

# On the Beginnings of North Park University: “Risberg’s School” and Covenant Ministerial Education, 1885–1916

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**T**he Evangelical Covenant Church and its school of higher learning, North Park University (before 1997, North Park College and Theological Seminary), have never been strangers to the realities and challenges of immigration, generational transition, and ethnic identity in a pluralistic, dynamic American culture. It is fitting during the observance of North Park’s 125th anniversary to revisit a primary catalyst in the historical narrative of its origins and to gain insight into dimensions of an institution’s life that has as much to do with continuity as it does with change. This may serve as a case study that weds older patterns of the mass migration of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the ever-rich tapestry of American life in the new millennium.

Frederick Jackson Turner made commonplace the notion that in order to understand America it is necessary to understand the immigrants.<sup>1</sup>

1. The significance of immigration was central to Turner’s understanding of western expansion, which he introduced in his seminal lecture, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” delivered to the American Historical Association at the Chicago World’s Fair in 1893. For the influential role of Turner’s “frontier thesis” among later

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It has been less evident perhaps that to understand the immigrants it is necessary to understand their religions. More than four decades ago, Rudolph J. Vecoli observed that ethnicity in American historiography has been something of a family scandal with skeletons in the closet, and Martin E. Marty in his presidential address to the American Society of Church History extended the image to suggest that “ethnicity is the skeleton of religion in America because it provides the supporting framework, the bare outlines or main features, of American religion.”<sup>2</sup> Though we have learned much about the pluralistic character of American religion, Marty has stated elsewhere that the greatest conflict has been “between the original-stock Anglo-Saxon Protestant peoples and ‘everyone else.’”<sup>3</sup>

This reality explains the rich historical themes of nativistic claims of Protestant hegemony and immigrant struggles with incorporation and identity. In a more positive way, it also points to the variety of means and motives by which American aid was offered to immigrant churches. Since the time of George Stephenson’s *Religious Aspects of Swedish Immigration* (1932), which transcended traditional denominational historiography, historians have often generalized about Swedish Americans as either secular or religious, assuming that the latter were predominantly Augustana Lutheran and rural in character.<sup>4</sup> In the case of the Swedes, however, American aid in its most generous forms was a later and more urban phenomenon (though many rural churches benefited) and did not involve the Augustana Synod but the various Swedish-American “free church” groups that traced their origins to the Mission Friend movements of Carl Olof Rosenius (1816–1868) and Paul Peter Waldenström (1838–1917). These were immigrants who arrived well after the Civil War, beginning especially in the 1870s and ’80s, and whose youthful

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historians of immigration, see John Higham, *Writing American History: Essays on Modern Scholarship* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970). At Harvard, Turner supervised the doctoral dissertations of three pioneering American historians of immigration and ethnicity: Merle Curti, Marcus Lee Hansen, and George M. Stephenson (the latter two of Scandinavian immigrant heritage).

2. Rudolph J. Vecoli, “Ethnicity: A Neglected Dimension of American History,” in Herbert J. Bass, ed., *The State of American History* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1970), esp. 70ff; Martin E. Marty, “Ethnicity: The Skeleton of Religion in America,” *Church History* 41 (1972), 9.

3. Martin E. Marty, *Modern American Religion, Volume 2: The Noise of Conflict, 1919–1941* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 2.

4. George M. Stephenson, *The Religious Aspects of Swedish Immigration: A Study of Immigrant Churches* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1932), *passim*. For

leaders directed a surging immigrant stream of young, single, and increasingly urban Swedish Americans. The most poignant and protracted record of aid came from the American Congregationalists between 1885 and 1916 and was aimed not only at Swedes but also Danes, Norwegians, and Germans in an educational enterprise centered largely at Chicago Theological Seminary (CTS).<sup>5</sup>

This study focuses especially on Fridolf Risberg (1848–1921), who headed the Swedish Department of CTS and its promotion of a Swedish Congregational church with confidence in an inevitable assimilation into the American denomination, and on the protest raised by leaders of the Swedish Evangelical Mission Covenant, such as David Nyvall (1863–1946), who labored for a more highly differentiated Swedish-American identity through their own school, North Park College and Theological Seminary. Adding complexity to the story is the more independently organized mission activity of the “Free” elements in their own congregations and in Fredrik Franson’s Skandinaviska Alliansmissionen (Scandinavian Alliance Mission), founded in 1891, which included Danes and Norwegians as well. All of these activities centered in Chicago. More than any other individual, Risberg was connected to all three of these religious associations. The complex, competitive efforts at ministerial education in Chicago between 1885 and 1916 demonstrate the strength of the various free movements in numbers, vying for relatively limited resources in an intensely Americanized setting. They also show a striking degree of pragmatic cooperation and sporadic attempts at merger, where Risberg was clearly the bridge and a young North Park forged its singular educational identity.

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the broader context of the Swedish and Swedish-American free churches, see Philip J. Anderson, “The Lively Exchange of Religious Ideals between the United States and Sweden during the Nineteenth Century,” in Scott E. Erickson, ed., *American Religious Influences in Sweden* (Uppsala: Tro och Tanke, 1996), 31–48; and Anderson, “From Compulsion to Persuasion: Voluntary Religion and the Swedish Immigrant Experience,” *Swedish-American Historical Quarterly* 66 (2015), 3–23.

5. For the Scandinavian departments at Chicago Theological Seminary, see Robert M. Anderson, “An Analysis of Congregational Aid to Scandinavian Churches,” B.D. thesis, North Park Theological Seminary, 1960; P. Richard Lindstrom, “The Risberg School,” B.D. thesis, North Park Theological Seminary, 1966; Frederick Hale, “The Scandinavian Departments of Chicago Theological Seminary,” M.A. thesis, University of Minnesota, 1974; and Hale, *Trans-Atlantic Conservative Protestantism in the Evangelical Free and Mission Covenant Traditions* (New York: Arno Press, 1979), chapters 9–10.

## Mission Friends and Attitudes about Education

Before looking more closely at Risberg, it would be well to establish the outlines of educational issues among Mission Friends and the self-understanding of American Congregationalists in their home mission work with immigrants. The religious awakening that began in the 1830s in Sweden had a leveling effect on many of the primary institutions of society. In addition to national educational reform in the 1840s, the religious folk movements established several ministerial training schools, such as Peter Fjellstedt's in Stockholm and P.A. Ahlberg's in Vetlanda. Waldenström's popular serial allegory *Brukspatron Adamsson* (Squire Adamsson), published in 1862–1863, made the universities at Uppsala and Lund, with their attendant clericalism, appear to be “preacher factories.” Instead, the faithful *läsare* were informed that the best learning came at the feet of “Mother Simple” and “Father Experience” in the “Misery Class” rather than from professors “Cocksure” and “Wise-in-His Own Conceits” at “Theology College.”<sup>6</sup>

When applied to the children of revival in America and their itinerant evangelists and pastors, it is little wonder that education in general, and ministerial training in particular, became noisy fields of battle. During the 1870s, those Mission Friends who had left Augustana or the Synod of Northern Illinois to follow their convictions of non-confessional biblical authority and gathered believers' churches, organized themselves in free Lutheran synods.

The largest of these, the Mission Synod (1873), was opposed to schools altogether and never worked to establish one.<sup>7</sup> For example, when Carl

6. P.P. Waldenström, *Brukspatron Adamsson: Eller, Hvar Bor Du?* (Stockholm, 1863). The novel was first published serially in *Stadsmissionären* (The City Missionary) in Stockholm. This was translated into English in 1928, in part to support Swedish-American fundamentalists in their heresy charges directed against Nils Lund, dean of North Park Theological Seminary, for his alleged modernism: *Squire Adamsson: Or, Where Do You Live?*, Ruben T. Nygren, trans. (Chicago: Mission Friend Publishing Company, 1928). Cf. the recent definitive translation with critical introduction by Mark Safstrom (Seattle and Minneapolis: Pietisten, 2014). Most Mission Friends seem to have missed the irony in Waldenström's hyperbolic allegory. Waldenström was awarded a PhD in classics from Uppsala University about the time the allegory was published.

7. Though many Mission Friend pastors had attended training schools in Sweden, most shared the judgment that “the pioneers were uneducated men and women. They did not consider an education essential to a successful career in the ministry. Most of them were self-made men, gifted and useful in that early generation” (A.H. Jacobson, *The Adventures of a Prairie Preacher* [Chicago: Covenant Press, 1960], 34).

Johan Nyvall (1829–1904) visited the United States in 1876, he found it odd that the Mission Friends in Lindsborg, Kansas, could praise Bethany College so highly when the first disciples merely learned at the school of Jesus.<sup>8</sup> The Mission Synod formulated a statement on ministerial education at Des Moines, Iowa, in January 1880, which read in part:

Fully conscious of the need of a minister to have essential skills, as for example to read properly and clothe his thoughts in somewhat orderly phrases... we nevertheless believe that such essential knowledge can be secured in a less pretentious manner than through seminaries or whatever they are called; furthermore because we have found no reference to the establishment of such schools in the Scriptures... [and] since it is clearly manifest that schools have more destroyed and hindered than furthered Christian life... the meeting decided that it considered it essential to cease discussing the matter... And this so much the more since it would be heartless to impose such a burden [of ministerial education] upon our friends.<sup>9</sup>

In contrast, the Ansgar Synod (1874), closer to Augustana in theology and to the General Synod in its openness to Americanization, supported its own school, which had been started in 1873 in Keokuk, Iowa, by its most energetic leader, the Dane Charles Anderson. Moving to Knoxville, Illinois, in 1875, the fledgling school struggled for a decade as a result of inadequate resources and students, as well as the limited strength of the Ansgar Synod in a period of escalating synodical suspicion and strife. When the school fell into the hands of “Free” iconoclasts like J.G. Princell (1845–1915) in 1879, the only thing that kept the school attached to the synod was a legal condition that if the synod dissolved, the assets of Ansgar College would revert to the city of Knoxville. Though several pastors were trained at the college, the school folded when the Ansgar and Mission Synods, along with several independent congregations, merged in Chicago in February 1885 to form the Swedish Evangelical Mission Covenant.<sup>10</sup> The only Covenant school on the horizon was a little inde-

8. C.J. Nyvall, *Travel Memories from America* (Chicago: Covenant Press, 1959), 54f.

9. *Missions-Vänner*, February 1880, 47f. For a discussion of this theme, see Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Vantage Books, 1963).

10. See C.V. Bowman, “Ansgarius College,” *Swedish-American Historical Bulletin* 2 (1929), 19–30; and Philip J. Anderson, “Education and Identity Formation among

pendent immigrant training school in Minneapolis, begun in 1884 by Erik August Skogsbergh (1850–1939), who was an evangelist and pastor, not an educator. Moreover, it made no provision for ministerial training. This school would be taken over by the Covenant in 1891.

The woeful planning for ministerial education by American Covenanters, partially the result of little liquid capital, did not go unnoticed by CTS and the American Home Missionary Society (AHMS). Three representatives, Hugh MacDonald Scott and Samuel Ives Curtiss of CTS and Frederick E. Emrich of the Tabernacle Church in Chicago, were present at the Covenant's organizational meeting to offer immediate assistance through the expanding foreign work of the seminary. A German department had been opened in 1882, followed by a Danish-Norwegian department in 1884. Instruction was also given in Finnish. By the autumn of 1885, a Swedish department joined the ranks under the leadership of Fridolf Risberg, fresh from Sweden and handpicked by Waldenström and Covenant president C.A. Björk (1837–1916) at Congregational expense. A Bohemian department was authorized in 1886 but never materialized.

The Congregational AHMS, a product of the Plan of Union with Presbyterians in 1801, sought to extend the New England way on the frontier, intertwining nationalism and religion, bolstered by a romanticized and partly invented historiography of its Puritan roots. New Englanders began arriving in Chicago in the 1830s, and the Chicago Association was formed in 1835, independent of Presbyterian participation. The first Congregational church was organized in 1851, and because of a general shortage of ministers in the Midwest, CTS opened its doors in 1858, perpetuating on the frontier New England agendas of abolition, Native American missions, manifest destiny, and the kingdom of God in America.

Swedish Lutherans had had early involvement with the AHMS in the ministry of Lars Paul Esbjörn, an unhappy experience that contributed to the formation of the Augustana Synod in 1860. The Norwegian pastor Paul Andersen had previously received aid in 1848 for his Lutheran church in Chicago. Esbjörn incurred the wrath of Gustaf Unonius (who formed a Swedish Episcopal congregation in Chicago in 1849) and others when in 1850 he accepted an annual stipend of three hundred dollars

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Swedish-American Mission Friends: The Case of Ansgar College, 1873–1884,” in Philip J. Anderson, Dag Blanck, and Peter Kivisto, eds., *Scandinavian Immigrants and Education in North America* (Chicago: Swedish-American Historical Society, 1995), 50–61.

from the AHMS. But Esbjörn himself chafed while teaching at Illinois State University under the expectations to submit to Reformed views of regeneration, sacraments, election, and eternal security, sensing an oppressive form of ecclesial condescension. Eric Norelius wondered how Esbjörn could “throw himself into the arms of such a thoroughly reformed, puritanical, and in all respects anti-Lutheran society.”<sup>11</sup> Esbjörn, however, detested the embrace and walked away, sealing for the future Augustana’s attitude toward any encroachment by the Congregationalists.

Congregational aid to Swedish Mission Friends represented the coming together of varying degrees of cultural nativism and a growing conviction that these people were indeed Congregationalists, but, according to Scott, “there were no Congregationalists in Sweden to tell them so.”<sup>12</sup> In 1867 the Chicago Association discussed how to reach immigrants and concluded that “the aim should be to nationalize them and gather them into our churches, rather than to establish churches exclusively of foreign elements.”<sup>13</sup> Levi Cobb, superintendent of the AHMS in Minnesota, asserted in 1878: “To us nothing is plainer than this—that *God has sent these people to our very doors for us to Christianize*. We must do it, or they will make Europeans of us.”<sup>14</sup> The challenge to “Americanize, Christianize, Congregationalize” was summed up by Curtiss when he asked, “What have we, orthodox offspring of the pilgrim fathers, done to teach these children of Luther a more excellent way?”<sup>15</sup>

By the mid-1880s this nativism had developed into a rhetorical tradition justifying aid to Scandinavian free-church immigrants while glossing over inherent doctrinal and ecclesiological differences.<sup>16</sup> The power of this tradition was particularly articulated by Marcus Whitman Montgomery

11. Quoted in Stephenson, *Religious Aspects of Swedish Immigration*, 162f.

12. H.M. Scott, *A Ministry for Foreign Born America* (Hartford, CT: Hartford Seminary Press, 1907), 46. For a history of the American Home Missionary Society, see C.B. Goodykoontz, *Home Missions on the American Frontier: With Particular Reference to the American Home Missionary Society* (Caldwell, ID: Caxton Printers, 1939). The Scandinavian work, however, receives no attention in this study.

13. Quoted in Matthew Spinka, ed., *A History of Illinois Congregational and Christian Churches* (Chicago: Congregational and Christian Conference of Illinois, 1944), 284.

14. *The Home Missionary* 51 (December 1878), 187.

15. Quoted in A.C. McGiffert, *No Ivory Tower: The Story of the Chicago Theological Seminary* (Chicago: Chicago Theological Seminary, 1965), 59.

16. This rhetorical tradition is developed in Hale, “Scandinavian Departments,” esp. 62ff. Future problems were anticipated in 1884, however, when the Congregational Club of Minnesota held a symposium entitled “Norwegians, Swedes, and Their Denomina-

(1839–1894) in his position as superintendent of the Scandinavian work of the AHMS, which included an extended visit to Scandinavia in 1884 and the resulting enthusiastic report of “spontaneous Congregationalism,” entitled *A Wind from the Holy Spirit in Sweden and Norway* (1885).<sup>17</sup> The rhetoric of Montgomery, Scott, Curtiss, and others treated the northern Europeans as different from other immigrants, as “allies with us in the work of saving America for Christ,” in effect making the Germans and Scandinavians “second-class WASPs”—one in the cause, but only because they were perceived to be easily assimilated.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, it was natural for immigrants to participate in the American religious institutions that most clearly resembled their own, and many Swedes initially came to believe the rhetorical tradition.

Based on his travels, Montgomery concluded that the “Swedish free churches are purely Congregational” in all respects, despite no previous contact.<sup>19</sup> Even as he rhapsodized about the similarities, questionably (if not, naively) confirmed by Waldenström, the nativism directed toward these “desirable people” was clear: “The information gathered may be summarized thus,” wrote Montgomery:

*The Scandinavians are, all things considered, among the best foreigners who come to American shores. . . . They who love liberty and religion will make the best citizens of this republic. Just such are the Scandinavians. They are almost universally Protestants; comparably few are sceptics. They have been reared to believe in God, the Sabbath, and in salvation through*

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tions,” where the speakers Sven Oftedal, professor at Augsburg Seminary, and George Wiberg, Ansgar Synod pastor from Worcester, Massachusetts (who became a staunch ally to the work of Risberg at CTS and was employed by the AHMS), predicted inevitable conflict over doctrinal issues.

17. For the crucial role of Montgomery, see Hale, *Trans-Atlantic Conservative Protestantism*, 215–55.

18. M.W. Montgomery, speech to the Congregational Association of Minnesota, reported in *The Pilgrim* (October 1885). This was a defense of Protestant America against foreign perils enumerated by Josiah Strong and the Evangelical Alliance. See Robert T. Handy, *A Christian America: Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), esp. 57–81. On Scandinavians as “second-class WASPs,” see Charles H. Anderson, *White Protestant Americans: From National Origins to Religious Group* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1971), 43ff.

19. M.W. Montgomery, “The Free Church Movement in Sweden,” *The Andover Review* 2 (1884), 411.



Christ. They ardently love the principle upon which our republic rests and hence are intensely loyal. In politics they are generally Republican. They have large, strong bodies; are industrious, frugal, eager, apt, modest, intelligent. Very many American homes are blessed with the services of Scandinavian girls whose ways are likely to be honest, quiet, faithful, cleanly, and pious.

In several respects the Scandinavians are in marked contrast with some foreign elements among us. They are not peddlers, nor organ grinders nor beggars; they do not sell ready-made clothing nor keep pawn-shops; their religion is not hostile to free institutions; they do not come here temporarily, and, while seeking for gain, live a foreign life, praying all the while that their bones may yet lie in the lands from which they came. . . . This republic—the hope and aspiration of the world—has nothing to fear from the Scandinavians, but very much to gain. After a careful observation of these people in this land and in their native countries, I am clearly of the opinion that *they are more nearly like Americans than any other foreign peoples*. In manners and customs, political and religious instructions, fertility of adaptation, personal appearance, and cosmopolitan character, they are strikingly like native Americans [sic]. . . . The first generation of American-born Scandinavians, when they reach the age of twenty years, cannot generally be distinguished from Americans by either appearance, language, or customs.<sup>20</sup>

Despite the strength of this manufactured rhetorical tradition (and many such examples can be marshaled), leaders at CTS also had a more pragmatic and pastoral view that, because these Scandinavians “in sympathy with us” needed an educated ministry and had neither preparatory academies nor seminaries of their own, such an extension of home mission was worthy and altruistic.<sup>21</sup> Through such benevolence it was hoped that “they will take a warm interest in our churches and naturally

20. M. W. Montgomery, “*A Wind from the Holy Spirit*” in *Sweden and Norway* (New York: American Home Missionary Society, 1884), 6f. Montgomery wildly estimated that half the population of Sweden was Lutheran while the rest were oriented toward the free churches; in fact, approximately 300,000 were part of the Mission Friend movement.

21. *Minutes of the Tenth Triennial Convention Held in Chicago, April 22, 1885, in Connection with the Chicago Theological Seminary* (Chicago, 1885).

look to us as their American helpers and friends.” Furthermore, added Scott, “We are not slow to take the hint.”<sup>22</sup>

This, then, sets the context for Risberg’s arrival at CTS in the autumn of 1885, a world of faith and education that must have seemed very foreign to him. While the Congregationalists were quite certain of the qualities that defined an American, such an identifiable species must have seemed highly illusive through the eyes of an immigrant initially. No doubt, CTS provided Risberg with a culture and context that allowed him to be a bridge among Swedish leaders and groups between 1885 and World War I, three decades that comprised the most critical period for issues of identity, self-differentiation, and degrees of ethnic consciousness, made all the more pressing by generational change.

### **Risberg, Nyvall, and Growing Tension**

Fridolf Risberg was born on November 4, 1848, at Nysätra in the province of Västerbotten.<sup>23</sup> The son of a provincial physician, he attended Umeå College and Uppsala University, graduating in 1871. After two years working as a tutor for a wealthy family, Risberg was ordained in Uppsala in December 1874. He then served as a pastor in various parishes in northern Sweden. Risberg became increasingly dissatisfied with the state church, and a significant turning point occurred in 1880 when the itinerant evangelist Fredrik Franson (1852–1908) held meetings for three weeks in Härnösand, where Risberg was pastor. Risberg shared his home with Franson, and the two formed a permanent friendship,

22. The report of Professor H.M. Scott to the Triennial Convention of the Chicago Theological Seminary, April 22, 1885, in Lindstrom, “The Risberg School,” 97. Lindstrom prints this most interesting status report in its entirety as an appendix (pp. 85–97), outlining the origins and work of each foreign department at CTS. Montgomery gave three reasons for the ambivalence of Mission Friends toward education: “(1) the deeply religious nature of the Scandinavians, which cares more for religion than culture; (2) the prejudice among these Free Church people against education, which has grown out of the unspiritual teachings and the harsh persecutions of the Lutheran State Church preachers, who are all educated; and (3) the revival prevailing among them makes them feel that the gospel messenger must not wait for the slow processes of a thorough education. Hence these young men are willing to overleap the college, and sometimes even the academy, and flock to the theological school,” not nearly as prepared as American students: M.W. Montgomery, *The Work Among the Scandinavians, Including the Swedes, Danes, and Norwegians* (New York: American Home Missionary Society, 1888), 11.

23. There is little biographical information on Risberg apart from his brief autobiography, *Strödda minnen från mitt flydda Ziv* (Chicago: Missions-Vännen Bokförlag, 1916). His personal papers are not extant.

which in a decade would establish a new alliance in Chicago.<sup>24</sup> On April 30, 1882, Risberg preached his farewell sermon in the parish church of Edsele, thus joining Svenska Missionsförbundet (the Swedish Mission Covenant), founded in 1878. A devout and sensitive man, highly influenced by Waldenström, Risberg criticized the state church for its rigid confessionalism, its lack of courage in applying spiritual discipline, and its practices of membership apart from voluntary signs of regeneration. "It is almost like serving God and Mammon," preached Risberg. "Two such different lords I can no longer serve. . . . I have been called to a work in greater conformity to the word of God."<sup>25</sup> He claimed that the decision was five years in the making.

Having been secured by Björk and Waldenström in the summer of 1885, Risberg commenced his teaching at CTS on September 9, joining what A. C. McGiffert later called a "polyglot seminary," comprised of the various foreign departments. Risberg had studied Shakespeare at Uppsala and knew at least a little English, but for some time he conducted his conversations with the faculty in German. He began with fourteen students. A lifelong bachelor, these were his family, and of the 313 Swedish students he taught between 1885 and 1916, only one out of seven had been born in the United States, and the average age was twenty-eight.<sup>26</sup> At Risberg's inauguration, John H. Morley of the AHMS spoke of the rosy prospects of assimilation through mission. "America, especially the Northwest," he said, "is plastic to the touch of Christ," and all foreigners would be "moulded" by American institutions, "so that they should not be alien to our nation, but homogeneous, no line of cleavage appearing."<sup>27</sup>

24. O. C. Grauer, *Fredrick Franson: Founder of the Scandinavian Alliance Mission* (Chicago: Scandinavian Alliance Mission, n.d.), 36.

25. Fridolf Risberg, *Afskedspredikan på tredje söndagen efter påsk den 30 April 1882* (Härnösand, 1883), as quoted by Karl A. Olsson, *By One Spirit* (Chicago: Covenant Press, 1962), 734.

26. McGiffert, *No Ivory Tower*, 66. For a listing of the students, chronological and alphabetical, see Lindstrom, "The Risberg School," 128–67. Risberg gave his own analysis of the students, *Strödda minnen*, 132f. The board of CTS followed five criteria in calling Risberg: (1) spiritual, doctrinally sound, inspiring confidence; (2) some knowledge of English; (3) skill in practical theology; (4) ability to teach Swedish homiletics and church history; and (5) a good preacher and example of godliness to the students. *Covenant Yearbook 1885*, 14f.

27. John H. Morley, "Charge to Professor Fridolph Rissberg [sic]," TS, Chicago Theological Seminary Library, 3, as quoted by Hale, "Scandinavian Departments," 99.

This ambition was shared by Fridolf Risberg, and his work at CTS was guided by the conviction that eventual assimilation into the American church would best serve the needs of the Swedish Mission Friends. In 1892 he wrote,

My opinion is that every European who makes this land his home should think from the very beginning that he is to become a good American. The English language must in time become our mother tongue. In the future, then, our preaching must be in English. Then certainly our churches may coalesce with the American. However, for the near future Swedish must be the chief language among us. It is because the training of Swedish preachers among Americans has a future before it that I willingly labor in this seminary.<sup>28</sup>

Risberg formally joined the Congregational Church in 1894.

The work of CTS with the Scandinavian free churches was complicated by the fact that the Covenant Church was a new denomination, and the issue of control over its students had never been fully anticipated or resolved, leading to years of misunderstanding. The first Annual Meeting of the Covenant in Princeton, Illinois, in September 1885, directed specific questions to CTS regarding admission, the relationship of students to Swedish congregations, and the nature of Risberg's connection to the seminary, though a committee of Covenant leaders had been meeting with him to screen ministerial candidates.

In time a partial solution was reached as the Covenant provided money to pay for an assistant to Risberg, pushed by President Björk—even as he remained adamant that the Swedes should not have their own school. This person was David Nyvall, who arrived in the fall of 1888. After his emigration from Sweden in 1886, Nyvall had taught at Skogsbergh's school in Minneapolis and served a congregation in Sioux City, Iowa. Having passed his pre-medical examinations at Uppsala and begun his medical studies at the Carolinian Institute in Stockholm, Nyvall was thoroughly at home in the rigorous academic climate of CTS.<sup>29</sup> He later

28. Quoted in M.W. Montgomery, "Scandinavian Department," *The Home Missionary* 65 (1892), 70.

29. For Nyvall as educator, see Philip J. Anderson, "David Nyvall and Swedish-American Education," in Philip J. Anderson and Dag Blanck, eds., *Swedish-American Life in Chicago: Cultural and Urban Aspects of an Immigrant People, 1850–1930* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991). For the definitive biography of Nyvall,

described his time with Risberg as “two of the most delightful years of my life.”<sup>30</sup> By 1889 there were forty students enrolled in the Swedish department’s four-year program (much larger than the other foreign departments). Though they were housed separately from the American students because of their inferior learning, Scott once defended them by saying to all the students, “You American boys with your degrees need not look down on these Swedish lads; I will be satisfied if you know as much about the Bible when you finish here as these fellows knew when they were confirmed in Sweden at the age of fifteen years.”<sup>31</sup>

Nyvall, however, vigorously disagreed with Risberg’s views of Americanization, saying that “in all things personal Risberg and I were one, but in school matters and in matters of denominational interests we did not agree.”<sup>32</sup> His role in the unfolding stormy discussions of schools and possible mergers led to the conviction that the Covenant needed its own school if the denomination was to have a future and if Swedish-American people were to shape their own cultural and religious lives. In reference to CTS and ministerial education, Nyvall wondered how the Covenant could assume responsibility “simply by watching with others at the entrance while the Seminary alone stood watch over the exit.” In April 1890 Nyvall tendered his resignation “to be free to work for a Covenant school.”<sup>33</sup> Covenant leaders, however, were reluctant to sever connections with CTS (Björk was still somewhat suspicious of education and cautious about grassroots perceptions), so Magnus E. Peterson (1850–1940) was called from Stromsburg, Nebraska, to succeed Nyvall

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see Scott E. Erickson, *David Nyvall and the Shape of an Immigrant Church: Ethnic, Denominational, and Educational Priorities among Swedes in America* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1996), esp. 233–314.

30. David Nyvall, “Dreams That Came True,” *Cupola* (1923 *North Park Yearbook*), 33.

31. Interview with Joel Fridfelt by P. Richard Anderson, May 1966, in Lindstrom, “The Risberg School,” 55f.

32. Nyvall, “Dreams That Came True,” 33.

33. David Nyvall, *The Swedish Covenanters: A History* (Chicago: Covenant Book Concern, 1930), 72ff. In this book, Nyvall commented extensively on his relationship to Risberg, whose character and teaching abilities he deeply admired. Nyvall described Risberg’s generational views (p. 75): “He was a staunch believer in the prompt Americanization of the Swedish Mission Friends and he used to say that he was certain of two things, and somewhat uncertain as to a third. He was sure that the Mission Friends of the first generation would never consent to any scheme of Americanization. He was equally sure that the third generation of the Mission Friends would be Americanized as a matter of course. He was not sure whether the Americanization would take effect already in the

in 1890, and together he labored with Risberg until the department, called the Swedish Institute after 1903, closed in 1916.<sup>34</sup>

Nyvall must have been deeply affected by the experience of Peter Christian Trandberg (1832–1896), the instructor in the Danish-Norwegian department from its opening in 1884 until his termination by CTS in 1890. Trandberg was fifty when he emigrated from Denmark, a graduate of the University of Copenhagen and converted by the writings of Søren Kierkegaard. Trandberg was a devout “free Lutheran” and had received from Montgomery “permission to hold fast to Lutheran interpretation.”<sup>35</sup> A controversy arose when Trandberg learned that Congregationalists were being told that he was at CTS to protect it and his students from Lutheran influences. Trandberg had formed several free Lutheran congregations in Chicago and countered publicly that he “heartily adhered to the Lutheran view of the mysteries of salvation.” Perhaps reminiscent of Esbjörn, Trandberg accused CTS of “blatant sheep stealing” and Montgomery of buying converts by offering aid to students and churches.<sup>36</sup> He was fired. Trandberg was followed by Reinert Jernberg, a graduate of both Yale and CTS, and an ardent assimilationist and Congregationalist known for his caustic attacks on Lutheranism. While Nyvall did not share in Trandberg’s evangelistic millenarianism, he did identify with his free Lutheran stand in a Calvinistic enclave and his critique that similarities in polity do not make for common doctrine or ecclesiology.

The years 1889 to 1891 were crucial for future alignments among the Scandinavian free churches and the place that Congregational aid might have. Waldenström visited America in 1889; merger discussions, the dismissal of Trandberg, and the resignation of Nyvall occurred in 1890; and a Covenant school as well as Franson’s Scandinavian Alliance Mission (SAM) were formed in 1891. In the midst of this organizational activ-

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second generation. With this opinion as to the future it is natural that he could not take a very enthusiastic view of the Covenant plan.” For a study of generational theory, see Peter Kivisto and Dag Blanck, eds., *American Immigrants and Their Generations: Studies and Commentaries on the Hansen Thesis after Fifty Years* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990).

34. Half of Peterson’s \$1,000 salary was paid by the Covenant, half by CTS. When the Covenant school was established in Minneapolis in 1891, the Covenant withdrew its funding, and Peterson’s earnings were augmented out of Risberg’s own pocket.

35. P.C. Trandberg, *Deliverance from Babylon and Its Foreshadowings* (Chicago: N.O. Moore, 1888), 41f.

36. For a discussion of the Trandberg controversy, see Hale, “Scandinavian Departments,” 108–111.

ity, it became increasingly clear that Congregationalist hopes would be limited by the self-determinative actions of the Scandinavians themselves, producing either, on one hand, intentional denominational commitments (the Covenant) or, on the other, more amorphous associational activity (SAM) across whose spectrum people moved freely and where schools became the key symbols of a potentially greater cooperation. It was here that the low-profiled and unassuming Fridolf Risberg became a tenuous link between all.

### **Assumptions, Expectations, and Politics**

What were the ambitions of the Congregationalists? On the basis of the rhetorical tradition, it is tempting to see assimilation and absorption of the Scandinavian free churches as the goal. Congregational leaders had made this quite clear. If one reads more closely, however, it is equally clear that their overriding concern was for preserving the Protestant establishment in America from the infiltration of “foreign elements,” especially Jews, Roman Catholics, and immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. With a qualified xenophobia, they diligently sought alliances with Protestant immigrants from Northern Europe and Scandinavia and were quite happy to allow these ethnic groups to establish their own associations—with hopes for possible merger in the future. In 1886, for example, Montgomery wrote that “organic unity between Congregationalists and Mission Swedes is not desired by either party, but Christian fellowship between them grows with mutual acquaintance.”<sup>37</sup> Yet, others harbored larger expectations, perhaps justifying for some the investment in these groups.

It should not be surprising, then, that in response to this Covenant leaders developed a rhetorical tradition of their own that became widely promoted in the press and among the people. The Congregationalists sent many mixed messages rooted in their nativism. This is well illustrated by the one effort at joint denominational affiliation in 1889–1890. At the triennial Congregational National Council meeting in Worcester, Massachusetts, in the fall of 1889, a “fraternal overture” was made to the Covenant. Sensing the Covenant’s sensitivity about assimilation, the resolution added that the church should “retain their present name and

37. M.W. Montgomery, *The Pilgrim* (October 1886), as quoted by Hale, *Transatlantic Conservative Protestantism*, 233.

organization, and carry on the work in their own language and methods, and send delegates to the National Council.” In reference to financial support of ministers and churches, it was stated that “this aid is not given for the purpose of making Congregationalists of them.”<sup>38</sup> Moreover, Waldenström was then making his first tour of America, had received an honorary doctorate at Yale, and was well known for his support of affiliation with the Congregationalists, though he feared the liberalizing tendencies of Americanization. Even as the Covenant emphatically refused the proposal, Waldenström wrote, “It would be a joy if all the Swedish Free churches would unite in a Swedish Association, and then this Association, as such, join the Congregationalists. But as the situation is at present, it may be best to have patience.”<sup>39</sup>

David Nyvall and Axel Mellander, who in 1892 became dean of the Covenant school, anticipated the Covenant’s rejection of the overture. In January 1890 Mellander wrote in *Missions-Vännen* that the freedom of the Covenant “cannot be sold either for Congregational favors or American bribes.” A week later, Nyvall added, “We shall not be assimilated because we shall not be Americanized. By making the best of what we now are, we can best educate the nation in America. . . . If we are good Swedes (in an apolitical sense), we are good Americans.”<sup>40</sup> The same week, Montgomery wrote in exasperation, “Some of their leaders are as blind . . . as the ostrich with her head in the sand. They bitterly oppose Americanizing influences. As well might they strive against the rising of tomorrow’s sun. They will succeed only in extinguishing themselves.”<sup>41</sup> In a similar vein, Scott wrote to Montgomery stating that should Nyvall wish to return to CTS, he would have to promise to “act loyally with us and at least cease all attacks on us. . . . To give some men rope enough means self-hanging.”<sup>42</sup>

The proposal was formally rejected by the Covenant’s executive board

38. *Minutes of the National Council* (1889), 175, 276, as quoted by Hale, *ibid*.

39. *Reports of the American Home Missionary Society, 64th Report* (New York: American Home Missionary Society, 1890), 61ff. For the nineteenth-century Swedish context of democratic movements of reform, see Mark Safstrom, *The Religious Origins of Democratic Pluralism: Paul Peter Waldenström and the Politics of the Swedish Awakening, 1868–1917* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2016).

40. *Missions-Vännen*, January 22, 1890; January 29, 1890.

41. M.W. Montgomery, “Our Scandinavian Brethren,” *The Advance*, January 23, 1890, 68.

42. H.M. Scott to M.W. Montgomery, June 16, 1890, as quoted by Lindstrom, “The Risberg School,” 21.



at a joint meeting with the Congregationalists, February 4–5, 1890, at the Pacific Hotel in Chicago. The reasons given demonstrate the rhetorical tradition emerging in the Covenant, namely, Nyvall's concern for denominational identity and Swedish-American ethnic consciousness and Mellander's fear of theological liberalism and social laxity. It is obvious that both sides misunderstood each other's intentions, but both had given ample cause for the other's doing so. An embittered Joseph B. Clark, secretary of the AHMS, believed that the Covenant's delegates to the meeting were not fully representative and complained in a letter to Montgomery "that they could not probably manage the team [of horses] which they assume to be driving.... [L]et the *Verbund* go to the grass or to the grave. I guess it does not matter much which."<sup>43</sup>

The Congregational leaders had good reason to wonder about the Covenant's central leadership, though they totally misread the internal divisions among the Scandinavian free churches. By 1890 the AHMS had aided numerous churches in the New England states, and in December of that year the Eastern Missionary Association (EMA) formed in Worcester, Massachusetts, along regional lines similar to what had been proposed nationally. Though the EMA merged solely with the Covenant in 1921, these churches were in effect Covenant all along (though known as Swedish Congregational), with clergy trained largely at Risberg's school.

By the turn of the century, there were over a hundred Swedish Congregational churches with some 5,000 members, concentrated most heavily in New England and areas of Minnesota and Wisconsin.<sup>44</sup> In the East, this dual affiliation persisted for decades in local congregations; whereas in the Northwest, a separate Swedish Congregational association of churches and pastors existed from 1898 until its merger with the Covenant's Northwestern Missionary Association (1884) in 1918. It is both surprising and revealing that there were few Swedish Congregational churches in Illinois—only one small congregation in Chicago (which moved many times and in 1905 had only sixty members), and four in

43. J.B. Clark to M.W. Montgomery, n.d., as quoted by Anderson, "Analysis of Congregational Aid," 35. Congregational leaders frequently used the German word *Verbund* instead of the Swedish *Förbund*.

44. For an extensive description of these 106 churches, see the sympathetic history by A.P. Nelson, *Svenska Missionsvännernas historia i Amerika* (Minneapolis: published by the author, 1906). In an attempt to show the common history of Mission Friends with English and American Congregationalism (to merge the rhetorical traditions), Nelson had written *Puritanernas och Pilgrimernas historia* (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1901). If Ris-

the suburbs.<sup>45</sup> Thus the influence of the AHMS and CTS had virtually no impact in areas where the Covenant was strongest. Churches in the East were founded at least a decade later, were more urban and separated geographically from church life in Chicago, and were in close proximity to New England history and culture as well as to theological schools at New Haven, Hartford, and Boston.

As the relationship between Congregationalists and the Swedish Mission Friends changed after 1890, the place of Fridolf Risberg, relatively quiet up to this point, came into greater prominence. Even then, in the absence of his papers, we know most about him from others and by his actions. Though not a Congregationalist himself until 1894, Risberg was the symbol of Swedish Congregationalism. At the same time, his close ties to the Covenant were evidenced by his declining the invitation to become president of the new Covenant school in Minneapolis in 1892—thus giving the opportunity to Nyvall—and his prominent place in the dedicatory ceremonies of Old Main at North Park in 1894, and providing the school its motto: “In Thy Light, Shall We See Light” (Psalm 36:9). Of even more importance, however, was Risberg’s connection to a third group, which he most personally identified with, namely the mission activities associated with Fredrik Franson’s Scandinavian Alliance Mission (SAM), in direct competition with Covenant missionary activity.

Franson’s mission was organized in 1891, the year after the Covenant sent its first missionary to China, and Franson began mobilizing young people, “without reference to their affiliation,” to go to China and elsewhere.<sup>46</sup> Risberg moved, therefore, increasingly away from the Covenant after 1891, at the same time that he was the most visible proponent of Americanization among the Swedes and deeply involved with the more radical Scandinavian Free congregations in the alliance mission. Since

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berg had had Nelson’s promotional energy, the history of Swedish Congregationalism might have been different.

45. For a discussion of Congregational work in the EMA, see Paul A. Day, *Unity and Freedom: One Hundred Years of the East Coast Conference of the Evangelical Covenant Church* (East Coast Conference, 1990). For the Northwest, see Philip J. Anderson, *A Precious Heritage: A Century of Mission in the Northwest, 1884–1984* (Minneapolis: Northwest Conference, 1984); and “Protokollbok för svenska kongregational predikantföreningen i nordvestern,” 1898–1918, MS, Covenant Archives and Historical Library (CAHL), Chicago.

46. Ironically, the Scandinavian Alliance Mission was organized in the Swedish Tabernacle in Minneapolis, the very place and in the same year that the Covenant school took its home, demonstrating the fluid lines of division among Mission Friends. Cf.

his friend Franson was the traveling carpetbagger, Risberg, as secretary, ran the SAM from his office at CTS, a position he held until his death in 1921. In effect, he was the director. Because of these connections, the churches in the East supported the SAM rather than Covenant missions, a most uncomfortable development. Though Nyvall admired Risberg and prized his friendship, he wrote in 1930 that all Covenant “hardships” with the Swedish Congregationalists were “symbolized in the personal factor of Risberg.” Because of him, it was possible for many churches in these groups to be “separated yet federated in spirit.”<sup>47</sup>

These complex relationships, however, were not to be played out on the level of church mergers. Rather, it was in a series of attempts to unite schools representing the Covenant, the Swedish Congregationalists, and the Free that the different perspectives on mission, institutions, assimilation, and ethnic consciousness and boundaries were shown. It can be argued that in these relationships one can see the stronger role of urban networks and institutions when compared to older rural environments. It may also be asserted that groups rooted in revival and the folk movements in opposition to the Swedish state church could more readily adapt to the competitive American environment of religious pluralism and voluntarism.

The Covenant school moved to Chicago in 1894, became known as North Park, and entered into more direct competition with CTS, though it was unable to offer comparable aid to students studying for Covenant ministry. Young immigrants were poor, and CTS attracted many of these students and often continued the aid as they went on to serve Swedish Congregational churches. A sizable number, however, remained with Covenant congregations. The Swedish Free churches began their own school in Chicago in 1901 under the leadership of Princell, which always struggled, moved for a time to Minneapolis and Franconia, Minnesota,

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Josephine Princell, ed., *Alliansmissionens tjugu femårsminnen* (Chicago: Skandinaviska Alliansmissionen, 1916); and Frederick Hale, “Norwegians, Danes, and the Origins of the Evangelical Free Tradition,” *Norwegian-American Studies* 29 (Northfield: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1979), 82–108.

47. Nyvall, *Swedish Covenanters*, 78. Risberg wrote, “There were never two persons more unlike each other than Franson and myself, but for many years we knew each other and worked together for the Mission, [and] we never had an unkind word between us,” quoted in J. F. Swanson, ed., *Three Score Years . . . and Then: Sixty Years of Worldwide Missionary Advance* (Chicago: The Evangelical Alliance Mission, 1951), 446.

and finally returned to Chicago—affiliated loosely with Moody Bible Institute. Nyvall said that whereas the Mission Friends should have been united, they “were now divided not only in two organizations, as at the onset, but in *partes tres*, to borrow from Caesar, a division accentuated by the three schools serving practically the same constituency.”<sup>48</sup> Consequently, all three schools struggled with limited resources and students.

The lengthy merger discussions between 1902 and 1911 consistently encountered two differing convictions. First, the Covenant and North Park, concerned for an emerging identity as a Swedish-American church and with a more comprehensive vision of liberal and professional education, wished only to absorb Risberg’s school into its existing seminary program. Because of historic differences and the Free’s anti-denominational spirit, North Park wanted nothing to do with Princell’s school. Second, leaders at CTS worked diligently for a new union of the three schools. Amid the talk, meetings, and correspondence, there was little hope of bridging these differences, despite the universal admiration of Risberg, personally and symbolically.

Nyvall proposed in 1902 the transfer of the Swedish department at CTS to North Park. In a lengthy reply, Scott and Curtiss refused the offer, no doubt with memories of Nyvall’s “disloyalty” a decade before, and proposed instead a new “Union Theological Seminary” of the three schools under Congregational auspices, where North Park would provide undergraduate preparation in its college.<sup>49</sup> This same scenario was repeated in 1906 (in Nyvall’s absence) when representatives from the three schools convened at the Oak Street Mission in Chicago.<sup>50</sup> By early 1907 the discussions had died.<sup>51</sup> The Covenant was now over two decades old, more secure in its prospects of moving into the second generation,

48. Nyvall, *Swedish Covenanters*, 76. The Danish-Norwegian free churches opened a seminary in Rushford, Minnesota, in 1909, with the cooperation of CTS. It moved to Minneapolis in 1916. For the context of Scandinavian Free Mission Friend identity, see David M. Gustafson, *D. L. Moody and Swedes: Shaping Evangelical Identity among Swedish Mission Friends 1867–1899* (Linköping: Linköping University, 2008).

49. H.M. Scott and S.I. Curtiss to David Nyvall, February 11, 1902, David Nyvall Papers, CAHL.

50. H.M. Scott to E.G. Hjerpe, April 26, 1907, CAHL.

51. “Risberg’s School: North Park Seminary Correspondence on Union 1910–1911,” MS, Covenant Archives and Historical Library, Chicago. For example, it was agreed to publish a directory of associated ministers, congregations, and mission organizations to be of value especially to new immigrants and those moving to other places. The Covenant and Congregationalists complied, but the Free did not.

and more firm in its prejudices, especially since the publication of Melander's stinging attack on the Congregationalists in 1900, *Betänkande i kongregationalist-frågan* (Thoughts on the Congregationalist Question).

Two events in 1908 portray vividly the hopes and disappointments born of deep division. In the North Park archives is a silver loving cup with three unusual handles, presented to Risberg on his sixtieth birthday in 1908 by the graduates of his school at CTS. Algoth Ohlson, a graduate in 1907 and later president of North Park (1924–1949), remembered:

The presentation of the gift, as I recall it, took place on a festive occasion where there were a large number of people present, representatives of the three Swedish theological seminaries in Chicago. . . . During the program someone suggested that one representative of each school should grasp a handle of the cup simultaneously while someone else led in prayer for harmonious cooperation and possible future consolidation. . . . So far as I know, this ceremony was never repeated; nor was there any deep feeling of symbolic meaning in the first and only expression of it.<sup>52</sup>

Also in 1908, the loose association of Free congregations organized itself in Minneapolis as a denomination, the Swedish Evangelical Free Church. Princell, who was present, protested that a mission association should not have the word "church" in its name, that such an organization was premature. He wanted room for independent congregations, yet he too harbored hope for a merging of all three groups. His passionate speech to the delegates was not recorded in the minutes, but in it he said,

In order that a kettle shall be able to stand up straight, it must have at least three legs. And we ought to wait in adopting the name "Free church" until the kettle has three legs to stand on. And you know what they are: the Covenant, the Free, and the Congregationalists. For it is evident that they will become one if we wait a little.<sup>53</sup>

The final discussions occurred between September 1910 and May 1911. With Nyvall away from North Park in voluntary exile between

52. Algoth Ohlson to Oscar E. Olson, December 9, 1959, CAHL.

53. Josephine Princell, *J.G. Princells levnadsminnen* (Chicago: J.V. Martensons Tryckeri, 1916), 265.

1905 and 1912, the EMA had passed a resolution in Brockton, Massachusetts, to revive the idea of a union of the three theological schools. The North Park board endorsed it, renewing the proviso that Risberg's school should be transferred to North Park, and that he would be invited to become president. The Free Church school was not mentioned. E.G. Hjerpe, the new president of the Covenant, conveyed this decision on March 29, 1911, to Ozora Stearns Davis, president of CTS since 1908. Davis—who desired a permanent solution and no doubt was weary of a discussion that had gone on for a quarter-century—insisted in his reply that it be a union of *three* schools in order to “promote the union of three bodies.” And while Chicago Covenant pastors had written to Davis saying that “Risberg commends the highest respect of our people and possesses such sterling qualities and thorough learning and experience that would make him an ideal President for such a school,”<sup>54</sup> Davis countered that Risberg was too old to change positions and “not fitted” to be president of North Park, only the dean of a seminary. When the boards of North Park and CTS met together on May 6, 1911, tempers flared, and the stalemate continued. Davis finally concluded “that the obstacles in the way of union are so many and so great that for the present it is impossible.”<sup>55</sup> It was never brought up again.

The Danish-Norwegian Institute closed in 1913 and, upon Risberg's retirement in 1916, so did the Swedish Institute. Nyvall paid tribute to Risberg by saying that his “ability, and the confidence he inspired, kept his school going long after it had ceased to be necessary or even helpful to its original purpose of training ministers for the Mission Friends.” By the early 1890s, and certainly by the turn-of-the-century, Risberg's school “had no purpose of its own” since most of its graduates “associated themselves with the Covenant.”<sup>56</sup>

## The Upshot

What is interesting in this history of American aid is not so much the Congregationalists' desire to incorporate a significant section of the Swedish-American people, which may easily be overstated, but how the various Mission Friend groups responded to the overtures. On one hand, the distinctives that divided the Covenant, the Free, the Swedish Con-

54. Chicago Swedish Mission Ministers to O.S. Davis, March 27, 1911, CAHL.

55. O.S. Davis to E.G. Hjerpe, May 11, 1911, CAHL.

56. Nyvall, *Swedish Covenanters*, 76.

gregationalists, and the independents, come into sharp focus. On the other hand, one can also see the development of a pan-ethnic “mission” identity that embraced all the Scandinavian free churches and fostered cooperation and hopes for merger, driven by religion and held together by ethnicity. The challenge was to steer between the Scylla of assimilation without tradition and the Charybdis of tradition without assimilation.

The divisions, however, were products both of religion and ethnicity. Among the Swedish Congregationalists was an uncritical accommodation to the American world of Reformed theology and culture, while remaining essentially Swedish and free Lutheran. Among the Free churches was a far more sectarian view of religion and life and an almost total disregard for ethnic distinctives, while accommodating almost fully to Anglo-American theologies and methods of revivalism and culture, essentially Reformed and dispensational. Among Covenant leaders was a distinctive articulation of an emerging Swedish-American consciousness as an ethnic group in transition and a concern for institutional completeness, sensitive to the intergenerational challenges of immigrant life, not sectarian but rooted in the inheritances of the Old and New Worlds. It is especially interesting that the clashing of rhetorical traditions between Congregationalists and Covenanters was partly based on invented histories, celebrating the Anglo-American destiny through colonial Puritanism, and the Swedish-American consciousness through Viking history and retention of Scandinavian language and culture.

To adopt language from family systems theory, on matters of ethnicity David Nyvall was a highly “differentiated” leader within the Covenant, meaning “the capacity of a family member to define his or her own life’s goals and values apart from surrounding togetherness pressures, to say ‘I’ when others are demanding ‘you’ and ‘we.’” It means “the capacity to be an ‘I’ while remaining connected” to the larger group, to be a non-anxious presence in the midst of anxious systems.<sup>57</sup> In ethnic terms, the leadership of Risberg among the Congregationalists and Princell among the Free was far less differentiated because the emphasis was more strongly on Americanization and less on generational ethnicity.

Another way to look at this would be to use John Higham’s leadership

57. Edwin H. Friedman, *Generation to Generation: Family Progress in Church and Synagogue* (New York: Guilford Press, 1985), 27. See also Michael E. Kerr and Murray Bowen, *Family Evaluation: An Approach Based on Bowen Theory* (New York: Norton, 1988).

types.<sup>58</sup> According to Higham, “leaders focus the consciousness of an ethnic group and in doing so make its identity visible.” Of the three types of leader (received, internal, and projective), the Mission Friend movement in general was too new and varied to produce “received” leaders, where one made traditional claims upon the group. Nyvall probably came closest to this. Rather, the voluntary nature of these groups meant that leaders were either “internal,” who arose from within the group, remained there, and addressed the external world as its representative and advocate; or they were “projective,” who came from the group but acquired a following outside the group, thus affecting its reputation without being directly subject to its control. Though Risberg gave much of his energy to Free Scandinavian causes across the spectrum (thus appearing as an “internal” leader), his role at CTS and his views of Americanization made him symbolically a “projective” leader among Swedish Americans. Nyvall, on the contrary, was firmly an “internal” leader, necessary to self-conscious and self-activating bodies because these leaders helped build psychological and economic security. The role of the Covenant and North Park in the merger discussions was consistent with this pattern. Had Risberg been a more aggressive activist as a leader, this advocate of American unity perhaps could have built more of the bridges he symbolically represented.

The entire story is a test case of generational themes. Princell’s school, today’s Trinity International University and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (affiliated with the merger of the Swedish and Danish-Norwegian Free churches in 1950), has no substantive tie to an ethnic heritage. “Risberg’s School” at CTS closed when he retired in 1916, and Swedish Congregationalism ceased all institutional forms by 1921. But North Park, according to Nyvall, “was built right, and withstood, therefore, the test of the storm.”<sup>59</sup> It survived without him, and throughout its history has seriously addressed issues of denominational identity and Swedish-American culture and consciousness in its urban and richly multiethnic setting, a flourishing Christian university in a world-class city.

58. John Higham, “Leadership,” in Michael Walzer, et al., *The Politics of Ethnicity* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1982), 69–91.

59. Nyvall, *Swedish Covenanters*, 77.