

A Pioneer in Northwest America 1841-1858
The Memoirs of Gustaf Unonius

VOLUME TWO

Chapter III

NASHOTAH—THE FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS—A TYPICAL DAY—THE GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION—A BAPTISM—A NORWEGIAN FUNERAL—THE EDUCATION OFFERED AT NASHOTAH—A PROTESTANT MONASTERY

MR. BRECK and the two other ministers in Nashotah, who had arrived in Wisconsin simultaneously with us, in order to find and bring together scattered members of the flock of Christ, were now beginning to realize the plan they had made at the very beginning: along with their missionary work and to further its future development, to establish an educational institution at Nashotah. Their purpose was not merely to found an ordinary school, but also and principally a theological seminary for which the ordinary school in certain cases, would be preparatory, and there prepare ministers and teachers for the new and distant states and territories. Since these men would be trained in the West, be well acquainted with the way of life and the character of the people living there, and from the very beginning be used to physical labor and inured to the hardships, trials, perils, and self-denial of the frontier people, they would be better suited than others to such activity. It was hardly to be expected that many of those who had graduated from the seminaries in the eastern states would go far away to the western settlements as long as they had many churches of varying membership in the ordered communities that were speedily growing up and which needed and were calling for their service. The harvest was great, but the laborers were then as now few. It was therefore necessary in the midst of the vast wilderness, where in many a place the cross of Christ was practically unknown, to provide young men the help and opportunity needed to enter the ministry when they felt called to that service but were unable, because of their financial circumstances, to secure their training in the eastern states.

It seems right and proper to give my readers, especially those vitally interested in religious matters and consequently also in the education of ministers, a true conception of an educational institution excellent in every respect and well suited to its purpose, and at which it was my inestimable privilege to spend almost two years, a period which gave me some of my most precious memories from my sojourn in America, and which I shall always cherish with deep gratitude to God and to those who instructed me in

His Word and guided my steps.

From an insignificant seed, that institution has grown into a tree whose present fruits give us reason to hope for richer harvests in the future. What began as merely an academy with a few students soon changed into a theological seminary, for some time in connection with a preparatory department from which some students were admitted to the seminary, until it became what it is now: an institution exclusively for the training of ministers, from which more than fifty messengers have already gone forth “in Christ’s stead” to proclaim the gospel in the faraway Mississippi valley; where at present more than sixty young men are preparing themselves for the same sacred office, in order that they may later in the uncultivated wilderness and in the newly erected log cabins of the new settlements meet the immigrant folk with the bread of life.

In outward things, too, Nashotah has changed a great deal from what it was during the years I spent there. I well remember the small, insignificant buildings where some of the students had to arrange, as well as they could, their small cells in attics and cellars, where the wind sometimes turned the leaves of their books at the wrong time. I recall the former barn and stable which after a while had to be evacuated by the four-legged inhabitants in order to be refitted and undergo a bit of cleaning and whitewashing, thereafter to serve as shelter for more rational creatures. I recall all these things that in the early days really promised little for the future, and which an academician reared in European halls of learning would no doubt have treated with a supercilious smile if he had been told that this was the outer shell of an institution of learning which in many respects could stand comparison with his own alma mater. In place of these makeshift shelters there is now a roomy, beautiful building with adequate lecture rooms, wide corridors, and pleasant living rooms for the students. Instead of the small, inadequate chapel, half of which was used as a classroom, and in which a few people of the neighborhood attended services on Sundays, an attractive Gothic-style church of hewn stone has been erected. There, besides the personnel of the seminary, more and more people who have been led to the knowledge of the truth gather for divine services; and many who now kneel at the altar, had it not been that a baptismal font in the former small chapel had been prepared for the children, would probably have grown up as “strangers from the covenants of promise” and “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.”

But I wish to revisit Nashotah as it was at the time of my sojourn there. Even for an American school it was strange, and it is not likely that anything comparable could be found in Europe.

In order to reduce the annual expense—I will not say for education, because that the teachers gave for practically nothing, and the founding of the institute was assuredly nothing less than a financial experiment—but in order that the students at the institute might secure food and clothes at the smallest cost possible, the institution being open even to those of very limited means, each student had to work for several hours each day: some on the land, which had been purchased with financial contributions from some men in the eastern states and from which, to the degree that it was brought under cultivation, the school reaped some of its necessary foodstuffs; some in other occupations associated with a country household for which no servants had been engaged. In this way each student was his own servant, maintained himself by the toil of his hands, and assisted through the yield of the land in maintaining the institute. The annual tuition amounted to only \$75, which of course was entirely inadequate for the students' support, and small pay for the privileges they enjoyed, even if one puts the highest possible value on their services. A few students were received for no tuition at all except the service they were able to render, and since the yield of the soil, at least during the first years, was rather inconsequential, the school had to depend for its other material needs on the annual voluntary contributions from church members in the eastern states who took an interest in the undertaking. That, however, was an uncertain income, and the amount of it could never be predicted in advance. Still, it was mainly through such contributions—exceedingly scant, particularly in the beginning—that Nashotah was able to carry on and develop into what it is now, an institution where it is unnecessary for students to labor. Gifts from Christian friends have brought about what the school, left to itself, could never have become, in spite of the toil and energy of its founders. And yet it has not been supported as much through the gifts of the wealthy as through the poor widows' mites and the sacrifices of those who have given to it, if not out of their poverty, yet still not out of their abundance. Nor was this support wanting in hours of need. This taught the students not to be unduly anxious for the morrow, but while they were diligently and conscientiously attending to their duties, doing everything that fell to their lot, to put their full trust in Him who taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." Nor was that bread ever wanting, though they had sometimes to be satisfied with crumbs when it did not please the Lord to seat them at a table heavily loaded with the good things of life.

In 1841, when it may be said that the Nashotah Institute was founded, there was only one student. The next year the number was increased by four; the next year by seven, and in 1844, when I was admitted, the number was twenty-eight. As I have already stated, the present number of students is

more than sixty, and more than fifty have now been graduated and entered the ministry. Several of those also received their preliminary education at this institution.

At the beginning as well as later there were always more applicants for admission to the institute than could be received, either because of lack of space or for economic reasons. Still, for each one who has revealed an earnest desire to enter the ministry, Nashotah has provided an opportunity to do so unless conditions have made it entirely impossible, and many a time what was impossible for other similar institutions proved possible, by the grace of God, for this one. To many who applied to become members of this brotherhood the answer has been: "Come in your poverty and we shall share with you our small means; come in your ignorance and we shall teach you until you are fit to be accepted as a worker in the vineyard of the Lord."

All the fees and contributions as well as the small private incomes and missionary salaries of the teachers were put into a common fund, which supplied, as far as possible, food and raiment for those who, as I shall later explain, made up the regular membership of the institute.

Students who were able to pay their way were treated no differently than the nonpaying students. No endowment for the support of the institute existed then, nor does it now, if we except the land which was purchased in its raw, uncultivated state and has gradually been put under cultivation. In the beginning we devoted our efforts mainly to clearing and cultivating the land. Each applied himself energetically. It was work not so much for ourselves as for those who were to succeed us. We were all encouraged by the spirit which the principal of the institute and the other teachers sought to instill in us: that we ought to feel that every furrow of the plow, every stroke of the axe, every cut of the spade promoted the building up of the kingdom of God in the wilderness. Thus supported, it was possible for us to endure every privation and to bear every burden, which few students of our day and age here or in any other land would labor under. The teachers enjoyed no greater privileges than the students, taking part in the same toil, and sharing the same meals, which frequently were quite meager. I know of times, which later came to my attention, when Mr. Breck left his own bed for some student who had just arrived, and prepared a resting-place for himself on the floor until he was able to add to the furnishings of the institute.

Generally we labored together at the farm work, but sometimes we were divided into groups for our daily labor, each taking its turn at the tasks. One group attended to the cooking and the things pertaining to the kitchen; another took care of the stable and barn; a third group had to chop wood; a fourth busied itself with carpentry; a fifth had for its share laundering and

ironing—for even these tasks, to which men's hands were unaccustomed, we did ourselves. At first we hired our laundering done, but the difficulty in a new territory of securing help or hiring servants often made it a problem to find anyone willing to undertake that work. The students themselves offered their services, an offer all the more readily accepted because it saved the institute at least \$500 a year, which could be used for the purchase of books and certain comforts which would otherwise have had to be foregone. The meals were sometimes scanty and who could blame the young men if the prospect of an improvement in their fare made them more willing to spend some time over the washboard?

It may be objected that with all these duties there would be little time left for studies. True, there was not so much time as is given a young man in other educational institutions, where he hardly ever has time to shake off the dust of the schoolroom; but still enough to give a sound education while retaining a sound soul in a sound body. Both the physical and mental labors were consecrated with daily prayer which gave increased strength, both outward and inward, and prevented the labor from being fruitless. At five o'clock in the morning, the ringing of a bell suspended from the branches of a sturdy oak gave the signal for rising. At six, it called students and staff to prayer in the chapel, after which breakfast was served. Then followed lessons and lectures until one o'clock when we gathered for the midday meal, which was immediately followed by work from one thirty to five thirty. At six there were prayers in the chapel, and supper. The rest of the evening until ten o'clock was devoted to study. Naturally, the division of time varied somewhat with the seasons, just as the hours in some departments were adapted to the character of their work. It is impossible to recount the daily routine completely without going into detail which would be tiring to the reader. However, what has been set down will probably give a fair idea of it all.

We were thus able to devote on the average eight hours a day to our studies. The winter months offered still more opportunity for study. During January and February we generally worked only about two hours a day. On the other hand, from the middle of June to the middle of August all classwork was suspended and in its place eight hours a day were devoted to the farm. During the latter part of the summer, half of the students were given a few weeks' vacation, and on their return the other half were let off for the same length of time. In this way there was always a sufficient number on hand to attend to the necessary work.

In addition to the house and chapel that had been built by the missionaries, a few small wooden houses were erected. At first the attic above the chapel was used as a dormitory, and by means of two big doors,

which were pushed aside for the service, the chancel and the altar of the chapel itself were separated from the other part of the chapel, which was used as a reading room; but later each student was assigned his own small chamber, where those who had been admitted as candidates for the ministry studied by themselves while the younger members of the brotherhood continued to use the common reading room.

To me and another older student there were assigned, in a kind of basement section under the chapel, a couple of small rooms of which one also served as a sacristy, with stairs leading to the chancel above. I kept that room throughout my stay at Nashotah although I was later offered a better. But from the very first I fell in love with it, and I shall always remember with a sacred feeling of gratitude the hours I spent in the small cell underneath the altar in the chapel at Nashotah.

In general, more freedom was given to me, as an older man, than to the other students. My manual labor was limited to two hours a day, and consisted mainly of woodchopping and work in the fields. Because I was near home it was not necessary for me to bother my fellow students with my laundry; hence I was also relieved of that work. I was relieved of the cooking, too—no doubt a fortunate thing for those who were to share in the products of the kitchen.

The location of Nashotah has already been described to some extent. At a convenient distance—about thirty miles—from Milwaukee, the metropolis of Wisconsin, it lies near the most heavily traveled road from that city to the interior of the country, and not far from a railroad that now runs through the land that formerly was Schneidau's, connecting Lake Michigan with the Mississippi. The neighborhood is one of the most beautiful in the orchard country of the West. From the steps of the former chapel one might enjoy one of the fairest views across the twin lakes of Nashotah, separated from each other by a neck of land only a few yards wide and crossed by a small creek, surrounded by park-like oak-grown hills and valleys beyond which one might catch a glimpse of other small lakes with their bays and islets. European travelers who have visited this spot declare that it is surpassed in beauty by few places in the world.

It is a pity that Fredrika Bremer¹ on her way from Pine Lake to Watertown should have been so close to it without paying it any attention. Perhaps she was so carried away by the socialistic phalansterian and Shaker colonies that she had neither eye nor ear for the Christian institution of

¹ Fredrika Bremer (1801-65), Swedish writer and champion of women's rights. See Vol. I, Chapter 3, note 4. See also Signe A. Rooth, *Seeress of the Northland* [Philadelphia, 1955].

learning which, growing like a flower in the wilderness, lay right by her road. Perhaps, too, her Roman Catholic companions did not choose to call her attention to that Protestant Catholic nest which from the very first, through its activity and influence, had been a thorn in the side of the believers in the Roman church settled in the neighborhood. Both the institute and the beauty of the region would have been well worthy of mention in her book. But it has been with Nashotah as with much else that is good and noble in this world—it has been overlooked,

Like to a spring that courses through the meadow,
Hid by the flowers that by its bounty live.

From a nearby hill there is a view over eleven lakes, some of them adorned with small islets covered with both foliiferous trees and cedars, and within a radius of twelve miles there are twenty such lakes, most of them joined together by narrow watercourses, altogether giving this region perhaps a greater wealth of varied scenery than one could find anywhere else in such a limited area.

Plain and simple as were the chapel and the rest of the small primitive buildings, still they gave an added charm to a nature which in its original state was both wild and beautiful. It was like reading in all of this natural beauty, with its trace of human activity, a spiritual romance—clear, pure, and peaceful as heaven that raised its vault above, pure as the waves of the lake which in its depth reflected the symbol of atonement atop the Christian temple close to its shore.

Among other improvements, a baptistry had been constructed at the lake, a few paces from the chapel. A stairway led down to the water, under which a floor had been laid at a proper depth for immersion. The Episcopal church employs both that mode of administering baptism and the ordinary pouring of water, without giving either mode a preferred place or ascribing greater efficacy to immersion. Infant baptism is seldom performed by immersion, but if the parents desire it, no objection is raised. When adults are baptized they are permitted to select their own mode. Since many of the settlers were Baptists or had been influenced by the teachings of that sect, at least with regard to the method of baptism, the ministers at Nashotah thought it advisable to show from the very beginning that the church, far from disapproving of it, permitted that method to be used without which the Baptists maintain that no baptism is effective. Prejudices or scruples of conscience ought not, at least in these matters, to prevent anyone from being baptized in the name of Jesus and into the fellowship of the church. By this means many were received into membership who might otherwise have been attracted to schismatic sects. During my first year at Nashotah no fewer than twenty-five grown persons were baptized by immersion.

Never has a church ceremony in which I have not myself been directly involved made such an impression on me as did the first of these baptisms that I was privileged to witness. Nothing could be more solemn. My thoughts could not but revert to the time in the early history of Christianity when the apostles went out into lands where the name of the Lord was still unknown, teaching all peoples, and through baptism making them His disciples. It was a bright, unclouded summer day. Nature was adorned in her Sabbath garb. A far greater congregation than usual had come to the service. The small chapel was filled to overflowing, and outside on the grass men, women, and children were seated, listening to the sacred words that reached them through the open windows. Following the second Bible reading, as the ritual provided, the minister and those who were about to be baptized went down to the shore accompanied by the congregation, and while a hymn was sung they went down into the water, the minister in the simple Anglican chasuble, the candidates in white robes kneeling about him. The prayers, like the entire Anglican baptismal ritual, which even under ordinary conditions could hardly fail to make a deep impression on the congregation, now seemed to arise with life and warmth out of every heart. In a clear melodious voice the minister, Mr. Breck, pronounced the prayers, while the congregation, kneeling on the sloping shore and among the spreading oaks, with devout lips added their Amens. After he had announced where to find the holy gospel (John 3:1-8)—the congregation joining in with the usual “Glory to thee, O Lord!”—he read the gospel and proclaimed thus to sinners present who were still outside the baptismal grace the necessity of being born again, and the word of divine truth that “except one be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” After the renunciation and the prayer of “the sanctification of this water to the mystical washing away of sin,” the baptism itself was performed in this way: The minister, holding one hand behind the head of the kneeling baptismal candidate and grasping the candidate’s hand with the other, bent him forward in the water, speaking the holy baptismal words. After the baptized person had risen but while he still remained in the water the minister made on his forehead the holy sign of the cross along with words found in the church ritual, “in token that he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner against sin, the world and the devil; and to continue Christ’s faithful soldier and servant unto his life’s end.”

Many disapprove of baptism by immersion, having been prejudiced against it because of the way it is generally performed within the Baptist sects that frequently seem to prefer the cold season for these functions, when also generally a great number of curious onlookers come together merely for

curiosity's sake and when there is, as a rule, much noise and joking, which ruin the solemnity otherwise inherent in the act itself. But never did I witness at Nashotah any such unhallowed spectacle nor have I ever heard that such things have taken place when ministers of our church have officiated. On the contrary, the people gathered on those occasions, of whom many have no doubt been members of other churches or of no church at all, always assumed a serious attitude and at least an outward attitude of devotion which the sacred act, when performed in a proper and solemn manner, can hardly fail to inspire.

As a result of the labors by the ministers stationed at Nashotah there were soon, within a radius of about thirty miles, no fewer than seventeen mission stations which were visited as often as opportunity permitted. Services were conducted and in the course of time small churches were organized, some of which later secured graduates of the Nashotah seminary as pastors. In this faithful and arduous labor, to which they gave whatever time they were able to spare from their teaching, these devoted men were assisted by those students who upon examination had been accepted as candidates for the degree of master of sacred theology. These latter acted as catechists and conducted services—in such manner as was permitted them as laymen—in places the ministers were unable to visit. Any license to administer the sacraments or perform other purely ministerial functions without being ordained could not be considered here as is the case in the Lutheran, Presbyterian, or Congregational denominations. Even the sermons delivered by the candidates could not, according to our church law, be written by themselves but were culled from some approved collection. This last rule caused a good deal of dissatisfaction among settlers unacquainted with the customs of our church.

The inclination to pay more attention to the sermon than to the service proper is unfortunately very common everywhere, and it is a strange fact that under conditions such as existed in those days, when a person who was not an ordained minister conducted a service and read a sermon written by another—no matter how excellent it may have been, and even if it had never been heard by a single member of the congregation—it was not listened to with the same *pleasure* as a most mediocre sermon written or alleged to have been written by the acting preacher himself. I said *pleasure*, for nothing else was considered. Neither one sermon nor another was likely to leave a more lasting and serious impression on such hearers. It was their desire to listen to man rather than to God; it was their wish to learn to know the speaker rather than the Word; it was the subordination of the religious feeling to the aesthetic which under such conditions frequently determined whether the service was to be attended or not, and in a way served as a

barometer of the congregation's devotion. It is because of this tendency that when people go to church it has become customary to say that they go to hear Dr. X or Bishop Y. Such expressions characterize more than we may be inclined to believe the church attendants of our age, and that is true even of those, both in the old and the new world, who pride themselves on a deeper spirituality. It is the same thing in different forms. For instance, one of our colporteurs, suffering from a veritable preaching mania, goes from house to house speaking for the edification of his sighing and groaning congregations, frequently talking without rhyme or reason, his talks consisting only, as Hamlet puts it, of "words, words, nothing but words." But let him instead read a sermon by Luther or Nohrborg² or some other well-known rather than well-read author—and I am quite certain that the members of the conventicles would soon turn their backs on him and go rather to church to listen to the sermon originating with the minister preaching it.

Since students were not permitted to appear in public and give the impression that they held an office with which they had not been invested, and therefore, when the ordained ministers were not on hand, only read a printed sermon, their services were not very well attended. But they had been charged with another kind of service which one might hope was more fruitful than anything they could have accomplished with their untrained preaching ability. Where the scattered settlements did not make it feasible to organize Sunday schools, they went from one log cabin to another, everywhere instructing and catechizing the younger members of the families and in that manner sowing the good seed. And so, every Sunday afternoon after united prayer they went out, each in his own direction, to do their work, thus preparing themselves in this way as much as through their weekday studies for the holy office they were someday to assume. Some of them had their stations as much as sixteen miles from Nashotah. The ministers themselves often walked as far as thirty miles to conduct services in some settlement where the neighbors met together. During the first few years they were accustomed, accompanied by their assistants, to make journeys lasting three or four weeks, visiting places farther away in the territory. On these trips they used horses and wagons, in which, along with food and other things

² Anders Nohrborg (1725-67) Swedish Lutheran clergyman in Stockholm. His collection of sermons entitled *Den Fallna Människans Salighets-Ordning, Förestäld, Uti Betraktelser Öfver de Årliga Sön- och Högtids-Dagars Evangelier* (The Redemption of Sinful Man as Demonstrated in a Series of Sermons on the Gospels Covering Sundays and the Holy Days of the Church Year), was published posthumously by his brother Daniel Nohrborg (1739-1819) in 1771. The collection became one of the most popular books among the Swedish people and had by 1932 run through a total of twenty editions. For many years it was probably, after the Holy Bible and the Swedish psalm book, the most widely read book in Sweden.

needful for their journey, they also carried a tent to enable them to camp out if they could find no other lodging. As more ministers came into the territory these trips became less necessary and were finally limited to places which they could reach by walking with a knapsack on their back, hoping for some hospitable roof to cover the wandering missionary.

The stories of these visits in the neighborhood, and of the minor adventures which they sometimes had, served to divert the mind during any idle hour we might have when we were gathered together at Nashotah. While these talks sometimes gave rise to an instructive exchange of opinions on the subjects that most occupied our minds, and to which everything in our daily life directed our thoughts, those who had returned home from their trips were also able, at times, to tell of things that could not but turn our youthful minds to a lighter vein. Sometimes they had occasion to witness scenes and conditions that were comical and in a way characteristic of western pioneer life. I cannot deny myself the pleasure of relating a couple in which I was concerned.

Once I accompanied Mr. Breck to a sawmill where he conducted a service in the limited confines of the sawyer's home. In proportion to the space the attendance was very good, Mr. Breck standing at a nail table at the window only a couple of paces from the tightly packed congregation. He was engaged in his sermon when a hen accompanied by a brood of chicks entered through the open door and made her way beneath the benches all the way up to the table, where they were probably accustomed to pick up crumbs that fell to the floor at mealtime. Mr. Breck neither heard the "cheep, cheep" which was almost drowning out his voice, nor did he see the chicks that jumped about at his feet in constant danger of being crushed, sat undecided what to do, whether to disturb the service still more by driving out the feathered flock, or to let Mr. Breck continue as he was, constantly moving his feet from one position to another and endangering the lives of the chicks. Finally the hostess, who stood to lose most by the latter alternative, came to me and asked me quietly to help her save the promising family of Shanghais from the danger which threatened them from the feet of the minister and the intent listeners standing near him. What was to be done? We both felt round under the seats and under the flowing robe of the minister to get hold of the chicks. This, of course, caused a still louder "cheep, cheep," and much cackling, until the entire feathered family began to flutter hither and yon over table, benches, minister, and congregation. Many a minister would have lost his poise for less reason, but Mr. Breck did not allow it to disturb him; and after a brief interruption the congregation was as attentive as ever, listening to his simple but heartwarming sermon.

My own Sunday activities were generally directed to the Swedish and

Norwegian settlements which really occupied all the time I was able to give them during my student days. Once I was called to a funeral. The deceased was a Norwegian, and his fellow countrymen had gathered in full force at the house of mourning. In the middle of the floor of the small room they had placed a couple of benches on which the coffin was resting. On a table near it were glasses and a jug of whiskey. The pagan custom of *gravöl* (funeral drinking)³ had to be maintained even here, although financial conditions did not permit the display and entertainment which in the home country, at least at that time, were believed essential for a “respectable funeral.”

In passing, I wish to state that this shocking custom is quite unknown among the Americans. With them a funeral carried on amid drinking and feasting would not be reckoned respectable. Whether it be in the city or the country, whether there be any religious ceremony or not, the friends of the departed congregate without any previous invitation either in the church, if there is one in the community, or in the house of mourning from which, without any entertainment, they accompany him to his last restingplace, whereupon each one quietly returns home. Of all our imported customs there was none that surprised the Americans more—or was more disapproved of—than the barbaric custom of feasting around the coffin. Perhaps that habit more than anything else caused the Norwegian mountaineers who in other respects also did not give the people of the new world reason to form too high an estimate of the civilization of Europe, to be known as the “Norwegian Indians.” That this name was not applied to them entirely without cause will be seen from the experience I am relating.

As I entered the Norwegian house of mourning, the *gravöl* had already begun, and the whiskey bottle was making the rounds among the guests who were gathered in the crowded room about the coffin, which had not yet been nailed shut. According to Norwegian custom I announced a hymn to be sung before the body was borne out. The host, who was also accustomed at times to function as sacristan, led in singing the hymn; but after one verse had been sung there was a pause, and to my unbounded astonishment a glassful of whiskey was handed me with these words, “It is a

³ *Gravöl* or funeral ale received its name from the extra-strong ale which was brewed on the farms of Scandinavia in preparation for a funeral. It was considered important to honor the memory of the dead person by staging one or more feasts in his honor. “The greater the sorrow for the deceased, the more food and drink on the table,” was a popular saying in Sweden, and this belief was no doubt prevalent also in Norway. In certain sections of Sweden it was believed that if not enough food and drink were served at the funeral, the deceased would enjoy no peace in his grave and would therefore return as a restless ghost. For further information on the *gravöl* and other funeral customs see Louise Hagber, *När döden gästar* [Stockholm, 1937], pp. 422-48.

custom in Norway that on such occasions a dram⁴ is drunk between the first and second verse,” and before I was able to overcome my surprise or prevent the unseemly performance, the bottle was making its rounds through the room, each holding the hymnal with one hand and grasping the whiskey glass with the other. Other Norwegians told me afterwards that they had never heard of such a custom in their native land; if it really existed, it must be limited to the parish of Slemdal,⁵ where these funeral guests hailed from.

But that was not all. On the way to the graveyard the oxen that pulled the coffin were stopped, along with the rest of the procession, and the host once more pulled the whiskey bottle out of his pocket. I really expected to see the same performance repeated at the grave, and was hesitant whether I ought not to go on my way and “let the dead bury their dead,” especially as some of the Slemdalians appeared to be somewhat under the influence of liquor.

Now, it is part of the story that a rumor was abroad that the canal lands, which had been so warmly disputed, had reverted to the government and had to be paid for forthwith. The Norwegians in this part of the country, most of whom had settled on that kind of land, were greatly concerned about how to secure money to pay for it. And since the rumor also had it that money could be secured from the bank in the city against a mortgage on the land, I was requested by several, since I was shortly to go to Milwaukee, to verify the rumors. These concerns were shared by our temporary sacristan. On the way to the graveyard he spoke to me about this matter, and when the grave was about to be filled and he raised his penetrating voice in song, he executed the 328th hymn in Guldberg’s *Psalmeboge*⁶ about this manner:

“Who knows how soon my life is ended” (“Remember to ask about the money in the city”).

“My days right swiftly fly away” (“I certainly did not think they were going to demand payment for our land so soon”).

“Against death’s darts I’m undefended” (“I certainly don’t know what to do if I cannot borrow money—do all you can to help me”). . . .

Thus there took place in the small Scandinavian church many

⁴ *Dram*, any drink of an alcoholic beverage. Use of the word is widespread in Norway, but is also found in Swedish dialects. The word has the identical meaning in the English language.

⁵ Slemdal, county in the Norwegian province of Telemark. After 1918 it is known as Siljan (information kindly supplied by Kjell T. Evers of Norges Herredsforbund, Oslo, Norway).

⁶ *Den Guldbergske Psalmebog* was published in Denmark in 1778 by the Danish Minister of State, Ove Högh Guldberg, in collaboration with Bishop Ludvig Harboe (1709-83). Since it reflected the rationalistic spirit of the age, it was never widely accepted in Denmark or Norway. (*A Chronicle of Old Muskego*, p. 179n).

disturbing and unedifying scenes which showed how necessary and yet how difficult it was to keep religion on a spiritual level when so many trivial worldly matters kept intruding themselves, and while disorders occurred which robbed the sacred acts of their proper solemnity.

As a rule, I was invited to dinner in the home where the Sunday service was conducted. In spite of the fact that on several occasions I asked to be excused, the hosts were anxious to treat me to the best they had in the house and, not infrequently, the meal was being prepared while the service was going on. Since the pioneer settlers had no more than one—or at most two—rooms, into which the congregation was packed, it was unavoidable that the odors from the pots and pans, the rattling of the kettles on the stove, the hissing of some pot that was boiling over, and the like, too insistently called our attention to our physical needs just when the soul ought to have been engaged with spiritual matters. In winter the iron stove was generally located in the middle of the room, so that the preacher must, of necessity, take note of everything that was done around it; both he and the congregation really had to become accustomed to this lest they forget that they were congregated in what for the time being served as their church.

And yet that “preaching from house to house” possessed a solemnity all its own. The informality of the services and the home-like surroundings gave occasion for many intimate and popular presentations which were in themselves quite effective, but which are too often lacking in the public and ceremonial church functions. Still, if one accepts the thesis that the greatest possible good can come from such religious gatherings as I have tried to describe, it is certain that in the long run they do not suffice. To be sure, God is to be worshiped in spirit and in truth, and we know that this can be done at any time and place, independent of external conditions; but experience has taught me that the spirit of worship is easily dissipated when it is not freed from the conditions of everyday life, and awakened and fostered by a devout external ceremonial, and given refuge in God’s church as in “a holy place, a gate to God.” As long as the Scandinavians were without a separate church building the natural undisciplined manner in which men, educated as well as uneducated, were inclined to approach sacred things appeared most offensive, and the bonds were loosed which had been designed to keep them within the limits of ordinary propriety.

But let us return to Nashotah, which was counteracting these tendencies through the teaching given us there, and to the activities which centered in that institution.

No one under fifteen could be admitted to the institute. The lower department was a school where at first no attention was paid to whether or

not the pupil was planning to devote himself to the ministry. When that department continued to grow it was separated from the seminary and had its own teachers, among whom, as already stated, were some of the older seminary students. Since then that department has been consolidated with another institution of learning which is also, in a certain sense—that is, for those who are planning to study theology—a preparatory school for the seminary. The upper classes consisted of the regular ministerial students. Not until a student had been graduated from the preparatory department and completed a trial period in the seminary of not less than six months could he gain admission to the advanced course. If the bishop and the teachers were satisfied with his behavior in the meantime and considered him capable of pursuing advanced studies, and otherwise possessed of the qualities necessary for discharging the duties of the Christian ministry to the glory of God and for the profit of the church, he matriculated as a regular student, and pledged himself to carefully live up to the rules and regulations of the institute.

Most of the members of that department, including the teachers, constituted a kind of brotherhood to which the students were not admitted as members till after another six months had elapsed. Membership, however, was voluntary. If a member of the brotherhood had private property he gave his annual income to the institute, and if he was without means he received from the common treasury, or from contributions given to the institute, food, clothes, and the books necessary for the pursuit of his studies. At his ordination, following graduation, he was outfitted with money and books as needed. These students were duty-bound to remain at the institute no less than three years unless they were ordained before the expiration of that time, in which case their obligation to the brotherhood ceased. Those, on the other hand, who were not members of the brotherhood were free to leave the institute at their pleasure, but were required during their course of study to supply themselves with clothes, light, and books and, as already mentioned, to pay an annual fee of \$75 for their board. All the students at the institute, without exception, were under obligation to labor four hours daily.

That brotherhood has now been dissolved and since the institute has become altogether a theological seminary there is no difference, is there used to be, between those who are merely students and those who at that earlier stage might have been known as lay brothers, however un-Protestant that term may sound to our Swedish ear. Each one is now expected to pay a fee of \$100 and those who have private means supply themselves with clothes; but otherwise the cost of the students' maintenance—food and clothing—as well as the teachers' salaries, is covered by the annual fees, along with the yield of the land belonging to the institute which is now rented out and the

contributions given to the institute. Without these contributions the institution could not be maintained, especially since many of the students pay no fees.

At present the manual labor has been reduced to two hours a day and consists mainly in this: in winter each student chops his own wood and in summer he works in the big orchard and vegetable garden which have been gradually enlarged for the good of the institution.

A rule to which every student at Nashotah must submit is that he must not enter into wedlock nor become engaged to be married as long as he is a student at the institute. After his ordination or after leaving the institution for some reason or other he is of course no longer bound by any pledge of celibacy. However, that rule did not keep those who were already married from being admitted. Of this I myself am proof, and many others along with me, who entered as students at a more mature age. Among them were also persons who had not only been members of other denominations but had also served as ministers and teachers in such denominations.

In passing I may mention that out of the ministers of the Protestant Episcopal church, now numbering about two thousand—bishops, pastors, and deacons—many have formerly been ministers in other denominations. From the Presbyterian denomination more than three hundred returned in a few years to the fellowship of the Episcopal church. When a person who has not received episcopal ordination but has been engaged in the ministry in another denomination seeks to enter service within the church he must, according to the laws and ordinances of the church, appear before the bishop in the diocese in which he resides. He must bring with him a certification from at least two ministers of the Episcopal church to the effect that either on the basis of personal acquaintance with him or for other good and sufficient reasons they do not consider the motives that cause him to leave the denomination of which he has been a member in any way to reflect on his moral and religious character, or that they are such that he ought not to be ordained to service in the church. In addition he must present a certificate signed by twelve members of the denomination in which he has been a minister, or else by a like number of persons, half of whom are such members and the rest members of the Protestant Episcopal church, stating that for the past three years he has been living an honorable, upright, and godly life, and, further, a similar certificate from two ministers of the church, provided his life and behavior are known to them, who are also able to testify that he is attached to the Episcopal church by a real inner conviction. He is then admitted as a candidate; after he has been examined like other candidates for the diaconate he will be ordained thereto, but not till he has been a member of the church for at least six months. Thus several men who had been in the ministry of other denominations came to Nashotah after they

had been convinced that their former ordination was ineffective, and they now sought to enter it according to the true apostolic order. Their experiences and the firm faith to which they had attained after a serious inward struggle with themselves and the prejudices in which they had been reared could not but make our fellowship with them, in more ways than one, highly instructive to their younger fellow students.

Just as representatives of various denominations met here in the confines of the true church and took each other by the hand—an illustration of the only Christian alliance which can reunite those who confess Christ and promote the glory of His name—in like manner men of different nationalities and tongues met together here to prepare themselves to go, each in his own way, and proclaim the Gospel of Him whom all men are to confess. Here were those who hailed from the tabernacles of Shem, and even the red men had sent from their wigwams some of their sons to be trained as teachers of their own people. But we did not always have the desired success. At Nashotah there were two young Indians, members of big war-like tribes, whom we sought to prepare for the ministry. On their arrival it the institute they were absolutely ignorant of the arts of reading and writing, and in addition their conception of religion was most lazy. Once I went into the woods to fell trees accompanied by one of hem, a youth of eighteen. When I noticed he was wearing a pair of well-made, excellent winter boots, I asked him, “Daniel, who made those boots?” With an extremely sober face he answered word by word from the catechism, “God, the Father who hath made me and all the world.”

In a short time, however, they made good progress in their studies and became quite civilized in their manners, and there was hope that the real purpose of their education might be attained. They learned a good deal about geography, history, and subjects of that kind. One of them revealed a real gift for mathematics, in which he progressed much beyond what is regularly included in an elementary education. But that was as far as it went. After a few years they were seized with an unconquerable longing to go back to their people and their hunting. There was no use trying to tie them to their books. They returned home not as had been planned, to be sure, as ministers, but still instructed and firm in the teaching of Christ, and thus they came to exert a good influence among their people.

One of them was the son of one of the principal chiefs of his tribe, and after his death he inherited his father’s office. From his youth the old chief had been a member of the Methodist church, and his tribe was divided between that and the Episcopal church; but nonetheless he had entrusted to our bishop the responsibility for his son’s education. When the young Indian—the same who had shown special proficiency in mathematics—

returned after spending a couple of years at Nashotah, the old warrior called his attention to certain party divisions within the tribe and hinted that others might lay claim to the chieftaincy and dispute his heritage. "Be that as it may," replied the young man, "in that case my people shall judge between us, and I shall know how to submit to their decision. But, my father," he continued, "there are other pretenders that disturb me more than those who are inclined to dispute my position as chief of the tribe, and who create dangerous parties and cause a destructive division among our people. I mean those who rise up in opposition to the teachers that God first sent among us, men who are truly authorized to proclaim His word, causing division and ill-feeling between brethren and leading them astray so that they do not rightly know what and on whom to believe. As far as it depends on me I shall do everything in my power to preserve peace and unity among our people, and afterwards I believe that other divisions as well shall disappear." From what I have heard the young Indian has kept his promise.

The instruction at Nashotah, in both the lower department and the theological seminary, was far more thoroughgoing and extensive than one might expect from a new institution in the American West. To be sure, less time was given to the ancient languages than is customary in the European universities, but in their final examination the graduates were expected to be able to translate easily the more difficult Roman authors and at least the commoner Greek classics. The study of Hebrew did not begin till the student was in the seminary, and under certain conditions the bishop might exempt a student from it. If a student at the age of thirty stated that he wished to be ordained, the bishop might, if he found there was good reason, and if the candidate otherwise was in possession of sufficient theological knowledge, also exempt him from the study of other ancient languages. However, that was seldom done and only in cases where a lack of knowledge of those languages would not materially hamper candidates in rendering effective ministerial service.

At the beginning, the length of the theological course was three years, but this was later extended to four years from the time the candidate passed his entrance examination. The time may under certain conditions be shortened, but there have been few exceptions.

The House of Bishops of the General Convention has proposed an educational program which the theological seminaries are not compelled to follow in every detail, but still it is used as a guide for the education of ministers and in the selection of authors to be studied. Such was the situation at Nashotah. Since I admit that mine was the only case in which they did not feel it necessary to be so strict in their demands, I can lay claim to no feeling of superiority if I make the assertion, which I believe I have good reason to

make, that the ministerial training at the Nashotah seminary is quite as good as, and in some respects even superior to, that of the European universities, at least if I may judge from conditions in Uppsala. The ordinary subjects are taught by means of lectures and at daily recitations when the teacher examines each class separately, not only on the assignment from some approved author, but also on what he himself has presented on the same subject. Thus the lectures are also examinations, somewhat like the private seminars in Uppsala.

The first year of the course is spent mainly in the study of Greek, Hebrew, and exegetics. The second and third years are largely devoted to dogmatics, with special attention to the Roman and Calvinistic controversies. Thus the students are prepared as far as possible not only to develop the Christian doctrines in the pulpit, but also outside of it to meet and disprove the many doctrinal errors and heresies which nowhere find lodging and flourish as much as in western America. A thorough course is given in pastoral theology and ethics and in everything that might be related to the theology of redemption. The doctrines of the Fall, original sin, the grace of the Holy Spirit, the need of the atonement, salvation only through the merit of Christ—these are the subjects especially treated during this part of the course. The fourth and last year is devoted mainly to church history and homiletics. There is also weekly practice in preaching, at first from a prepared sermon, later extemporaneously. From what I have stated about this institution, the daily life of the students, the daily public seasons of prayer (between which I do not suppose there was anyone who did not practice private devotions in his secret closet), the labors which in advance gave them practical experience in and definitely directed their thoughts to the holy calling they were about to enter, the brotherhood in which they were united, and the like—from all this it could be inferred that this institution, in addition to being a theological seminary and a school for missionaries, was also a kind of Protestant monastery. And why not? Many attach to the word monastery a conception of something approximating the Roman church and its errors which not even the word Protestant can neutralize. But, be that as it may, this is certain: true Protestantism would lose nothing by having a number of monastery schools like Nashotah. The institution does not lay claim to that designation, and its leaders themselves might have objected to it. And yet there was much in it, especially at the very beginning, that might justify a comparison between it and the monastic brotherhoods within the early Christian church, before the establishment of the papacy; in this case as in others the papacy by abuse changed something that was originally good into an evil, whereupon the Protestants committed an error almost as great in rejecting a good thing because it had been abused. In this entire institution,

and the missionary work which was an integral part of it, there was something which a true Protestant or—what I consider the same thing—a true Catholic would, if he took pains to learn to know it, regard with vital interest. Here was something that awakened trust, something that one might depend on. Here was not only outward appearances, not a gaudy show, but a reality built on a firm foundation, more and more revealing itself as a powerful testimony of the kingdom of God, and of a truth to which this institution even in its early feeble and insignificant beginning was dedicated with a divine “So be it,” by Him who still chooses the insignificant things of this world to carry out His will.