerations in Grandpa's life, a comparison with Abraham would not be totally out of place, at least from my lionizing point of view. Both men moved to strange countries for similar purposes. Both men were, of themselves, very poorly equipped for such a drastic change in environs. Grandpa knew no English when he came over. God provided a wife for him

who could carry on his business correspondence in English. Faith was the key. It provided cradle-to-the-grave security. Grandpa died with \$3000 in the bank, and with no thanks to his amateurish investment attempts or to his pastor's salary. The Lord provided everything.

To answer the question of why Grandpa chose to study over here, and at New Ulm, requires further speculation and digression. An immigrant arriving in New York in the 1880's might well have been presented with a pamphlet whose cover pictured a steam locomotive chugging off into the sunset with a farmer in a nearby field, smiling and waving and leaning on his shovel. Such a cover would also read as follows: "Southwestern Minnesota, The Land of Plenty. Compliments of the St. Paul and Sioux City Division of the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha Railway. St. Paul, Minn. to Sioux Falls, S. Dak." A special New York office had been created by the Minnesota legislature to persuade newly arriving immigrants to come to Minnesota. Railway companies were founding new towns all over the state. It was a boom time in Minnesota. People could still take advantage of the Homestead Act of 1862, although by the 1880's land speculators had fraudulently garnered 75-90% of all the claims, especially in northern Minnesota and the Dakotas.

But life in the new state was not all a rushing after the almighty dollar. In 1884, for example, New York Mills, a twelve year old village in northern Minnesota, filed a petition for its incorporation. The people of the sawmill

and railroad town said they had a population of "300 souls." That's the way people talked and thought. The religious consciousness ran as high as the monetary consciousness. People lived with a sense of imminent death and eternity. Five of Grandpa's children and his wife would die at early ages. Grandpa came to prepare people for eternity with the Word of Life.

The South German orientation of the Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan Synods, in general, was a significant factor, I believe, in Grandpa's decision to go to New Ulm. Koehler emphasizes this orientation throughout his history. Two of the three founding fathers of the Wisconsin Synod were Wuerttembergers, Muehlhaeuser from Notzingen, and Weinmann from Bernhausen. Of the former Koehler says:

Muehlhaeuser lacked the scholastic foundation which Schmid had received, and the Barmen training of the early days of the mission under Richter and Lindl did not affect much of a change in his Suabian Lutheranism. His was the way of Spittler and of the Chrischona, and its chief characteristic: the good-hearted, unselfish concern for others. (3)

"More so than Wisconsin," says Koehler, "Michigan, then, like Minnesota, became the destination of many Chrischona men."⁴ Michigan had a large contingent of Swabians that had come as early as the 1830's and had appealed to the Baseler Missionsgesellschaft for aid.⁵ The "Chrischona," of course, was the Pilgermission of the St. Chrischona, founded by Christian Friedrich Spittler (1782-1867), the one-time Pfarrer at Winzheim in Wuerttemberg, who also was the guiding force behind the Baseler Mission. Writing of the founding

of the Michigan Synod, Koehler says:

Pastor Fr. Schmid of Ann Arbor in 1859, in reporting Hildner's arrival to Director Josenhans of Basel, added the announcement that he was about "to construct a separate Lutheran synod of Michigan in the Wuerttemberg spirit." This conception of Lutheranism is quite often alluded to in the correspondence of those days, over against the Old-Lutheran way. The expression is meant to convey the Biblicism and pietism of Bengel, which Schmid, however, hardly was thoroughly acquainted with. (6)

Most of Minnesota's first pastors hailed from South Germany and had no ties with Langenberg or Berlin.⁷ The Chrischona sent five men to the 1865 Minnesota Synod, which, for all practical purposes, consisted of one congregation, Trinity-St. Paul.⁸ Two of the five, Ludwig Emmel and Albert Kuhn, were sent directly to Minnesota. Emmel was the first resident pastor at Salem in Greenwood, called in the year of that congregation's organization, 1865. As we have seen, that was to be the eventual destination of Albert Kuhn and Grandpa, also. Kuhn's immediate predecessor at Greenwood and a man who would likewise serve as Minnesota Synod Praeses (from 1883 to 1894), C.J. Albrecht, was sent directly to Greenwood by the Chrischona school in 1872.⁹ Altogether, that institution supplied Minnesota with twenty men, all of them especially trained for traveling *missionary* work.¹⁰

Then there was the make-up of the student body of the Practical Seminary in New Ulm. When the school opened its doors for the first time on Nov. 10, 1884, there were six students advanced enough to qualify for seminary instruction, four from Wuerttemberg, one from Austria, and one from Indianapolis. The next year, when Grandpa came, there were

twelve students in the theological department, six from Wuerttemberg (from towns like Dottingen, Bruetzingen, Geisslingen, in addition to Nellingen), one from Hamburg, one from Berlin, one from Austria, one from Philadelphia, and two from Minnesota (Minneota and Shakopee).

I believe this logistical factor may have influenced Grandpa greatly. He could hardly have been completely unaware of the movements of his countrymen. And apart from the Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan Synods, American Lutheranism was largely of North German extraction. If even today the older Haar relatives in Nellingen cling to their ancient Swabian dialect, the sectionalism of the 1800's must have been far greater. Tante Rose would speak virtually nothing but Swabish until her death in 1951.

Grandpa's theological roots and his probable affinity to the Wisconsin-Minnesota-Michigan confessionalism must not be overlooked. The fact that Swabian Lutheranism was definitely pietistic is interesting. All of the important Wuerttembergers mentioned by Koehler, beginning with Bengel, the "father of the Wuerttemberg pietism," and including the founders of the Basel and Chrischona societies, were pietists. The parents of Hermann Hesse, with whom I find it irresistible to compare my grandfather, if only because of logistical and chronological proximity, were pietists. It seems that anyone coming from that part of Germany at that period in history would have to be a pietist. But pietism was not all bad: its missionary zeal was tremendous. And it was an

amorphous impulse. Who can say whether it had the power to overshadow and neutralize the Biblicism and the true Lutheranism that Koehler says was also prevalent? The latter would be especially characteristic of the small-town, common people, I would think, the people Grandpa came from. Koehler says something about Muehlhaeuser that I believe corroborates this:

As a Suabian his training naturally had not been along confessional lines, but he was a simple-hearted Lutheran from his youth, and the idea of surrendering anything of his Lutheran faith would have filled him with consternation. (11)

The last part of this description, I'm sure, could apply to Grandpa. The negative part of this capsule evaluation of Swabian Lutheranism would not apply to Grandpa. He had no formal German ministerial training. I would like to believe it held no appeal for him. By the time he was ready for it, there was no confessional Lutheran training to be had in Germany. It is significant, too, that by the 1890's and the first decade of the 1900's there were no more Germans coming to the Seminary in New Ulm. Grandpa's generation represented a final flicker of confessionalism and of those looking for confessional training.

I believe it was the nature of the New Ulm school, more than anything, that was the attraction for Grandpa Haar. When it was ready, so was he. And its entrance requirements Grandpa could satisfy. More precisely, it was crying for students. To read the Minnesota Synod reports of the time is to be impressed with the desperateness of the pastoral shortage.

Minnesota had earlier stopped getting men from the Christiana, when that institution became unionistic.¹² And Hermannsburg and Steeden had no one to send.¹³ Praeses Kuhn had recently engineered the Synod through the state-synod strife, and had set it on the path toward independence. This appeared to some to be a foolish move at the time, especially to the Minnesota men who wanted to see the Synod join Missouri, either because they had been trained at Springfield, or because they merely considered it to be the most prudent alternative. Today we can be happy that merger never took place. Yet at the time it necessitated the opening of another seminary. And it presented Grandpa with his opportunity.

All this is not to imply that the New Ulm school was a sub-par institution. It was exactly what its name said it was, a practical seminary. It made no immodest claims. It did exude a confidence that belied its modest appearance, but it was a confidence based on the promises of God's Word. Already in the dedication sermon, the preacher was using that now common expression, the "city on the hill." On the basis of Mt. 5:14-16 he asked the question, "Wann wird unser Dr. Martin Luther Kollege in Wahrheit eine Stadt auf dem Berge?" And his confident replies: 1) "Wenn in demselben die Wahre Kunst und Wissenschaft gelehrt und gelernt wird;" and 2) "Wenn Lehrer und Schueler ihr Licht auch vor den Leuten leuchten lassen." If, at New Ulm, Grandpa Haar did not learn to become the greatest scholar, he did learn, I believe, how to let his light shine before men.

The first year of its existence the Lehrplan of the Seminary looked like this:

Dogmatik: 5 Stunden. -- Nach Dietrich's Auslegung des Katechismus wurde das erste Hauptstueck erklart.

Symbolik: 4 Stunden. -- Einleitung in die symbolischen Buecher und Erklaerung des ersten Teils der Augustana.

Exegesen: 2 Stunden. -- Erklaerung der ersten beiden Kapitel des Galaterbriefes.

Homiletik: 2 Stunden.

Kirchengeschichte: 2 Stunden. -- Geschichte des apostolischen Zeitalters.

Bibelkunde: 2 Stunden. -- Die drei ersten Buecher Mose nach Postel. (14)

It was based on the program of Dr. Ernst in Watertown. By the time Grandpa was in his last year, one hour of Katechetik, two hours of Doemengeschichte, and two hours of Pastorale had been added.¹⁵ That was the extent of his theological training. He knew Latin from his schooling in Germany, enough to give his sons a beginning course in it prior to their entry into the high school at New Ulm. His competence in Greek was minimal and in Hebrew non-existent. He would not have boasted of his ignorance, however, and, I am sure approved of the beefed-up schedule in Watertown and later in Wauwatosa. In 1899 he was elected to serve on the first separate board of directors of the latter institution as the Sekretaer des allgemeinen Verwaltungsrathes.¹⁶ In the only report he wrote in that capacity he makes special note of the process employed in the testing and assigning of candidates at the Seminary. He also describes the food served at the Seminary as "einfach aber reichlich" and notes that complaints about it were rare.¹⁷ To conclude these comments on Grandpa's

scholarly pursuits and interests it is obvious that his study was always immensely practical, geared toward the daily, weekly, and yearly teaching and preaching. While he never preached and rarely spoke in English, he did acquire the ability to read and translate it, mainly again, to serve him in the practical work of preaching and teaching. In this he did not differ much, I'm sure, from most of his contemporaries. He did retain a love of reading and studying right up until his death. Later in life he could be found in only one of three places, they say, the garden, the barn, or his study.

The summer after his graduation from the Seminary was an important one for Grandpa Haar. It is stated in his obituary that he completed his studies already in May of 1887, owing to his "gute Vorbildung."¹⁸ This may tally with the synod school report of that year which implies more than one examination and graduation period. He was not immediately assigned a parish of his own, however, but a vicarship at St. John's in St. Paul, under C.F.W. Gausewitz. It was the best thing that could have happened. There he met Louise Hess. Her full name was Clara Wilhelmine Louise Hess. She was the daughter of a St. Paul merchant, who was a member of St. John's. They would not be married for over two years, probably because of Grandma's age at the time, eighteen.

For part of the intervening years Grandpa performed collection service for the Synod. The Minnesota Synod, unlike its sister synod some years later, was not afraid to go into

debt. It had to do so, to the tune of over \$16,000, to get its New Ulm Anstalt into operation. We should report, rather, that Herr Praeses C.J. Albrecht was not afraid to get his Synod into debt, out of his zeal to make good on the Synod's promise to provide the teacher training school for the entire Joint Synod, and to make sure the school would be located in New Ulm, where he was serving as pastor. He duly apologized in the name of the New Ulm building committee, but apologies did not liquidate the debt, and Grandpa Haar got in on the synodical attempts to accomplish that. The report to the 1888 Synod meeting reads in part:

Nachdem die Synode voriges Jahr beschlossen hatte, einen Kollektanten fuer Schuldentilgung anzustellen, versuchte der Verwaltungs-Rat sofort, eine passende Persoenlichkeit zu bekommen. Es gelang aber erst im Herbst einen Kollektanten anzustellen, und zwar Student Haar. Derselbe arbeitete eine zeitlang mit gutem Erfolg. Nachdem aber das strenge Winterwetter eintrat, musste er seine Arbeit einstellen. Im Fruejahr erhielt Student Haar einen Beruf an eine Gemeinde. Darauf stellte der Verwaltungs-Rat P. Frey von Stillwater an. Derselbe ist jetzt an der Arbeit, und zwar ebenfalls mit gutem Erfolg. (17)

The various accounts of this operation contain not a few discrepancies. In Grandpa's obituary it says the Lord blessed and prospered his efforts bounteously. This would jibe with the above account. In the Geschichte der Minnesota-Synode we are told that the Collector system only increased the expenses because the collectors had to be supported from what was collected.²⁰ This book says that not until Gausewitz took over as Praeses in 1894 was the right path taken to clear the debt, but that it was still not entirely accomplished (the book was published in 1910). Whatever the case may have ^{might}

been, it is apparent that Grandpa was no Billy Sunday. The responsible position given him, though, does speak well of his abilities.

As stated in the above report Grandpa accepted a call in the spring of 1888. The call was to Trinity of Town Dexter in Mower County, Minn. He was ordained and installed on Rogate Sunday by Professor Otto Hoyer, the first director of Dr. Martin Luther College. Going to Dexter was a new experience for neither Grandpa nor Prof. Hoyer. The Trinity congregation had been organized on Dec. 3, 1883. Prof. Hoyer had drawn up the constitution and from 1883-1886 also had served as the mission pastor. During that time he had often sent his Sem students to preach. Among them was Grandpa.

Grandpa was Trinity's first resident pastor. He moved into a brand new parsonage, a white-frame, two-story, with trees and shrubs and a fence around it. The congregation consisted of thirty voters and 130 souls. That first year Grandpa baptized seventeen, confirmed three, communed 156, buried one, and married one couple. Some of his time was spent in preaching in nearby Austin, an effort that did not result in the formation of a new congregation. Still today Trinity of rural Austin is the only WELS congregation in the area. It has grown to a communicant membership of 172 and a baptized membership of 205, with sixty-six voters.

The biggest event that took place during the Dexter ministry was the wedding. The exact date was Oct. 8, 1889. The place was St. John's in St. Paul. The wedding picture, the

only tangible remnant of that day, other than the cutaway coat Grandpa wore, is revealing. It's also the only picture we have of Grandpa and Grandma in their younger days. Grandpa's nervous energy is evident on his face -- what exactly he was nervous about is not certain -- and it is plain to see he had not yet gone bald. Grandma wears a regal, yet demure expression, in addition to an extremely ornate dress and headpiece.

From those people who knew Grandpa we are given to understand how "meet" a helper Grandma was for him. Beyond the obvious physical companionship there was her organizational and musical abilities, and her proficiency in the English language. The fact that she had received a high school education represented no mean advantage for Grandpa and his ministry. Indeed, we can understand why Grandpa's children say he was "lost" in many respects when he had to get along without her after 1917. She died on March 9 of that year of hardening of the liver, which developed as a consequence of the birth of the thirteenth child.

The stay at Dexter was not long. In January of 1890 Grandpa received a call from St. John's of Lake City and Immanuel of West Florence. He accepted and was installed in March, on Oculi Sunday, by Pastor Christian Bender of Red Wing. The Geschichte der Minnesota-Synode closes its account of Grandpa's ministry in Lake City with these words:

Pastor Haar erhielt am 1. September 1900 einen Beruf von der Gemeinde in Hanover, Minnesota. Die Johannes-

Gemeinde in Lake City liess ihren Pastor in Frieden ziehen. Er hat in grossen Treue und Selbstverleugnung an der Gemeinde gearbeitet. (21)

A look at the record forces concurrence with that final appraisal.

The congregation at Lake City was organized on June 10, 1888 after being served sporadically by Prof. Hoyer, Pastor Gausewitz and Praeses Albrecht. Until the fall of 1889 it was served by the pastor from West Albany (West Florence). But he took a call back to Bremen, Germany, and then both congregations were vacant. This explains the dual parish call sent to Grandpa.

When Grandpa came to Lake City, the congregation had no church, no parsonage, and no property. The Swedish Covenant church was being rented for services and Grandpa was paid extra (\$200 per year) so that he could rent living quarters. By fall of the first year however, two lots were purchased at the cost of \$165 as future church and parsonage sites. In 1892 the parsonage and barn (garage) were built. Together they cost \$1,600 and are still being used by the congregation today. In 1893 the congregation was informed they could no longer rent the Covenant church, so the old Catholic church building was bought for \$1,600 and moved onto the congregation's lot. When the dust had settled and the bills were added up, the congregation stood in the red by \$1,400. "Die noch kleine Gemeinde musste grosse Opfer bringen, um die Schuldenlast abzutragen, auch die Frauen und Jungfrauen halten treulich mitgeholfen," we are told.²²

Further additions to the congregation's property during Grandpa's time included a cemetery purchased in 1893 and a

school room that was attached to the church in 1898. Grandpa's school endeavors appear to have been substantial throughout his ministry. He preached a host of school sermons. In one of them, based on Dt. 6:4-9, he asked the question, "Warum sollen wir unsere Kinder vom ersten Schuljahr bis zum Konfirmation in der Gemeindeschule schicken?" His answers were: 1) "Damit sie Gottes Wort recht kennen und darinnen wandeln;" and 2) "Damit sie recht geruestet werden zum Kampf und auch zum Sieg." A school annex was added to the West Florence church during his time (1894), and later on, while he was at Greenwood, the congregation there would first buy an old district schoolhouse (1901), and then erect a new one of its own (1917). Here at West Florence and Lake City the number of students varied anywhere from 15-35, according to the records. At Greenwood the average number of students was around 75. These were, of course, Sunday and summer schools, taught primarily by Grandpa, but also, later on, by Grandpa's children, as we have noted. But we must not compare these summer schools with our VBS. These were schools, lasting six to eight weeks, and requiring morning and afternoon attendance. At Greenwood it became the practice for many years for prospective confirmands to take a whole year off their regular jobs or schooling to devote their time exclusively to confirmation instructions. Such instruction usually occupied the entire morning of every weekday. Today two of Grandpa's former congregations, St. John's and Salem, have rather large Christian day schools, the former needing six teachers for 150 students, the latter

three teachers for 75 students. Grandpa would have rejoiced to see this day.

The congregation in Lake City grew considerably during Grandpa's own *stay* there. He himself was more than spiritually responsible for this: six of his own children were born during the ten year period, Louise Martha Rosine, Dec. 3, 1890; Agnes Elizabeth Ottillie, Nov. 28, 1892; Otto Heinrich Wilhelm, May 13, 1894; Wilhelm Paul Johannes, Oct. 23, 1896; Esther Pauline Wilhelmine, March 15, 1898; and Phoebe Marie Christine, Nov. 18, 1899. While the actual number of souls in the two congregations is not in the records, they do show that the number of voters went from 64 to 85 during Grandpa's time. St. John's today has 218 voters, 1455 communicants, and two pastors. Immanuel, being a *rural* parish, has not seen such dramatic growth. From the years 1859-1880 it was, officially, a Presbyterian congregation, and the controversy over the denominational change that took place prior to Grandpa's coming was probably responsible for the fact that it also did not join the Synod until rather recently.

Grandpa was most closely associated with Salem in Greenwood. The fact that we have found it impossible up to this point to omit references to his life there bears this out. The association is natural because he spent thirty active years and most of his fourteen retirement years there.

How does one begin to summarize and evaluate forty-four years in the life of his grandfather, a man he never knew? Does he look at the statistics and stick to the facts? Hardly,

not when dealing with a man for whom statistics and facts held neither ultimate appeal or sway. Grandpa, like every Christian, had only one purpose in life, and that purpose was the one explained by that dedication sermon in New Ulm. To attempt to criticize his fulfillment of that purpose on the basis of statistics would be the height of thoughtlessness.

Perhaps one begins by looking at that which did hold ultimate authority for Grandpa, the Word. When Grandpa got the letter in the mail from the group of farmers up in Greenwood, asking him to be their pastor, he interpreted it not only as a request from a group of farmers, but as a call from the Spirit. This is clear from the farewell sermon he preached to the people of Lake City and West Florence on Sept. 30, 1900. He based his sermon on the words of Paul to the elders of Ephesus in Acts 20:22: "Und nun siehe, ich im Geist gebunden, fahre hin gen Jerusalem, weiss nicht, was mir daselbst Begegnen wird." If Greenwood was not exactly Jerusalem, at least the principles applied. His theme was, "Ich befehle euch Gott und dem Wort seiner Gnade." And his two main parts were these: 1) "Das habt ihr noetig;" and 2) "Darinnen findet ihr voellige Beruhigung." Obviously Grandpa wasn't worried about the people he was leaving, or about his destination. God and the Word of His grace were reigning supreme in his own heart and in the hearts of the people of St. John and Immanuel. He did not tell the people of Immanuel, "You had better join the Synod because there is no salvation outside it." He commended them to God and the the Word of His grace.

That same spirit was in evidence the very next Sunday when he preached to the people of Salem for the first time. He based his Antrittspredigt on II Cor. 5:19-21. The theme was, "Ein Prediger ein Botschafter an Christi Statt." Part 1: "Gott war in Christo und versoehte die Welt mit ihm selber." Part 2: "Lasset euch versoeihen mit Gott." Part 3: "Gott hat unter uns aufgerichtet das Wort von der Versoehnung." Perhaps we are given here an intimation of a preacher syndrome, that lack of application of the doctrine of the universal priesthood of all believers which can be seen in various areas of our Synod's early life. But application is not the main point. Motivation is.

Only when we understand the basic motivation can we keep the facts and figures in their proper perspective. And then we also come to realize that whatever we may say about accomplishments or lack of the same falls far short of an ultimate judgment. An examination of the facts can be instructive for us, but a man who was motivated as was Grandpa must stand trial before no man.

Salem was reaching its peak period of growth when Grandpa came. It was not a mission congregation in the sense that Grandpa's previous charges had been. It was already fairly old and established. It could be called the mother church to at least a half-dozen of the area churches. Prior to its organization in 1865 it had been served by Reiseprediger like Moldenke and Fachtmann. Emmel, Jahn and Kern had used it as their base station. Then under Albrecht the first teacher

was installed and by Kuhn's time the membership had grown to over 100 families.

Grandpa was installed Oct 21, 1900, three weeks after he preached his first sermon. The following year he was privileged to move into the second new parsonage of his career, built at the expense of \$1,936.98. A bit of a controversy arose over whether or not a heating system should be installed. Grandpa wanted it. The congregation did not. Grandpa paid for it himself -- 300 dollars -- and all seemed satisfied. It is said the generous gift given him at his retirement 29 years later was in partial and veiled remembrance of this act.

Quibbling over a few hundred dollars seems entirely out of character for the Salem congregation. Property improvements were made by the score, including the afore-mentioned school enterprises, the drilling of a new well and installation of a new pump, and to top it all off, the construction of a new church in 1904 at the cost of \$15,000. Grandpa wrote the following for the Cemeinde-Blatt on the church dedication: "Dieser Gebaeude ist ein schoenes Zeugniss fuer die Opferwilligkeit der Greenwooder Cemeinde. Es will etwas heissen, wenn 130 Familien \$15,000 fuer eine Kirche opfern."²³ Was there irony in those words? I don't think so. Not when you read his description of the church itself. There's genuine awe in his words. He had been used to a little wood-frame church in Dexter, after all, and the old Catholic church in Lake City. And when you read the following words, you can sense the

respect and thankfulness for the efforts of the people and for the grace of God:

Und nebenbei haben die Glieder alles Material auf den Platz gefahren, die Steine fuer die Grundmauer hergeschleppt, Sand herbeigeschafft und das Ausgraben besorgt. Wenn man 7-9 Meilen zur Eisenbahn hat, erfordert das viel Arbeit. Es haben auch alle Glieder einmuetig Hand ans Werk gelegt. Der Altar sowie die Teppiche sind von den Frauen. Die Kanzel und die Bekleidung fuer Altar und Kanzel von den Juenglingen und Jungfrauen. Drei Dutzent Stuehle von den Kindern. Die drei grossen Fenster von einzelnen Gliedern. Die Altarbibel von zwei Frauen. Der Taufstein zum Andenken an ein entschlafenes Glied der Gemeinde. Die Statue ebenfalls von einem Glied. Die Schoenste Zierde der Kirche aber ist, dass Gottes Wort, das Evangelium von Christo darin gepredigt wird und die heiligen Sacramente recht darin gehandhabt werden. Moege der Gesamteindruck allen unvergesslich bleiben! Moege die die so schoen vollendete neue Kirche fuer uns alle und fuer viele mit uns und nach uns sein und bleiben: eine Zeugenstaette der Wahrheit underes Gottes, ein Tempel seiner Herrlichkeit und Gnadengegenwart, eine untruegliche Pforte des Himmels und ein lieglicher Vorhof des himmlischen Reiches imoberen Heiligtum. (27)

Certainly Grandpa had in mind his rather abortive efforts at clearing the Synod of its \$16,000 debt. When you consider that Salem had the \$15,000 debt on its new church paid off by 1907, while the Synod could not liquidate its debt in 25 years, you know what people were doing with their money. Rather than laying the blame on congregations like Salem, however, we might ask whether the high-handed, unilateral tactics employed by the New Ulm building committee, with Praeses Albrecht at its head, may not have discouraged grass-roots synodical cooperation.

More controversy and animosity are stirred up over externals like money and buildings, it seems, than by anything else. Grandpa was charged by a member of the congregation with embezzlement of funds. The charge was quickly disallowed,

however, by perusal of the church records, where every penny was itemized and accounted for. And the accuser was completely disgraced when he left the church and his own family refused to follow suit. But what a crying shame! That a pile of bricks should inhibit the building of the Kingdom!

But a church can be more than a pile of bricks, as Grandpa stated in his words above. It can be a "place of witness to the Truth of our God, a sanctuary of His Glory and of His gracious Presence, an undeniable gateway of heaven, and a beloved forecourt of the heavenly Kingdom in holiness above." Most people of Salem thought of their church in those terms, I believe. As with the Old Testament temple, every effort was made to beautify it. The pipe organ that is still in use was dedicated Dec. 20, 1908. The church's stained glass windows and wall-sized oil painting of the Ascension are true works of art.

Still, the Salem church building was not Grandpa's crowning achievement, if we may use such words. His daily and weekly teaching and preaching were more important, as were the 644 baptisms, 532 confirmations, the 17,060 communions administered, and the 188 weddings and 236 burials at which he officiated. His work as visitor, first for the St. Paul District, and then for the Crow River Valley Conference District, was more vital. The influence he exerted upon several sons and daughters of the congregation to enter the teaching and preaching ministries was more valuable. In these areas he most directly lived and proclaimed that Word of reconciliation.

Altogether, when Grandpa retired from the active ministry on Oct. 5, 1930, he was responsible for the following pastoral acts: 882 baptisms, 654 confirmations, 23,075 communions, 247 weddings, and 288 burials. He also preached approximately 2,500 sermons in his career. He never took vacations as far as we know.

The rest of Grandpa's children were born in Greenwood: Charlotte Julia Auguste, Aug 12, 1901; Tabea Natalie Bertha, May 5, 1903; Cordelia Helena, Mar. 31, 1905; Theophil Georg, July 13, 1906; Erna Ruth Dorothea, Dec. 26, 1908; Delores Clara Marie, Mar. 18, 1911; and Margaret Renada, Feb. 23, 1917. Otto, the oldest son, died in June of 1910 as a result of peritonitis and spinal meningitis that followed a ruptured appendix. He had just completed his high school studies and was heading for Northwestern. Grandma, of course, died in 1917. And Margaret too, died while Grandpa was still in the ministry, in Aug. of 1926, of tetanus, contracted by stepping on a nail. The wound had apparently healed.

Salem was witness to Grandpa's strengths and his weaknesses. It saw him in his ascendancy and also in his decline. Advancing age and the deaths in the family had not a little to do with the latter. The congregation itself declined in membership, again due to more than one factor. When several neighboring congregations were finally organized, Salem's membership suffered numerically. And there was the language problem. Already at that first board of directors meeting in 1889 Grandpa must have gotten a presentiment of the coming shift to

English. Koehler reports that part of the business of that meeting involved the clearly recognizable need for more English instruction at Northwestern and the Seminary.²⁵ He says, "The move looking to more emphasis on the English originated in Minnesota."²⁶ By 1910 congregations are beginning to hold English services once or twice a month. By 1922 the following embarrassing questions are part of the regular Synodal-Berichte:
Englischer Gottesdienst wie oft? Wie oft ist englische Abendsmahlsfeier? In welcher Weise ist gesorgt fuer englischen Religions-Unterricht? Grandpa had to answer, "Niemals." It was not that he was afflicted with an *indelible* streak of German chauvinism, like Tante. He frequently invited guest preachers to hold forth in English. And in private conversation and in study he would commonly use English. Those who knew him say he would not have been entirely incapable of preaching an English sermon. It appears that the crux of the matter was his pride. It was perfection, or nothing. Da liegt der ganze Hacken!

*if his study
was of German
+ his pronunciation
Adam + Ava*

I refuse to criticize Grandpa too harshly for his attitude. He was on the very fringe of the transition period. Very analogous to the situation are the many congregations today that must forego German services because of the unwillingness or inability of our younger pastors to preach German. How many of us seminarians could preach an acceptable German sermon? And we have had up to six years of formal German language instruction! Grandpa had no formal English classes. Given his origin, the nature of his training, and the demanding

schedule he maintained throughout his ministry, I believe our sympathetic understanding is more in order than our criticism.

To complete the story of Grandpa's life a few words about his retirement and death are in place. Koehler says Von Rohr's Prussian military training made him a man of judgment and poise.²⁷ Perhaps it did the same for Grandpa. But then it also made him a man of regimen. Every morning he was up by five and every evening he was in bed by six. Every evening, that is, except the one on which the Springerle were made. Then he would stay up later and help the grandchildren make cookies. He loved to play with the children. He loved to study, work in the garden, and in the barn. I guess we'd call him a man of simple pleasures.

Grandpa died of stomach cancer. The date was July 9, 1944. He was 82. He had made several trips to the hospital before the doctors determined his condition to be incurable, and then he came home. He was not bed-ridden long. He was walking around, up and down stairs, five days before he died. He told his daughter-in-law he felt pretty good only seven hours before his death, but then he fell into a coma. "He died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people." Pastor Dowidat preached his funeral sermon. They had made the agreement that when one of them died, the other would perform that service. In view of the difference in their ages, and the fact that Pastor Dowidat is still living, we can chalk it up as a bit of gallows humor on Grandpa's part. Grandpa is buried on the Salem cemetery, next to Tante.

I asked the Rev. Walter Bouman, Th.D., and Professor of Systematic Theology at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Columbus, Ohio, to evaluate Grandpa's ministry. Wally is the son of Cordelia, Grandpa's ninth child. Wally's mother died when he was 17. Unlike this writer, he knew Grandpa personally, if only in his retirement. Specifically, I asked him to compare and contrast Grandpa's day and approach and message with ours. I asked him if he recalled a letter Grandpa may have sent to him on the occasion of his confirmation, the brown-paper-bag copy of which I found in one of Grandpa's books. It was a letter about faith.

He could not recall receiving the letter. Grandpa may never have sent it. He did recall Grandpa's staying with them for a time in Wood Lake in 1938. He recalled playing a German game with Grandpa called "Muehle," and chopping wood with him. And he offered his opinions.

Grandpa was part of a German cultural "enclave." It was very similar to the "enclaves" that existed among the Roman Catholics and the Scandanavians. He referred me to a book of his, Christianity American Style, in which he writes about these enclaves. He thinks much of what the Lutherans did in their "enclave" was valid. He says:

There was spiritual nurture of a consistent and high caliber. There was resistance to the "culture religion" which was characteristic of most of the Anglo-Saxon American denominations. There was a unity of church-school-home in the communities of the enclave which gave people identity, meaning, and life orientation. Some of the positions on American religio-cultural institutions had the possibility to be genuinely counter-cultural, critical of culture. Examples: the general opposition to the Masonic Lodge, the Wisconsin Synod

opposition to boy and girl scouts, the continued refusal of the Wisconsin Synod to have military chaplains, the refusal to participate in the religious rites of the public schools, service clubs, and state and national political and legislative assemblies.

At one point he calls these enclaves "saving enclaves." He says he has great respect and admiration for Grandpa's ministry.

The biography we are presently concluding has made some of these points. Grandpa most likely was influenced to enter the church body he did for some cultural reasons. And once he began to function in his ministry the language barrier did tend to isolate him from non-Germans. Grandpa's ministry did represent a high and consistent caliber of spiritual nurture. And his positions over against such organizations as the Lodge, boy scouts, and the military chaplaincy were "counter-cultural," if you will. But I would question the pressing of the term "enclave." Does it not imply a conscious desire to be isolated and aloof? Is it not basically, a renunciation of more than just the cultural strictions of Grandpa's ministry? If it does imply such an intentional isolation, and if it does represent a more penetrating criticism than the mere cultural, then its application to Grandpa's ministry is misplaced. For in reality, Grandpa was no Tante. I say this in all charitableness to Tante, for her insights were limited by many circumstances beyond her control. But Grandpa was not proud of his ignorance, as I have mentioned before. He ^{did not} would not have come back from an English church service and said, "All they did was swear. It was one 'Jesus Christ' after another," as the joke went.

Zion River!
his favorite

No, that's mainly what the German "enclave" was to the Germans themselves, a joke. Or else it was a grievance, as I'm sure it often was to Grandpa. It was certainly no means of salvation to him, whatever kind of salvation is meant by the phrase "saving enclave." Surely Grandpa was not happy about his inability to communicate the Gospel to all races and all peoples. That's why he studied English. That's why he imported English preachers. That's why he threw himself with total abandon into the work he could do. Grandpa's limitations were not self-conscious. To me it says a lot that he was willing to serve the congregation at West Florence, a congregation that was formerly Presbyterian and not a member of the Synod. The treasurer of the congregation was Christopher Luetjen, undoubtedly a Scandanavian.²⁸ The controversy that preceded Grandpa's coming concerned whether or not German services, German Lutheran services should be held in the Presbyterian church. But the differences were ironed out. The two cultures found out there was only one God and Father of all. It was a tiny incident in an insignificant place, but it says much about the intentions of the Lutheran's of Grandpa's time.

As far as lodging criticism against the Lutheranism of Grandpa and his peers more deep-seated than the cultural, it is out of the question. In both motivation and message Grandpa exhibited genuine Christianity. His sermons could be preached today and they would be effective witnesses to the Truth. If they were properly drawn from the Truth, they would be effective witnesses of that Truth.

That my fears concerning the use of the word "enclave" are founded is evident from a closer look at Wally's criticism and proposals. He says the enclave positions came to be mere reactions, rather than a "conscious churchly effort to relate Christianity to our cultural environment." He speaks of reacting critically to his tradition and to the whole static practice of Lutheran Christianity. He is critical of the slow change in sermonizing among "enclave"preachers. He says we must apply our recently acquired theological, historical, sociological and psychological insights to the question of how to function as faithful witnesses. Otherwise, saving enclaves turn destructive. He uses language borrowed from Tillich and says we must risk our tradition.

Wally's "respect" and "admiration" for his and my grandfather's ministry is the respect and admiration one shows for museum pieces. They were good in their day, but they've seen their day. We need something more and something new.

Our understanding and application of God's Word can not remain static, it is true. But the basic tools with which we work are the same as those with which Grandpa worked, the Gospel in Word and Sacraments. That never changes, and needs no supplementation. It is a tradition that needs not to be "risked," but appreciated and exercised. Either Grandpa delivered to us the form of sound words or he did not. If he did not, kind words of admiration will not help him or us. If he did, then we must appreciate and use them ourselves. Respecting and admiring our tradition without using it is not even risking it. It is embalming it. It is losing it.

END NOTES

- ¹ John Philipp Koehler, The History of the Wisconsin Synod (St. Cloud, Minn.: Sentinel Pub. Co., 1970), pp. 67-69.
- ² Ibid., p. 68.
- ³ Ibid., p. 35.
- ⁴ Ibid., p. 175.
- ⁵ Ibid., p. 25.
- ⁶ Ibid., p. 175.
- ⁷ Ibid., p. 127.
- ⁸ Ibid.,
- ⁹ Ibid., p. 174
- ¹⁰ Ibid., p. 173.
- ¹¹ Ibid., p. 72.
- ¹² Ibid., p. 173
- ¹³ Ibid.,
- ¹⁴ Katalog des evangelisch-lutherischen Dr. Martin Luther Kollegiums, 1884-1885 (New Usm, Minn.: Druck der "New Ulm Review," 1884), p. 8.
- ¹⁵ Katalog, 1886-1887, p. 10.
- ¹⁶ Koehler, op. cit., p. 207.
- ¹⁷ Berichte der Minnesota-Synode, 1901, pp. 72, 73.
- ¹⁸ W.J. Schulze. "Pastor Wilhelm Georg Haarsen." Evangelisch-lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt, Vol. 79. (August, 13, 1944), 172, 173.
- ¹⁹ Berichte der Minnesota-Synode, 1888, p. 52.
- ²⁰ Geschichte der Minnesota-Synode (St. Louis: Druck der Louis Lange Pub. Co., 1910), p. 38.
- ²¹ Ibid., p. 141.
- ²² Ibid.

END NOTES (cont.)

23 W. Haar. "Kircheinweihung in Greenwood." Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt, Vol. 39. (November 15, 1904), 172.

24 Ibid.

25 Koehler, op. cit., p. 207.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid., p. 172.

28 Golden Jubilee History of the Minnesota District (Minneapolis: Ad Art Advertising Co., 1969), p. 129.

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Pastor Paul Dowidat

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