

Brorson, Knud

(1846–1893)

SVEN HAGEN JENSEN

Sven Hagen Jensen, M.Div. (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA) has worked for the church for over 50 years as a pastor, editor, departmental director, and church administrator in Denmark, Nigeria and the Middle East. Jensen enjoys reading, writing, nature and gardening. He is married to Ingelis and has two adult children and four grandchildren.

Knud Brorson (sometimes spelled: Brorsen) helped pioneer the Adventist mission work in Denmark and Norway, together with John G. Matteson. Brorson was the first Adventist missionary to work among the Sami people in Norway.

Early Life

Knud Brorson was born on October 23, 1846, in Nørre Farup, Ribe county, Denmark.¹ He was a relative of the well-known Danish bishop and hymn writer Hans Adolph Brorson (1694-1764).^{2, 3} When he was 22 Knud and his younger brother Andrew⁴ went to America. They worked on farms, and Knud planned to return to his home region in Denmark when he saved enough money to buy the largest farm there. However, God had other plans.⁵ One year after their arrival to America Knud and Andrew became Seventh-day Adventists in California. Sometime after his baptism Knud enrolled as a student at Battle Creek College,⁶ where he showed “much diligence.”⁷ After completing his studies, he began working as a minister in America.⁸

In March 1878 the board of the Adventist church in Battle Creek decided to send a tent and an assistant to help Pastor John G. Matteson in his pioneering work in Scandinavia. O. A. Olsen wrote the following appeal in *Advent Tidende*:

A brother has promised to pay the journey for a missionary to Denmark to assist Bro. Matteson. How many are there that likewise are ready to give of their means for this mission? In Norway there are already several that have accepted the truth, and soon more missionaries need to be sent. Let everyone feel that God has a claim on



Knud Brorsen

Photo courtesy of Adventist Digital Library.

him, and we will use the talent, that God has given us.⁹

Soon the church was able to send two helpers. A note in August 1878 issue of *Advent Tidende* says: "God willing, the brothers Andrew and Knud Brorson travel one of the first days to Denmark to help Matteson in the Danish-Norwegian mission."^{10 11}

A few months later there was a report in the *Review and Herald*: "By letter just received from Bro. Andrew Brorsen, dated Alstrup, Denmark, Sept. 5, 1878, we learn they have safely reached their destination, and have received a cordial welcome from their own people and the brethren there."¹² The two brothers separated to cover a wider area. Andrew primarily worked in Zealand, and Knud chose to work in Jutland, an area he knew from his previous work as a wool merchant.¹³

Shortly after arriving to Denmark and his home region, Knud Brorson gathered the people of the parish in a smithy and shared with them the Adventist message.¹⁴ Matteson and Knud Brorson worked together in many places. "By the faithful work of Brother Brorson as well as my own efforts souls were won little by little around the country here and there," Matteson wrote.¹⁵ In the book *Danmarks Frikirker* (The Free Churches in Denmark) Brorson is called Matteson's "right hand."¹⁶ Thanks to Matteson's and Brorson's careful and persistent efforts, the Danish Conference was organized at the constituency meeting in Høllum in Vendsyssel on May 30, 1880. Prior to the constituency meeting, Brorson had worked for 48 weeks, mostly in Vendsyssel, but also in the surrounding area of the city of Aarhus, including the villages of Høver, Galten, Sorring, Farre and Skaade, and in the southern part of Jutland.¹⁷ On average he had four meetings a week and use the rest of the time for house visitation and the distribution of pamphlets and magazines. Twelve people were accepted into church fellowship, and sixteen people began to keep the Sabbath.¹⁸ One of the first church members that Brorson introduced to Adventist faith was C. C. Hansen in Asaa, Vendsyssel. Later Hansen became the first secretary of the Danish Conference and had a significant role in building up the Adventist church in Denmark.¹⁹ Sine Renlev was among others who accepted the Adventist faith in 1879. She almost immediately set out to preach the present truth and came to play a major role in the proclamation of the Adventist message.²⁰

The Aarhus church board meetings (1912) mention five people baptized by Brorson.²¹ Brorson also worked close to the German border in the south "as far down as our language is spoken." Here he had the joy to see his mother being baptized. Brorson wrote, "Two dear people in Visby will join the Jested church. We were gathered there last Sabbath, and Br. K. Kristensen baptized my mother."²² Then he moved on to Kolding and Odense and preached and baptized.²³

Knud Brorson was one of the delegates at the European Council of Seventh-day Adventists in Switzerland in 1884. He was appointed to serve on the committee that dealt with the subject of the proper method of conducting and managing the publishing houses in Europe. Out of the nine members on this committee five were from the Scandinavian missions, which tells of the experience and success of the publishing work in the Nordic countries.²⁴

In 1885 Brorson returned to Vendsyssel and organized a church of 10 members in Vraa pr. Sæby.²⁵ Later the same year he moved to Copenhagen and another important person, Carl Ottosen,²⁶ who at the time studied in the capital city, was baptized and joined the church through Brorson's efforts.²⁷ Brorson's fruitful ministry in Copenhagen is further confirmed in an article about Ellen G. White's visit to the Danish capital in 1886, when she was welcomed by Matteson and Brorson.²⁸ White was happy with the appearance of the people she met: "There was a little company assembled of intelligent, noble-looking men and women – Danes. They had accepted the truth through Brother Brorson's and Matteson's labors and many of them had received the truth under difficulties that our American brethren know nothing of."²⁹

In January 1887 Brorson assisted O. A. Olsen³⁰ in his evangelistic meetings in Christiania (Oslo), Norway, and they visited together in Moss and continued to Larvik for meetings. Brorson continued to Drammen and Sandsvær, where he held several evangelistic meetings before he returned to Moss. In both Christiania and Moss, the evangelistic meetings resulted in baptisms. On March 19, 1887, the Moss Seventh-day Adventist Church was organized with 14 members, and Brorson was elected its first elder. Brorson duly informed the county prefect about the new church in his region. The prefect's journal includes the following note in March 21st entry: "*Knud Brorson*, Moss, informs that a number of the inhabitants of Moss have organized a church with the name 'First Seventh-day Adventist Church' and asks to be acknowledged as the superintendent."^{31 32}

While living and working in Norway with his base at Akersgaten 74 in Christiania,³³ Brorson travelled for two months to north Norway in the fall of 1888. There he held 51 evangelistic meetings and 39 Bible classes and baptized the first Adventist in that part of the country.³⁴ Brorson was also the first Adventist missionary to work among the Norwegian Sami (or Laplanders). In a letter on August 2, 1892, he wrote: "There are now seven families among the Laplanders (Sami) that keep the Sabbath."³⁵ During most of his years in Denmark and Norway, Brorson served on the conference's executive committee.³⁶ He travelled to Denmark and preached in Odense and Zealand. In Norway, he organized a church in Arendal and became its first elder. He helped the Adventist members in Frederikshald organize their local church. "I have tried to prepare our brothers and sisters in order to be able with good understanding of our duties towards God and our mutual duties as Christians to unite them in a congregation, which Br. Johnson will come to organize on the 7th."³⁷

In October 1892 Brorson was invited by the General Conference to attend a health and temperance program at Battle Creek Sanitarium to prepare him to render effective service along these lines in the Scandinavian countries. On May 31, 1893, after completing his studies, Brorson sailed from New York, accompanied by S. N. Haskell of the General Conference, to attend a camp meeting in Moss, Norway. From Moss Brorson, Haskell, and L. Johnson left on June 23 for Karlstad, Sweden, to attend a session of the Swedish Conference, in which he took an active part. Sadly on June 28, before the session was finished, he died of a hemorrhage of the lungs.³⁸ He was buried on July 1, 1893, in "Vor Frelsers Gravlund" (Our Savior's Burial Grove) in Christiania, Norway.³⁹ There is no record of him being married.

Legacy

A close associate in the work, L. Johnson, described Brorson.

His indefatigable enterprise, his great participation with all in all circumstances, his friendly demeanor, and his readiness to teach, endeared him to all. Because of his great patience and diligence, many were brought to the knowledge of the truth, who rejoice in the Lord and wait to meet him in the kingdom of God.⁴⁰

During his relatively short life of 47 years, Brorson became the leading force of the Adventist mission work in the formative years of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Scandinavia. His lasting contribution to evangelism, committee work and leadership was nicely summed up by P. G. Nelson, West Nordic Union president. In his report to the General Conference session in 1946, Nelson mentioned Knud Brorson as the first, after John G. Matteson, among those who built up the work in Norway and Denmark. "We have had many zealous workers who have given all they had of strength and ability to build up the work of God in Norway and Denmark. In this connection I would like to remember Knud Brorson."⁴¹

SOURCES

"Arrived in Denmark." *ARH*, October 3, 1878.

Brorsen, Knud. "Missionsvirksomhed, Danmark." *Tidernes Tegn*, September 1884, and August 13, 1885.

"Conference in Denmark." *ARH*, July 28, 1885.

"Denmark." State Conference Directories, *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, 1883.

"European Council of Seventh-day Adventists." *ARH*, June 24, 1884.

"The Journey's End – Andrew Brorson" (Obituary). *ARH*, December 26, 1940.

"Workers' Directory." *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbooks*, Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1889, 1890, 1893.

Faddersbøll, Kurt. *Adventistkirken Aarhus* (The Adventist Church Aarhus), Aarhus: Private Publication, 1995.

Graybill, Ron and Gerte. "Ellen White in Copenhagen." *Adventist Heritage*, Loma Linda, California: Adventist Heritage, Incorporate, July 1974

Hansen, Kristian. *Lørdagsfolket på heden* (The Saturday People on the Moor). Odense, Denmark: Dansk Bogforlag, 1990.

Johannesen, Terje. *Den Skandinaviske Adventismes Begyndelse og Vækst, Del III* (The Beginning and Growth of Scandinavian Adventism, Part III). Skjern, Denmark: Øko-Tryk, 2018.

Johnson, L. Obituary, *Sandhedens Tidende*, 16/1893.

Loughborough, J. N. *Rise and Progress of the Seventh-day Adventists with Tokens of God's Hand in the Movement*, Battle Creek, Michigan: General Conference Association of Seventh-day Adventists, 1892.

Matteson, John G. *Mattesons Liv og Adventbevægelsens Begyndelse blandt Skandinaverne – En Selvbiografi* (The Life of Matteson and the Beginning of the Advent movement among the Scandinavians – An Autobiography). Nebraska, College View: International Publishing Ass'n, 1908. Odense, Denmark: Dansk Bogforlag Offset Press, Photographic Print, 1972.

Muderspach, H. "I Reformatorens Fodspor" (In the Footsteps of the Reformer), *Adventnyt*, March 1968.

Nelson, P. G. "The West Nordic Union." *ARH*, June 7, 1946.

Pedersen, Kaj. *Syvende Dags Adventistkirken i Danmark* (The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Denmark), Nærum: Dansk Bogforlag, 2007.

Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1966

Seventh-day Adventist Yearbooks. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1883-1894.

Tobiassen, Erik Malm. "Våre Veteraner, Knud Brorsen" (Our Veterans, Knud Brorsen). *Adventnytt*, 1992.

Varmer, A. "Margreth Hansen" (Obituary), *Missionsefterretninger*, August 1931.

White, E. G. "Visit to Copenhagen." *ARH*, October 26, 1886.

NOTES

1. Kurt Faddersbøll, *Adventistkirken Aarhus* (Aarhus, Denmark: Private publication, 1995), 186-187.
2. Kaj Pedersen, *Syvende Dags Adventistkirken i Danmark* (Nærum, Denmark: Dansk Bogforlag, 2007), 22-24.
3. Hans Adolph Brorson's name has gone through a development. His father's name was Broder (English: Brother), and the son was called Brodersen. This was later changed to Brorsen and then to Brorson. It seems that Andrew and Knud started out with the surname Brorsen, which Andrew did not change, while Knud is known by both Brorsen and Brorson. He signed his articles in the Danish papers *Sandhedens Tidende* and *Tidernes Tegn* with Knud Brorsen.
4. Andrew Brorson was born on May 30, 1951. Like his brother, he became an Adventist minister. He spent a short time as a missionary in his homeland Denmark, returned to America, and continued serving the Church until his retirement. In 1882 he married Miss Dora Ingels. They had a son and a daughter. He died on October 8, 1940 ("The Journey's End – Andrew Brorson" (Obituary), *ARH*, December 26, 1940, 24).
5. Pedersen, 22-24.

6. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1966), 170-171.
7. Faddersbøll, 186-187.
8. Pedersen, 22-24.
9. Erik Malm Tobiassen, "Våre Veteraner, Knud Brorsen," *Adventnyt*, 1992, 2.
10. Ibid.
11. J.N. Loughborough, *Rise and Progress of the Seventh-day Adventists with Tokens of God's Hand in the Movement*, (Battle Creek, Michigan: General Conference Association of Seventh-day Adventists, 1892), 312.
12. "Arrived in Denmark," *ARH*, October 3, 1878, 120.
13. Tobiassen, 14.
14. A. Varmer, "Margrethe Hansen (Obituary)," *Missionsefterretninger*, August 1931.
15. John G. Matteson, *Mattesons Liv og Adventbevægelsens Begyndelse blandt Skandinaverne – En Selvbiografi* (College View, Nebraska: International Publishing Ass'n, 1908, Odense, Denmark: Dansk Bogforlag Offset Press, Photographic Print, 1972), 203.
16. Cited in Tobiassen, 2.
17. "Denmark," State Conference Directories, *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* 1883, 8.
18. Ibid., 14.
19. H. Muderspach, "I Reformatorens Fodspor," *Adventnyt*, March 1968, 8. See also Carl Christian Hansen's biography in this Encyclopedia, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=AJCO&highlight=Hansen>.
20. Kristian Hansen, *Lørdagsfolket på heden* (Odense, Denmark: Dansk Bogforlag, Odense, 1990), 13. See also Sine Renlev's biography in this Encyclopedia, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=9JCS&highlight=Renlev>.
21. Faddersbøll, 187.
22. Knud Brorsen, "Missionsvirksomhed, Danmark," *Tidernes Tegn*, September, 1884, 141-142.
23. Ibid.
24. "European Council of Seventh-day Adventists," *ARH*, June 24, 1884, 413.

25. Knud Brorsen, "Missionsvirksomhed, Danmark," *Tidernes Tegn*, August 13, 1885, 132
26. Carl Ottosen was a trained physician, who learned from Dr. Kellogg at Battle Creek Sanatorium, and became the medical director of Frydenstrand and Skodsborg Sanatoriums in Denmark. See his biography in this Encyclopedia.
<https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=7JJC>.
27. Ibid.
28. E.G. White, "Visit to Copenhagen," *ARH*, October 26, 1886, 657
29. Ron and Gerte Graybill, "Ellen White in Copenhagen," *Adventist Heritage* (Loma Linda, California: Adventist Heritage, Incorporate, July 1974), 38
30. Ole Andreas Olsen was the first Norwegian to serve as conference president and later General Conference president (1888-1897).
31. Terje Johannesen, *Den Skandinaviske Adventismes Begyndelse og Vækst* (Skjern, Denmark: Øko-Tryk, 2018), 305-307.
32. *Smålenenes Amt*, Journal no. 29 1886-1888, case no.1519, March 1887, Statsarkivet in Oslo, Norway.
33. "Workers' Directory," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbooks* 1889 (p. 12), 1890 (p. 6, 34) and 1893 (p. 6, 38).
34. Johannesen, 336.
35. Faddersbøll, 187.
36. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbooks* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1883-1894). See also, "Conference in Denmark," *ARH*, July 28, 1885, 476.
37. Knud Brorsen, "Missionsefterretninger – Danmark and Norge," *Sandhedens Tidende*, April 4, 1892, 125.
38. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (1966), 171.
39. Faddersbøll, 187; L. Johnson, "Brorsen (Obituary)," *ARH*, September 19, 1893, 612
40. L. Johnson, Obituary, *Sandhedens Tidende*, 16/1893, 252.
41. P. G. Nelson, "The West Nordic Union," *ARH*, June 7, 1946, 43.

encyclopedia.adventist.org is an official website of the [Seventh-day Adventist World Church](#)