

A HUMBLE SERVANT OF THE LORD

Among the multitudes of people who emigrated from Sweden to North America from the middle of the 19th century and for several succeeding decades there was a small group of pioneer pastors who lived and worked among them. Most of these pastors were young men with limited experience or who had served in subordinate positions in the state church.

Olof Olsson was one of this small group.

Olof Olsson was not a lover of titles. As a service motivated pastor in Sweden and North America, he did not wish to be known as anything other than pastor, "a humble servant of the Lord."

In spite of this he received the titles of doctor of theology, doctor of philosophy, professor and college president.

Even though this is the case, one cannot find any literary work among Olof Olsson's writings which was intended to be a doctoral thesis. Also, no document has been discovered which proves that he presented oral arguments to earn his doctoral degrees.

Olof Olsson was called many different names by different people. In addition to being a pioneer pastor and one of the most learned theologians in the Lutheran Church, he was called evangelist, pietist, mystic and dreamer, heretic and fanatic, conservative Lutheran, figure head in the Augustana Church, democrat and man of the people.

He could also be called farmer and pioneer.

The truth is that behind all of these titles and descriptions we find a man who courageously battled for his faith throughout his entire life.

***“GOD HAS SO CREATED A HUMAN
BEING THAT NO TIES ARE STRONGER
IN HIS HEART THAN THE TIES OF
HOME”***

There are still traces of a path which once led from the church in Karlskoga to the homestead farm, Björtorp, in the southeast part of Värmland. This farm, seven kilometers west of the church, was subdivided into several tracts, one of which, a 1/36 farm assessment unit of Björtorp, was called Hedfallet.¹

The farmer, Olof Olsson, who was born October 19, 1795, and his wife, Britta, nee Jonsdotter, who was born July 15, 1806, lived there with their two sons, Carl and Olof.

Olof was born March 31, 1841, and was baptized on April 2 when he was three days old. His godparents were Anders Jonsson of Björtorp and Anna Olsdotter of Kråkslund, who were members of the Karlskoga congregation in Olof's home neighborhood.

Olof Olsson loved this idyllic place. This was made clear when later in life he described his home and its surrounding area. He had the opportunity to view from his childhood home a scenic panorama of forests, cultivated fields and meadows.

“Do you think I have forgotten my cows which I herded and my calves that I played with? We had no horse but a gentle faithful ox with large horns – I remember him well. And my path to the pasture – do you think I have forgotten the fir trees, the birches, the bushes, the rocks (especially my prayer rocks), the swamps, the moss and much more?”

“The church and the path to the church – when can all of these memories be erased from one's heart? Surely you remember your church and the path to it? When one later enters his spiritual and childhood adolescence, the hills, the brooks, the lakes, the forests, the trees, the flowers, the birds and all animals receive a new life.”

– To Rome and Home Again

Still, it was not always enjoyable to herd one's father's cows:

“Listen, you who do not really understand what it is like to be a herdboys in the untamed forest. In addition to other troubles, one had to face the constant terror of mountain trolls and woodland spirits. At least that is how it was for me. And now, old as I am, I still feel the same fear of forest nymphs. If one could place them in a confessional booth, that

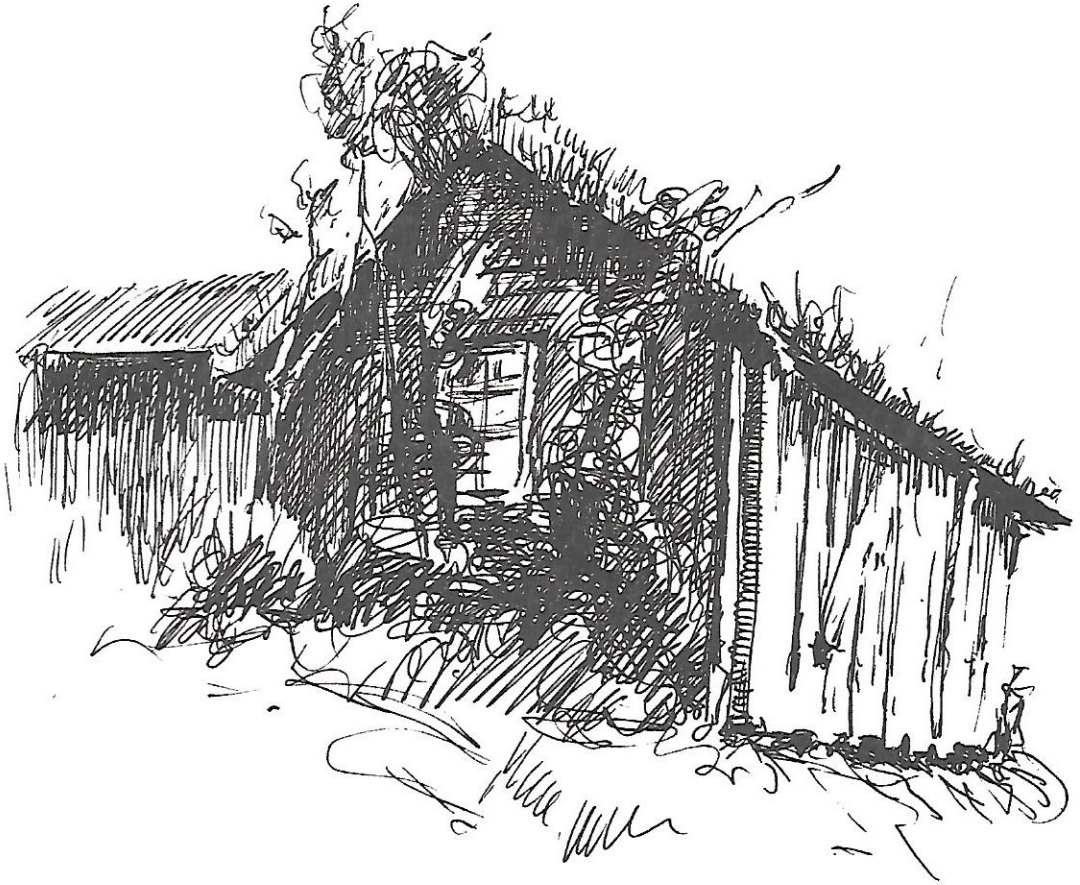
would help, but to see them is unbearable. So these forest deities still spook and terrorize.”

- To Rome and Home Again

A year after Olof’s birth a law was enacted which established compulsory school attendance for all children. But this reorganization of the school system could not be accomplished overnight. Olof should have started the first grade of public school at the age of seven in 1848 and then have continued through the prescribed course. But it didn’t happen that way.

Olof was first enrolled as a regular public school student at the age of thirteen. He has recalled that during this intervening period he was able easily to read the New Testament, the hymnal and the catechism. He was also very good in penmanship and arithmetic.

How had he acquired this educational knowledge?



“My small but happy childhood home.”

The Hedfallet cottage at Linneböck, Karlskoga, where Olof Olsson was born.

With the exception of one year of sporadic instruction by a capable teacher at Karlskoga, Olof's mother had been his teacher.

Olof had to use the available time to good advantage, and he did.

“The Acts of the Apostles and the history of the Waldensians were my first love in church history and they will surely be my last. It was under a birch tree near a little gray cottage in Värmland that I first read the New Testament and about Christian martyrdom. Place a book in the hands of a lively child and you have made an impression upon his soul which the ravages of time can never erase.”

– To Rome and Home Again

When Olof, as a child, began to read the Bible, which he was fortunate enough to call his own, there were scarcely any resources available for Bible study. One was considered fortunate if one even had the means to own a Bible. Almost the only Bible study that occurred came from the pulpit.

At an early age Olof met up with zealous pietism. His mother persuaded him to destroy a violin which he had acquired. The “wicked violin” was a sinful instrument.

This certainly caused great pain to music loving Olof. He gave in to his mother's decision, but he was never able to forget his violin.

“You have heard of ships which carry dynamite or other explosive materials across the ocean. How careful they must be who travel on such ships. The slightest carelessness can cause the entire ship to blow up. What a picture of the explosive emotions that are experienced in a youthful life! Who is wise enough to carry these dynamite emotions across the stormy sea of adolescence?”

“I am greatly astonished by young people who dare to journey through their youth without Jesus as their shepherd and friend. He was my personal friend and savior all through my youth when it often appeared that my boat would break into pieces from the restless and powerful emotions which were stirring in my sensitive heart.

“I was tempest tossed during the dangerous years of my youth but was saved. And all of the credit belongs to Jesus only, the true friend of young people. I am certain that without him I would have become a wreck.”

– Addresses and Lectures (On refining and ennobling the emotions. An address given to young people at Moline, Illinois, May 1, 1883)

Olof experienced strong spiritual influences early in his life. A pastor named Erik Berggren served in Karlskoga during the years 1846–49. He served as adjunct under the pastor, Claes Wahlund, and came from Högsäter's congregation in Dalsland. The stamp of Schartau's piety was evident in the Karlskoga congregation as a result of Pastor Berggren's preaching.

Olof's mother was one who was influenced by Berggren's preaching. She belonged to that group of people who never find the road too difficult or the distance too far to attend church. One would often see her in Karlstad's cathedral and in churches in Västergötland.

Jonas Jonsson and his wife, Maria, nee Nilsson, lived on the farm Vall, which was part of Bofors county. Their eldest son, Carl Johan Nyvall, became one of the first student colporteurs of the Fatherland Foundation² and became a leader of the new evangelism in Värmland. He was born in 1829 and was twelve years older than Olof.

Carl Johan Nyvall married Anna Margareta Moberg who belonged to a pastor's family. She remained faithful to Schartau's preaching throughout her entire life and was unalterably opposed to her husband's enrollment in Fjellstedt's Mission School. She also disapproved of his work as a colporteur.

The families at Hedfallet and Vall had frequent social fellowship together, and Olof's mother was an interested participant at devotional meetings which were held in addition to the regular Sunday services.

1854 became a significant year in young Olof Olsson's life. Olof enrolled as a student in the new Swedish public school at Fredsberg in Västergötland which was fifty miles from his home. His teacher was Anders Fredrik Sedström, a respected School Master who was also the cantor and organist in the Fredsberg congregation.

Before the school year was over Olof's slumbering musical talent and interest had been awakened. He learned quite easily how to play a church organ and how to master the most frequently used church music.

Olof's musical talent became a source of happiness in his home. Schoolmaster Sedström's advice that Olof should continue his studies and become a pastor were not easily brushed aside, but they became a source of tension between his mother and father. Because of economic problems it was a giant step for a poor country boy to become a minister. The father considered it enough of an honor for his son to become an organist, but his mother clung to her cherished dream that Olof should become a pastor.

After a three year interruption away from school work, Olof, at the age of seventeen, received a visitor who brought him unexpected opportunities.

Peter Fjellstedt, the Värmlander, had discovered in Olof a suitable student for his school, and Olof was offered the opportunity to prepare himself to become a missionary. Olof became a student in Fjellstedt's school in Stockholm in the fall of 1858. During the fall term he showed aptitude for becoming a missionary. As a result he was accepted as a student at the Mission Institute in Leipzig, Germany.

The year 1859 was probably one of the unhappiest in Olof's life. He was able to endure only one year in Leipzig. His inner storms had begun in earnest. Olof was plagued by depression but finally recovered. On a brief visit to Leipzig twenty years later, Olof commented on his relationship with the Missionary Institute:

"Before I left Leipzig I wanted to see again the mission house where I lived one year and where I had to fight such internal and external battles that I expected nothing less than the ruin of both my body and soul. Those battles, the studies and worry, damaged my health for the rest of my life. Some people may now wonder why I left the mission house in Leipzig. If so, I will say briefly, To try to persuade a young, active, pietistic Värmlander to be happy in Leipzig's mission house in 1859–1860 is like trying to compel a fish to swim on dry land.

My youthful inexperience must bear part of the blame. But even so I must say regarding the mission house at that time that purity of doctrine without a warm, childlike faith in Christ is a truly deplorable condition.”

– Greetings From Afar

Before the year of 1860 was ended Olof was back at the Fjellstedt school. His course of study was quickly completed, and on January 27, 1861, he became an advanced theological student.

It was not now a question whether he should continue to prepare to become a foreign missionary. Even so, missions were always important to Olof, and later in his life he would become interested in missionary work among the American Indians and the Negroes. Because of this interest he was assigned the responsibility by the Augustana Synod to investigate the possibility of a new Indian mission in the Kansas Territory.

During the pressing years up until 1860 Olof experienced a gnawing spiritual unrest. This led to the development of a melancholy disposition and a mystical element in his personality.

While a twenty year old tutor living in Hälsingland, Olof preached in the Tuna church in Medelpad on the Sunday after Christmas in 1861.

It is impossible to determine whether this was his first sermon, but it is the first which has been preserved as a part of his sermon collection. Olof began the sermon with the hymn stanza, “Jesus, let me always in thy name begin.”

The text was Luke 2.33–40.

“And Joseph and his mother marvelled at that which was spoken of him.

“And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother, See, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel and for a sign which will be spoken against.

“Yes, and a sword shall pierce your own soul, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

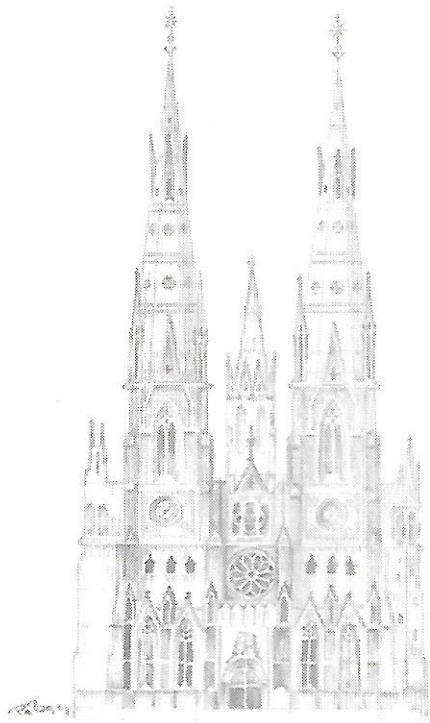
“And there was a prophetess, Hannah, Phanuel’s daughter, of the tribe of Asher. She had reached a great age and had lived with her husband seven years from her virginity, and she was now a widow eighty-four years of age. She never left the temple and served God with prayer and fasting by day and night.

“And she was present at the same hour and praised the Lord and spoke about him to all those who were awaiting redemption in Jerusalem.

“And when they had completed everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned to their home town, Nazareth.

“And the child grew, strengthened in spirit and filled with wisdom, and God’s grace surrounded him.”

Following the reading of the text, Olof preached a sermon which lasted about forty-five minutes. Its arrangement is similiar to that of Schartau’s sermons. The misconception, however, that Olof had borrowed the content from someone else’s sermon already preached by another person can be dismissed, because the content, the language and the



Uppsala Cathedral.

manner of expression fits in with all of his subsequent preaching:

“God’s congregation or Christ’s true Church is like a spiritual house which was not completed in the days of primitive Christianity and since then has not been and cannot be completed. The true cornerstone for the spiritual house, Christ’s congregation, is Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world.”

During the spring and fall terms of 1863 Olof Olsson was a free student³ at the ancient and venerable Uppsala University. Here he passed the theological candidate’s examinations in apologetics and practical theology.

During Advent on December 15, 1863, Olof was ordained as a pastor in the Swedish church by Bishop Henrik Reuterdaahl in the Uppsala cathedral. After his ordination Olof returned as a young pastor to the rural district of Värmland.

He was twenty-two years of age.

During the period of 1820 to 1860 about half of the pastors were recruited from the so-called upper class. The social gap between the upper class clergy and the lower class clergy was wide and deep. The distance between the dean and the parish priest and his assistant vicar was approximately as great as between the owner of a business and an office clerk. A dean or parish priest was paid an annual salary of 4.350 riksdollars, an assistant vicar 350 riksdollars and an adjunct 75 riksdollars.⁴

The result was discontent.

Between 1801 and 1854 a total of twenty pastors was lost by the church in Värmland. Seven of them resigned from the ministry. The thirteen others were removed for a variety of offences and misdemeanors. Most of them were either assistant vicars or adjuncts. Only one was a parish priest. Many of them led a poor and dreary existence in the northern Finnish towns of Värmland. This group also included alcoholics.

On December 22, 1863, the cathedral church in Karlstad issued its first assignment to its new pastor, Olof Olsson.

He was given a contract to serve for several months as assistant vicar and teacher in Brunskog’s congregation in Jösse. This congregation was known as far back as church records are available as a congregation where church attendance was excellent every Sunday.

The morning service, in addition to formal worship, would often include such rites as the burial service, baptisms, holy communion and special dedications.

In addition to this there were all of the usual pastoral responsibilities.



The old Brunskog stone church, built in the early 1700s.

Olof's second assignment took him to another congregation in the beautiful Jösse district. He was assigned by the cathedral chapter in Karlstad to begin services as assistant vicar on February 26, 1864, in the Älgå congregation by Lake Glafs fjorden.

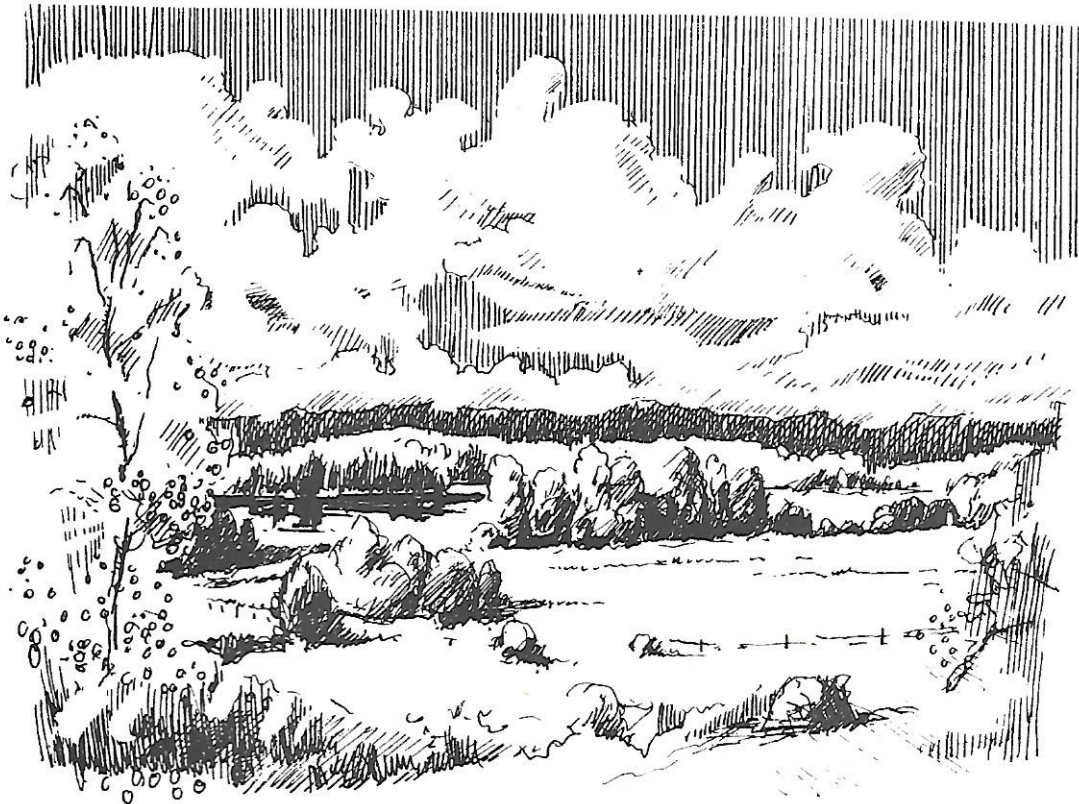
This assignment also included the responsibility to serve the Arvika rural congregation, the mother church, and the neighboring congregation, Ny.

While serving Älgå, Olof became acquainted with a Värmland's Finnish settlement in the Älgå Finnish forest.

Olof's residence in Älgå was in the old manse in Gördsbyn which was surrounded by birches, chestnuts and maples.

It was a disappointment for music loving Olof that the congregation at Älgå did not have an organ.

It was necessary, therefore, to borrow an organ from a family in the congregation.



Landscape scene from Älgå.

The minutes of a business meeting at the church on Sunday, July 11, 1864, state the following. "Ut supra in fidem (Forward in faith) by request of the pastor, O. Olsson," it was noted in #3 that concerning the purchase agreement for the organ borrowed by the church, no payment should be made until the installation was complete. Practical man that he was, Olof did not want the congregation to make a bad business deal.

In addition to the church's regular worship services, Olof held daily prayer meetings and devotional gatherings which were later to be judged by church authorities as being conducted in the spirit of the Evangelical Fatherland Foundation.

From the beginning of his ministry Olof was always concerned about the spiritual care and education of the young people in his congregation.

As something new in Älgå, Olof started Sunday schools.

He had a burning desire to care for souls.

Olof completed his ministry in the Jösse district on September 27, 1864. He returned to Bergslagen, Värmland, where he received an assignment on September 28, 1864, to be assistant pastor to the miners at Persberg and until further notice to be assistant pastor at Kroppa.



The cemetery at Skavnäset, Persberg.

After returning to his home district, Olof was united in marriage with Anna Lisa Jonsdotter on December 21, 1864. His bride was born on March 8, 1841.

The officiating clergyman was Pastor O. Martinson and the witnesses were Carl Nywall and Södersten, the tailor at Bregården, Karlskoga.

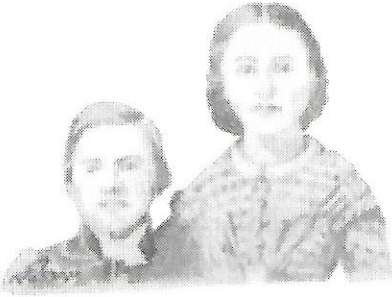
After the marriage Olof requested a membership transfer from Karlskoga to the Färnebo congregation at Persberg, and the day for moving was set for January 19, 1865.

The Karlstad cathedral chapter issued the assignment of Olof Olsson in January to become both the miners' pastor and the schoolmaster at Persberg. His service was to begin on January 11th and continue indefinitely.

The Olsson family resided for two-and-one-half years at Persberg which was located eight kilometers northeast of Filipstad.

Persberg was located in a beautiful and important mining district near Lake Yngen. The strenuous labor in the mines, foundries and smelters was not limited at that time to eight hour working days.

Olof's personal contacts were mainly with the laboring class and their families. Here he was confronted by social and economic problems as well as the spiritual needs of his congregation. Olof left Persberg with the conviction that he had faced societal problems



Olof and Anna Olsson.

which demanded larger solutions than any one person could provide.

That Olof faced the problems of society and thought seriously about possible solutions is clearly shown by his statements and decisions later in his life.

The position of assistant vicar in the Ekshärad's parish with placement in the Sunnemo congregation was declared vacant on

November 26, 1866, and three candidates applied for the position. The Karlstad cathedral chapter nominated three candidates as possible replacements. They were: first, Vice pastor J. Örtquist, second, Vice pastor M. Björlin and third, Miner's pastor, O. Olsson.

After trial sermons in which Olof Olsson had been assigned Sunday, March 17, by lot, an election was held on April 7, 1867, under the supervision of Dr. J. Bjurstedt, the contract dean.

The vote proved to be unanimous. When the votes had been counted, there were none for Örtquist. Björlin's name had been named only in passing and without a single complete vote with 14424/23040 of the votes cast, while Olof Olsson received 64 complete votes with 14137/23040 of the votes cast.⁵

The diocese certified the vote on April 30th and issued the authorization for Olof to become the assistant vicar in Ekshärad's parish. This was his first permanent charge.

The Olsson family moved to Sunnemo in the middle of May 1867 and was provided housing in the Noretorp rectory located between two lakes seven kilometers north of the Sunnemo church.

From the rectory Olof could look out over a wooded landscape. Farm after farm was visible in the valley between the hills. Lindens and birches gave shade and protection to the house, the storage shed, the barn, the wash-house and the cellar. When weather conditions were favorable Olof could hear the evening church bells ringing before holy days.

"I know the power the sound of a church bell has upon one's spirit, when one sits at dusk and listens to its sound. The deep tones fill the space between heaven and earth and one seems to hear the evening tolling of life's last day. To the depth of one's heart the question forces itself irresistibly: Do you hear that your life's evening may be at hand? Are you ready to meet your God? The deepest tones of a church bell are music of the most solemn kind to my ear and heart. I treasure greatly the privilege of listening to the tones of a majestic church bell, but I detest the banging of clanking kettles that are often hung in the places which belong to genuine church bells."

– Greetings From Afar

In Sunnemo Olof conducted worship in a church which had been a place of spiritual refuge for worship and adoration since the middle of the 17th century. The same traditional

customs prevailed in Sunnemo as in the other congregations Olof had served in Värmland. But here, as in other places, there were shortcomings and problems to be solved. Drunkenness was responsible for a large part of the problems.

Olof considered this social menace to be evidence that humanity was not seriously seeking God's Kingdom: People were looking away from the fact that Christianity is both teaching and living and that when they are found in true union with one another they lead to the infusion of God's Spirit and a new birth in the soul of a believer.

This became Olof's principal emphasis in the soul care of his Sunnemo congregation.

On Christ's Ascension Day, May 30, 1867, Olof noted in the church journal:

"It is regrettable to the greatest degree that a group of young people from other churches have the custom of meeting at our church, which they never attend to hear God's word, but instead get drunk and indulge in all kinds of carousing to the dishonoring of Christianity. These occasions demonstrate the Christianity of the masses. It is horrible to think of these raging guests at the Lord's Table, which they leave with the same unrepentant attitude. May the Lord in mercy help his church and congregation."

The same day one year later, Christ's Ascension Day, May 21, 1868, Olof wrote this short message in the church journal:

"Note, this year at Sunnemo was especially peaceful although there was a large crowd present. I saw only one person who was really drunk."

One is impressed by Olof's reverence for his church.

"The sight of people who show no respect for the church and for holy things is an abomination. They mix the worldly and spiritual things in such a way as to use the church as a theater and the theater as a church. However, our Lutheran Church wishes to retain respect even for the outward things that relate to worship and the church building."

– Greetings from Afar

"The pastor's life in this sin-cursed world is truly hard, but the worst accusation of all, in my opinion, is that we preachers wish to steal bread right out of the mouths of the poor. Who and what is it that steals bread out of the mouths of the poor? Consider this question thoughtfully and give an honest answer."

– Lectures and Addresses ("Great is Diana of the Ephesians!") An article published in the magazine, Shibboleth, 1878)

Based upon his conviction that a Christian and a compassionate person, a Good Samaritan, are one and the same, Olof formed his opinion of rich and poor people accordingly. There were many times when Olof and his wife expressed great generosity. There were times when they gave away their own food and clothing.

There are examples of how far this socialistic sharing went. It went so far that at times it seemed to be more important than caring for their own needs.

It is told that one Sunday morning in late winter after the worship at Filipstad's Church, Olof met a man whose shoes were so worn that his toes stuck out. In sympathy for this man Olof gave him his own nearly new shoes in exchange for the man's worn-out pair.

What Olof had not counted on but learned later was that his shoes had been used to pay for whisky.

In Sunnemo, more than in previous congregations he had served, Olof participated actively in many activities. He always did this in a careful and caring manner.

Shortly after his arrival in Sunnemo, Olof presided at three congregational business meetings.

The church's sacristy had deteriorated from the ravages of time. It was, therefore, necessary to make repairs as soon as possible. The walls were to be covered with wallboard and painted, and a heating stove needed to be purchased. The deteriorated condition was evident and required no discussion. The congregation decided to hire a contractor who in this instance was Mr. N. Svanberg of Sunnemo.

This was reported in the 2nd paragraph of the congregational minutes of June 6, 1867.

Olof convened another congregational meeting the following month on June 10th at which time a decision was made relating to the congregation's elementary school.

When Olof arrived in Sunnemo one regular full-time teacher was employed by the congregation. After a short time it was evident to Olof that an additional teacher was needed. The congregation voted at this meeting to hire a second regular teacher. In accordance with the royal decree of December 11, 1863, a minimum salary was set which included 400 riksdollars per year, housing of one room and a kitchen with unspecified square footage area, 25 loads of firewood about 5 meters long and one meter square together with fodder in the amount of four loads of hay, two loads of oat straw, two loads of rye straw as well as summer pasture for the animals in the public forest.

The salary was to be paid by the entire parish and it was decided that every registered member should be personally assessed 20 öre toward the cash salaries of the school teachers.

Olof stated his disapproval of distinctions of rank at the congregational meeting he had called for August 13, 1867.

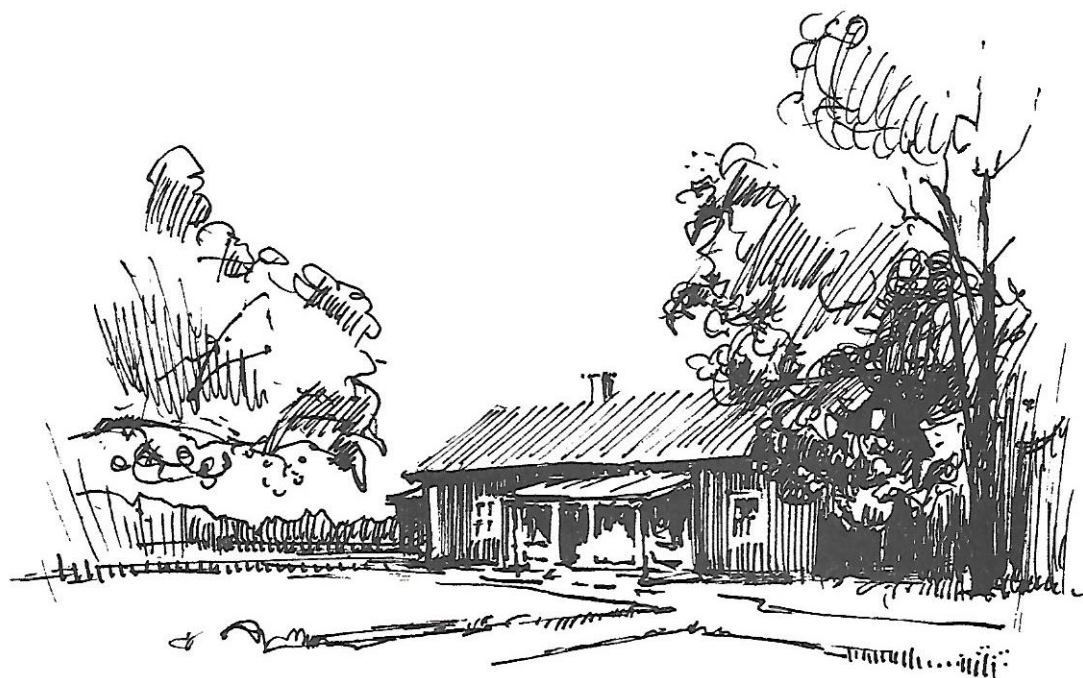
During times when the church was crowded, it was customary for every family estate to have its family pews which were assigned in numerical sequence. An empty or poorly filled pew was regarded as a sign of indifference and lack of loyalty to the church.

Until this time soldiers who were members of the Sunnemo congregation had the privilege of sitting in a reserved pew. This practice was now discontinued. The church meeting's minutes #2 specified that every soldier should sit with the people of his home district.

Pew exchange would now be instituted in such a manner that those who occupied the two front pews in the church would, the following year, be moved to the rear, and the rest of the congregation would be moved two pews forward. In this way there would be an annual exchange for all with impartiality, sequence and good order.



A section of Sunnemo.



The old parsonage at Noretorp in Sunnemo.



The Sunnemo Church.

Besides the regular worship services and ministerial acts, Olof Olsson also held religious cottage meetings here and there in the parishes.⁶ In 1865 when the Värmland's Ansgarius Society was founded, Olof was even chosen as a director and in the Sunnemo mission congregation he was not a stranger or unknown.

He was not afraid to be a candidate for one of the committees which the organization established to manage its program.

“We have all experienced to some degree in our lives how it feels to be treated with such contempt. Anyone who has experienced it, never forgets it. I do not say that he does not forgive it, but I do say he never forgets it.”

– Lectures and Addresses (The issue of labor and the Christian high school)

At the same time the cathedral church communicated in July, 1868, that assistant vicar Olof Olsson had made his vow of faith, loyalty and obedience to his contract dean, Bjurstedt, and also announced the bishop's forthcoming visit to Norra Råda, Råda, Sunnemo and Gustaf Adolf congregations on July 21 and 22.

In connection with this visit there was a quarrel between Olof and Anton Niklas Sundberg, Bishop of Karlstad and later the archbishop of Sweden.

Olof was ordered to carry the bishop's staff. This became an incendiary spark.⁷

The bishop also was not one to mince words and Olof asserted that he had never been given such a scolding simply because he preached the word of God on weekdays. But Olof was not afraid to pick up the gauntlet.

When Olof in later years attended a cardinal's mass in a Roman Catholic church he recalled the experience in Norra Råda which weighed so heavily on his conscience as he saw a young priest carry the bishop's staff.

"It was impossible for me, at this sight, not to think about myself. I also in my youth had performed the same ritual beside the one who would become the highest prince of the church.

"But I cannot now relate the experience as it happened because you would say that I am unkind to bishops. I shall, when such memories return, seek to suppress my righteous anger."

– To Rome and Home Again

Olof Olsson gave credit to the former kings of Sweden for an important role in the battle for God's word: "The Swedes must have God's word, otherwise they are lost."

"All true history must give recognition to old King Gösta, who with true Swedish honesty and sincerity respected the Scriptures and wished to establish and build a free and prosperous kingdom based on the solid and unshakeable foundation of God's word.

"Sweden held its greatest place in history when respect for the scriptures was shown by the monarch, namely under Gustaf Adolf whose whole life was directed by the word of God."

– Lectures and Addresses (The Swedish people's armor for the defence of the Gospel. Festival address given at Wahoo, Nebraska, February 25, 1893)

By December, 1868, Olof had decided to immigrate to America.

But under the leadership of Bishop Sundberg the Karlstad diocese decided not to accept Olof Olsson's resignation.

Olof did not give up. Just as the Apostle Paul appealed to Caesar, so Olof appealed to the King, who on February 19, 1869, granted his request for release from service within the Church of Sweden. The Karlstad diocese, therefore, was required to release Olof Olsson from his Ekshärad's pastorate and did so on March 23 of the same year.

Olof's emigration was preceded by an exchange of letters to and from America.

In a letter to T. N. Hasselquist, the first president of the Augustana Synod, Olof wrote:

"Thank you for the kind letter which I received a long time ago. The reason I did not answer it sooner is that I was advised and warned on all sides not to journey to America. It is not difficult to understand that I became indecisive as a result of these persistent warnings. I have, nevertheless, decided to come to you in the name of the Lord. I have recently sent my resignation from service in the diocese to the cathedral chapter.

“Unless the Lord places some unexpected obstacle in my path, I will come to you at the end of June. I have been quite weak lately, which is the result of several years of overexertion. Therefore, I will need to go easy on myself for awhile until I have recuperated. Please do not expect too much of me at first. I prefer to be assigned to care for a small congregation; whatever I am able to do beyond that, I will do willingly.”

Olof Olsson was not a man of great physical endurance. From childhood he had to struggle with the handicap of a weak body and it was difficult for him to perform heavy manual labor. In addition to this he suffered severe headaches early in life, an affliction which remained with him throughout his life.

Nevertheless, his statements about his weakness do not reveal any feelings of bitterness or complaint. He carefully monitored his physical strength in relation to the performance of his tasks:

“My poor health assigns narrow limits to me and an inconspicuous place of service.”

In spite of his expressed modesty, he succeeded in carrying out an impressive and inclusive life's work.

Footnotes

1. The fraction 1/36 indicates that Hedfallet was a fairly small and simple acreage of farm property.
2. The Evangelical Fatherland Association was founded by C. O. Rosenius and likeminded Christian people who labored for more earnest spiritual life in the congregations.
3. Free student, *liber studiosis*, is a term not much in use in Sweden any more. It indicated a student who was free to study according to his own interests and inclinations.
4. Riksdollar was old Swedish currency (*riksdaler*) and is no longer in use. The figures indicate that a dean or parish priest was paid a salary nearly thirteen times as much as an assistant vicar, who received more than four times as much salary as an adjunct.
5. It would be difficult to give a complete explanation of the fractional vote, but at that time when a parish pastor was chosen, wealthy and influential people as well as industrial companies were allowed many votes while others were given none. The vote for Olof was almost unanimous, as he got all votes by the wealthy as well as by the common people. It would also indicate something about his preaching effectiveness.
6. Until 1858 it was forbidden to assemble anywhere for religious worship except in the church according to the so-called Conventicle Edict. But the “official Church” was still powerful, and after the edict had been abolished it still frowned upon these evangelical meetings.
7. The staff was a symbol of the bishop's pastoral function, but it was also a symbol of his authority. Olof considered the Scripture to be his only source of authority. He had little tolerance for or interest in ecclesiastical vestments, symbols and hierarchical authority. Hence, he resented having to hold the bishop's staff during the celebration of mass.





Lindsborg, in the Smoky Valley of Central Kansas.