Nils Astrup's 1889 Trek Translated

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A Missionary Journey to the Limpopo

Translated and edited by

Frederick Hale

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PREFACE

Since the 1980s numerous historians, missiologists, scholars in other disciplines, and people outside the academic world have urged me to translate Nils Astrup's account of his 1889 expedition from Zululand through Swaziland and part of what is now Mozambique. Published originally only in Norwegian in 1891, it has been inaccessible to most non-Scandinavians for well over a century. It was widely – and correctly – assumed that Astrup's diary and other remarks recorded in these pages might be a rich trove of information from the pen of an intelligent, seasoned, and culturally sensitive observer of contemporary African life in several ethnic groups. Indeed, the extent to which awareness of the existence of the original version was known internationally initially surprised me and prompted me to consider rendering it into English for a broader readership. Encouragement to undertake this project became stronger after the Van Riebeeck Society issued my edition of shorter edited documents, *Norwegian Missionaries in Natal and Zululand*, in 1997, and favourable reviews of that volume were published both in South Africa and abroad. Preoccupation with several other historical, literary, and theological projects in South Africa, Scandinavia, and the United Kingdom prevented me from taking on this task until well after the turn of the millennium. Against the background of my research since the 1970s in Norwegian-South African historical documents, it was evident that scholarship would be best served if I not merely translated Astrup's text but provided the English edition of it with a scholarly apparatus identifying various phenomena, persons, places, and so on to which he referred as well as an introductory chapter and a bibliography. Hence the composition of the present volume.

Included in this edition is most of Astrup's book as it was published in 1891. However, it was deemed unnecessary to include his final chapter, which is chiefly about linguistic matters as they relate to his proposed strategy of extending the field of his Norwegian Lutheran mission by using Zulu-speaking evangelists who could acquire closely related Nguni languages. Secondly, at two points Astrup interrupted his narrative to include an excerpt from the 1886 edition of *Chambers Encyclopædia* and one from a recently published English book about life in the Cameroons. The two ellipses are clearly identified in the present translation. Astrup included dozens of Zulu and other African personal and place names as well

as common nouns and other in his text. In many cases, the spelling of those words has changed since the late nineteenth century. Nevertheless, with few exceptions Astrup's spelling has been retained in this edition.

I have incurred many debts of gratitude when conducting the research for and making this translation. In Norway, I was privileged to use the resources of the National Library in Oslo, the library at the University of Oslo, and the Norwegian Missionary Society in Stavanger. In the United Kingdom, I spent many hours in the British Library, especially its unsurpassed collection of historical maps, and in the libraries of the University of Cambridge and Liverpool Hope University. In South Africa I conducted research chiefly in the National Library in Cape Town but also in the libraries at the University of Cape Town. On visits to the United States of America I had access to helpful materials in the libraries of the University of California and the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, Luther Seminary, and the University of Minnesota. André Boessenkool rendered invaluable assistance in creating the simplified map that indicates many of the places which Astrup and his entourage visited on their three-month trek.

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Bishop Nils Astrup

INTRODUCTION

NILS ASTRUP: THE MAN AND HIS MISSION

BY FREDERICK HALE

Establishing Norwegian Lutheran Missions to the Zulu

For decades Nils Astrup played a prominent and at times dominant rôle in the grand drama of missionary endeavour which made a profound impact on the spiritual life of southern Africa and particularly that of the Zulu people beginning before the middle of the nineteenth century. His influence extended well beyond the Untunjambili mission station in northernmost Natal, just south of the Tugela River, where he spent more than a quarter of a century beginning in 1883. Although Astrup entered the scene approximately a generation after such early pioneers as Hans Paludan Smith Schreuder (1817-1882) had initially brought Christianity to the Zulus, he left an indelible stamp on the field. A consideration of various characteristics of the man and his historical context can enhance our understanding of his remarkable book.

Much confusion about the history of missionary endeavours in southern Africa during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries can be avoided if it is borne in mind that for several decades *two* Norwegian Lutheran organisations evangelised the Zulus and established missionary stations among them. The first and decidedly larger was the Norwegian Missionary Society. Founded in 1842 as a national amalgamation of various local missionary groups, chiefly in areas of Norway where pietism exercised an abiding influence on popular religious life, the NMS began three years later to support Schreuder, a confessionally orthodox graduate of what is now the University of Oslo who had been ordained in that city and arrived in Natal in 1844. After a quinquennium of generally frustrating efforts to find a foothold in north-eastern Natal, Schreuder, who also had a modicum of medical training, succeeded in getting permission from King Mpande (1798-1872) of Zululand, whom he had treated at the royal kraal,

Nodwengu, to establish a station at Empangeni in 1851. This first permanent mission in Zululand was followed by several others on both sides of the Tugela River during the next two decades. Ntumeni was founded in 1852 and Mahlabatini, near the site of Mpande's kraal, in 1860. Eshowe and Nhlazatshe followed in 1861 and 1862, respectively, Mfule in 1865, and Mbonambi four years thereafter. Ekutembeni station was established in 1869 but was moved to Emzinyati a year later. Hlabisa in north-eastern Zululand became the site of a station in 1871.

The arrival of other missionaries, many of them unordained and, unlike Schreuder, of decidedly pietistic bent, made this expansion possible. Eventually Schreuder, as superintendent of the field, ordained some of his theologically educated and seasoned colleagues to form the nucleus of a Norwegian Lutheran ministerium there. In 1858, fourteen years after landing in Natal, he finally baptised his first convert. Growth of the indigenous church came very slowly; most of the Zulus who requested baptism before 1880 were young people who resided at or very near the NMS stations. Keenly aware of this, the Norwegian Lutheran missionaries, like many of their counterparts in other societies, sought to cultivate contacts with Zulu youth by establishing schools at their stations, another aim of which was to impart European culture to the supposedly uncivilised and benighted souls of Africa. Eventually the NMS also created evening schools at some of its rural stations so that adult Zulus who were employed during the day could still come under the influence of the wedded Christian faith and European civilisation. Evangelisation of the far-flung indigenes also took the form of missionary visits to the kraals which dotted the landscape. The stations, however, remained the principal venues of NMS rural work in Natal and Zululand. They soon had chapels in which the missionaries preached every Sunday to congregations encompassing both adherents of traditional Zulu religion and increasing numbers of converts to Christianity. The day and, later, the evening schools followed. The large station at Eshowe in Zululand had a vocational school, and at Umpumulo in Natal the NMS launched an institute for training Zulus to teach at its schools. After the turn of the century, the NMS developed medical missions by building modest hospitals at some of its stations. When the NMS began its urban programme in the 1890s, however, its rural work was still overwhelmingly "religious"; social ministry played only a minor rôle. It was also male-dominated (though female missionaries were beginning to make their presence felt and would do so much more noticeably after 1900), and unordained Zulu evangelists, though instrumental in the daily functioning of the work, served under the authority of the Norwegians who administered the stations.

After the British conquest of Zululand in 1879, much of the popular resistance to Christianity diminished, and the 1880s were, despite unrest in that occupied country, a decade of considerable numerical growth at the NMS stations, although the number of converts at them did not increase as rapidly during that decade as it would in the 1890s. The missionary ranks also grew notably during the 1880s.

Not all had gone smoothly for the NMS, however. In 1866 the arguably imperious Schreuder, whose relations with his less well-educated and more pietistically inclined colleagues were sometimes disharmonious, was consecrated bishop of the Church of Norway's mission field, which then encompassed only parts of Natal and Zululand but was extended to Madagascar a year later. Schreuder and his superiors at the NMS headquarters in Stavanger, Norway, disagreed sharply about the limits of his episcopal authority, however, which in a democratising age some of the other Norwegian missionaries in Southern Africa believed should be quite circumscribed. These men advocated making decisions collegially at periodic conferences. Schreuder found this unacceptable and left the NMS in 1873. With the financial assistance of sympathetic sponsors in Kristiania (since 1925 called Oslo), the capital of Norway, he launched "the Church of Norway Schreuder Mission" which continued his work on a small scale at rural stations in Natal and Zululand. The most notable of these, which would remain his principal home for the rest of his days, Schreuder founded at Untunjambili in northern Natal in 1874. Schreuder died there in 1882; Nils Astrup arrived the following year as his successor, and his brother, Hans Astrup, came in 1884 to assume responsibility for the station at Ntumeni. These two Norwegian pastors provided most of the spiritual leadership for many years, although later in the 1880s they were joined by Carl Otte, a German clergyman who had left the Hermannsburg Mission to join the Schreuder Mission. Ntumeni and Untunjambili long remained their principal stations, although in 1891 a third was acquired when the NMS ceded Hlabisa as compensation for exclusive rights to Umpumulo. Another, Biyela, was also added to the brief roster in 1891. Nevertheless, for decades the Schreuder Mission remained quite small, and its geographical focus was always rural.

Other Missions to the Zulus

These two Norwegian agencies were by no means the only foreign entities that brought the Gospel to the Zulus in the nineteenth century. A comprehensive catalogue of the others obviously lies outside the scope of this brief introduction. However, it should be noted that during the 1820s

and 1830s European forays into and settlement in what became in the 1840s the British colony of Natal facilitated early Protestant endeavours there, though initially on a very small and impermanent basis. In 1834 Allen Francis Gardiner, an Englishman who had served as an officer in the British navy, went to Port Natal (soon to be redubbed Durban) and got permission from King Dingaan (or Dingane) to establish a local station. The Zulu monarch also gave this Briton extensive administrative authority over a wide tract of land south of the Tugela which eventually formed much of the colony of Natal. Gardiner addressed the (Anglican) Church Missionary Society in London in 1836 and requested it to establish a mission in Zululand. Francis Owen, a cleric in the Church of England, consequently sailed to Natal the following year. He and Gardiner trekked to Dingaan's kraal at Ungungundlovu and got permission to create a station there. The Zulu monarch evinced no interest in Christianity as such but wished to employ Owen as his secretary. In February 1838 Owen witnessed the massacre of Piet Retief and other *voortrekkers* before withdrawing to Port Natal. This early venture thus failed to bear fruit.

In the meantime, the largely Congregationalist American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions became interested in extending its programme of evangelisation to the African continent. Its vanguard arrived in Cape Town in February 1835. Some of these missionaries soon undertook work among the Zulus in Natal. Again, however, the intrusions of *voortrekkers* and the resulting armed clashes between them and the Zulu authorities interrupted missionary work. Nevertheless, in the 1840s the ABCFM's endeavours among the Zulus in Natal expanded and flourished. By mid-century, that agency had a dozen stations in Natal. It remained a prominent fixture in the multi-denominational constellation of missionary agencies which propagated Christianity among the Zulus. Efforts to expand its field geographically had inconsistent results. Its attempts to enter what is now Mozambique in the late nineteenth century were not successful, but in the early 1890s the ABCFM established stations in present-day Zimbabwe. This was an obvious example of the sort of expansion which Astrup envisaged for the Schreuder Mission, albeit in a different region of southern Africa.

Not all of the early missions to the Zulus were British or American. The Hermannsburg Missionary Society (*Hermannsburger Missionsgesellschaft*), founded by Louis Harms in 1849, sent its first representatives to Natal in the early 1950s. Their first station, Neu-Hermannsburg, lay near the border of Zululand and gained considerable proportions. Not long after it was established, King Mpande permitted this German Lutheran agency to create missions at several points in his kingdom.

A generation later, in 1876 the Church of Sweden Mission gained a foothold in northern Natal, hardly more than a stone's throw from the Zulu kingdom, when its first representative in Africa, Otto Witt, established his Oscarsberg station at Rorke's Drift on the Buffalo River. Destroyed in the Anglo-Zulu War in 1879, it was rebuilt in the following decade, when a small number of other Swedish Lutheran missionaries, both ordained men and lay people, entered the field.

Expanding beyond Rural Evangelism

It is crucial to note that mission stations generally–not only the previously mentioned Norwegian Lutheran ones–were not merely places of evangelisation and worship. In addition to and interlocking with their religious character, within a few years after their founding they typically had schools at which Zulu children (and in some cases also adults) were taught literacy and other skills. Catechetical instruction for prospective church members was also routine. Some members of the churches and prospective converts resided on property surrounding the missionary compounds. Occasionally stations served as places of refuge for converts who were persecuted for religious reasons or whose tribal superiors, family members, or other people wanted them to return to their Zulu villages.

Hence, when in the late 1880s Astrup conceived the idea of expanding the Schreuder Mission's field northward, he undoubtedly understood that much of Zululand was already being evangelised by a diverse range of foreign missionaries and that many churches had been established among its people. Extending the rim of Christianity to unevangelised areas thus seemed especially appropriate, despite the fact that his organisation was quite limited in terms of both personnel and financial resources.

In the context of South African missionary history, it should be noted that by the time Astrup began to ponder expansion of his agency's field into hitherto almost completely unevangelised rural areas, counterparts in several other missions (including the Norwegian Missionary Society) had already launched or at least considered undertaking work in the burgeoning cities of Natal, the Orange Free State, and the South African Republic. To cite but one particularly relevant example, in 1890 the Norwegian Missionary Society extended its field to Durban, as many young Zulu men from areas around its rural stations had migrated there in search of employment.[1] Astrup would have been aware of this noteworthy new dimension, of course, but it is unknown whether he considered an analogous venture for the Schreuder Mission at that time. In any case, it would have been virtually impossible for Astrup and his few fellows in that organisation

both to begin urban missionary work and to look seriously at northern Zululand and Swaziland.

Regional Changes in the Late Nineteenth Century

The defeat of Cetshwayo's forces by the British forces in 1879 and the resulting annexation of Zululand further opened the door to relatively unimpeded evangelisation and, in consequence, a noteworthy acceleration in the number of converts and growth in the indigenous churches. Most of that numerical expansion lies outside the scope of this introductory chapter. However, one aspect of it which has appeared in recent scholarship is quite noteworthy. Ingie Hovland has discussed the "humiliation theory" in her study of *Mission Station Christianity: Norwegian Missionaries in Colonial Natal and Zululand, Southern Africa 1850-1890*. According to this theory, among the Norwegian Lutheran missionaries to the Zulus there evolved by the 1870s considerable support for British subjugation of Zululand in the hope that such a development would benefit their missionary endeavours and open further doors to successful evangelisation. That some of the Norwegians in question held this view to varying degrees has been documented. As Hovland has pointed out, however, Nils Astrup did not share it. To be sure, by the time of his arrival at Untunjambili in 1883 the military defeat of Zululand was a *fait accompli*, and its formal annexation as a British crown colony was completed in 1887. At any rate, in 1889 Astrup could announce his opposition to crushing the Zulus "in external matters" in order to facilitate the conversion of some of them.[2] This did not, it should be made clear, signal anything approaching an attitude of racial equality. On the contrary, as his comments in his book of 1891 make clear, Astrup repeatedly asserted his authority over them.

It was this theologically and ecclesiastically conservative yet venturesome Lutheran cleric who undertook an exploratory journey which did not result in an expansion of the Schreuder Mission's field but yielded a volume replete with observations of great interest from historical, anthropological, and missiological perspectives.

During the "Scramble for Africa", *i.e.* the period of intensive competition among European countries for colonial hegemony over large parts of that continent, the political status of the nation was subjected to several winds of change. Generally speaking, that status *vis-à-vis* other countries was decided through international conventions in which the Swazis, to cite a particularly relevant example, had little or no significant voice. Briefly stated, in 1881 the British government signed a convention recognising the independence of Swaziland. This official status was

confirmed in another treaty three years later. Complicating matters, in the 1880s gold was discovered, and hundreds of prospectors streamed in. Land tenure agreements were made with Swazi leaders who apparently failed to understand the terms of treaties which they signed. Protracted disputes over mineral and land rights led to minor international tensions over the status of the small country. Following the death of King Mbandzeni in 1889, Swaziland briefly had a triumviral administration representing Kruger's South African Republic, the United Kingdom, and the Swazi people. Implemented in 1890, this endured until 1894, when Swaziland was placed under the South African Republic as a protectorate. The British conquest of that Boer republic in the war of 1899-1902 led to a shift of the Swazis' homeland becoming a protectorate of the United Kingdom in 1903.

The colonial history of Mozambique was considerably less complicated. Around 1500 a small number of Portuguese gradually began to displace Arabic military and commercial hegemony. The decline of Portugal as a European power left it with that loosely administered colony. In the nineteenth century other European countries, especially the United Kingdom and France, actively expanded their imperial interests in southern Africa and the Indian Ocean. By the mid-1880s European governments recognised "Portuguese East Africa", as it was often called in English, as a colony of Portugal. Its borders were not carefully defined until 1891, when they were set in a way quite similar to those of modern-day Mozambique. By the time Astrup's party began its exploratory venture, Mozambique thus had Swaziland (under its triumviral administration) and the South African Republic on its south-western border and what became Rhodesia on its western flank. (Rhodes's "Pioneer Column" entered Mashonaland in 1890.) Traders and settlers in small numbers from several countries were then present in both Mozambique and Swaziland.

Nils Astrup the Man

What manner of man was Nils Astrup? His background in Norway set him apart from most of the Norwegians, many of them from the agrarian ranks of society, who served in the significantly more pietistic Norwegian Missionary Society. This son of a judge was born in 1843 at Grue in the province of Hedmark, but when he was still a quite young child the family moved to the district of Salten at the Arctic Circle in the province of Nordland. Nils spent several years there before matriculating in the Faculty of Law at the University of Kristiania. He distinguished himself in his studies and graduated with honours in 1866. Thereafter young Astrup served briefly under his father in the judicial system, but by 1870 he

returned to the capital as the administrator of a Christian school. Two years later he married a pastor's daughter, Anna Catherina Agatha Ursula Thurmann, who was about three months his junior. Nils re-entered the academic life, this time studying theology at the University of Kristiania, where he earned the degree *candidatus theologiae*, again with distinction, in 1877. Two years later he accepted a pastoral appointment in Norddal on the west coast of Norway; according to the present configuration of Norwegian counties, Norddal is in the Sunnmøre region of Møre og Romsdal.

Like his father, Nils Astrup supported the Church of Norway Schreuder Mission rather than the Norwegian Missionary Society. As indicated earlier, the Schreuder Mission emphasised the traditional hierarchy of the Lutheran state church, including of course, the episcopal office. Astrup apparently had little sympathy for the movement for greater democracy then evolving in Norway and none for its ecclesiastical implications, which would eventually lead to *inter alia* the establishment of parish councils whose lay members demanded a voice in the making of decisions traditionally handed down by bishops. In harmony with many other confessional Lutherans, Astrup accepted without qualification the understanding of Christian ministry expressed in Article 14 of the Augsburg Confession, with its stress on the notion of *rite vocatus*, or being "properly called"; preaching of the Gospel and administration of the sacraments were thus reserved for ordained clergymen. Astrup's maintenance of this on the mission field not only reflected his conservative theological education but also the authoritarian strain in his personality which came to the fore in his book about his missionary journey.

Astrup was painfully aware of the strife concerning Lutheran theology in the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. At the time of his death he was described, apparently by a family member or another fellow missionary to the Zulus, as a pastor who, theologically, was "a conservative of the conservatives" and "abominated with a perfect hate" the doctrinal liberalism that had enervated much of the Lutheran heritage. Rather than taking any of his theological cues from such contemporary modernisers as Albrecht Ritschl, Astrup found his inspiration in Scripture in tandem with the historic confessions of the Lutheran tradition and of Christianity generally. He was remembered as having had "a firm, unwavering faith in every word in the Bible".[3]

Apart from his theology, what sort of person was Nils Astrup? No brief description can do justice to a personage of his stature, but a sketch can be useful for helping readers to understand better the personality of this strong-willed missionary. To begin with, Astrup, like his predecessor Schreuder,

was physically imposing, standing nearly two metres tall. At the time of his death in 1919, he was described in *The Natal Mercury* as "a man of strong physique" but also as "cultured, refined and of kindly disposition and charming personality", a person who "endeared himself to all with whom he came in contact".[4] Astrup did not hesitate to assert his authority, especially *vis-à-vis* the Zulus, as one sees in his account of his dealings with subordinates on the 1889 trek. An anecdote in his obituary illustrates this trait:

> Two tribes at enmity with each other were preparing to fight. Bishop Astrup walked to the seat of the trouble alone and unarmed. He came upon the two hostile companies of warriors fully armed and ready to fight. He sternly rebuked the leaders and warned them that just retribution would inevitably overtake those who attacked first. The personality of the Bishop and the convincing power of his words effectually extinguished their pugnacity and they went home peaceably.[5]

At least with regard to ecclesiology, one could thus hardly imagine a more appropriate successor when Schreuder died in 1882. Moreover, Astrup had shown aptitude for language acquisition in his studies of Hebrew and Greek as part of his theological education and took these Biblical languages with him to the Zululand field after being appointed to succeed Schreuder. He quickly mastered the challenging Zulu tongue while continuing to read the Scriptures in their original languages and immersing himself in Lutheran theology.[6] To some outsiders, it may have seemed like a peculiar cultural miscegenation at Untunjambili, but given Astrup's theological and especially his ecclesiological proclivities, to him it must have seemed entirely natural.

Presumably the sweeping generalisation cited above about Astrup's cordiality would have seemed anomalous to those whose behaviour he condemned with sententious comments, some of which are found in this book. Although Astrup pitched his tent in a different spiritual camp from those occupied by Norwegian pietists who dominated the Norwegian Missionary Society, his stringent moralising matched theirs stride for stride. Moreover, and in accord with his impatience with what he perceived as unacceptably low levels of personal conduct and other shortcomings in Zulu and other African cultures, Astrup at times evinced condescending racial attitudes common in his day, as will be seen in his book.

A *caveat* must be issued with regard to what may be the most accessible and succinct published source of information in South Africa about Astrup, namely B.J.T. Leverton's biographical statement about him in the *Dictionary of South African Biography*. This respected historian gave

incorrectly Astrup's place of birth, the names of both of his parents, the name of the Norwegian mission he served, his position in that organisation, the name of the principal station where he worked, and the title of his book about the 1889 expedition.[7] In Huw M. Jones's *A Biographical Register of Swaziland to 1902*, the title of Astrup's book, its place of publication, and its title are all given incorrectly, and the date when Astrup succeeded Schreuder is also wrong.[8]

Astrup was not only a missionary but also a serious amateur linguist. As such, he was clearly aware of, and indeed referred to, such recent nineteenth-century works as Robert Needham Cust's *A Sketch of the Modern Languages of Africa* and Johann L. Krapf's *A Dictionary of the Suahili Language*. He did not hesitate to challenge some of these volumes at various points.

Owing only in part to the dearth of source materials, relatively little of a scholarly nature has yet been published about the history of missionary endeavours in Swaziland, indeed only a minute fraction of what has appeared about them in South Africa. To be sure, one can find scattered studies of individual topics, but they have yet to make a perceptible impact on larger syntheses of the proliferation of Christianity. In their massive *A History of the Church in Africa*, for example, Bengt Sundkler and Christopher Steed ignored it almost completely, while Adrian Hastings limited his treatment of Swaziland to a few lines in his generally commendable *The Church in Africa 1450-1950*, a volume of more than 700 pages.

Astrup's Early Impressions of South Africa

When one reads Astrup's account of his trek to the Limpopo in the context of what he had written about his missionary endeavours generally since 1883, it becomes evident that to a great extent his observations in 1889 reflected perceptions, attitudes, and so on which had been formed not only in Norway but also during his first few months in Africa. It is therefore particularly useful to examine some of this Norwegian's initial impressions, especially those pertaining to indigenous peoples and the contemporary political situation in colonial Natal, and the conditions under which they had been made.

Before leaving Norway in late April 1883, Astrup spent several days in Kristiania making final practical preparations for the voyage and seeking support for his endeavour. He preached or otherwise made appearances in several churches in the capital and preached a valedictory sermon at St. John's Church on 22 April. Four days later Astrup, his wife, and their five

children, who then ranged in age from two months to ten years, boarded the *Kong Magnus* and sailed via Havre to London on the first stage of their voyage to Natal.

Although Nils Astrup was then nearly forty years old, this was apparently his first sojourn outside Scandinavia. In the British capital, which in general he found to be an appealing city, he availed himself of the opportunity to gain some familiarity with the political centre of gravity of the Empire. Astrup's English was then quite limited, but he nevertheless attended sessions of the House of Lords and the House of Commons and recorded his impressions, albeit briefly, of contemporary politics. He was pleased to report that in the former chamber he had heard Lord Carnarvon deliver a speech calling for improved defence of the British possessions overseas, not least the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope. Part of Astrup's time in London was devoted to religious activities, however, including preaching twice at the Norwegian Seamen's Church. He also heard a presentation by a missionary named Gregory at St. Paul's Cathedral.

Owing to the largesse of their sponsors, the Astrups had first-class passages on the *Warwick Castle* to Cape Town and Durban. The weather nevertheless made much of the voyage unpleasant and prevented the normally studious Astrup from devoting as much time as he had desired to language study during approximately a month at sea. It was nevertheless a time of spiritual enlightenment. Astrup is not known to have had any noteworthy contact with non-Lutheran Christians before leaving Norway, and he remained a theologically conservative, confessional Lutheran all his life, but on board the *Warwick Castle* he enjoyed the fellowship of three other missionaries, namely Fredrik Ljungquist of the Church of Sweden Mission, a German named Grasse who represented the Church of the Brethren, and an English Primitive Methodist called Smith. The last-named cleric, who preached on at least two Sunday evenings at sea, especially impressed Astrup as a theologically learned colleague in ministry and, despite certain doctrinal differences in their ecclesiastical traditions, Astrup reported that he agreed wholeheartedly with everything Smith had said in the pulpit. Interaction with Smith apparently gave the vigorous Norwegian some appreciation of Christian spirituality outside his own confession, as did the services which the English captain of the *Warwick Castle* conducted using the *Book of Common Prayer* of the Church of England. "The content of this book seems very beautiful and of general Christian value," Astrup wrote with obvious gratification.[9]

Almost immediately after disembarking at Cape Town, where the *Warwick Castle* spent a few days before continuing to Durban, Astrup encountered a much greater degree of ethnic pluralism than at any previous

time in his life. His initial report of this dimension of South African life revealed some measure of respect for the non-European peoples whom he saw there: "One sees not only the plump figures of the children of Africa, but also often faces featuring Arabian or Malay fineness and regularity. The coloured[10] children are generally attractive and cheerful to look at." Indicative of Astrup's concern for their spiritual welfare, however, he lamented that many of the Africans in Cape Town had converted to "Mohammedanism". On a more optimistic note, Astrup was pleased to report, though incorrectly, that most of the Protestant churches in Cape Town were Lutheran. His perception may have stemmed from his brief association with a German Lutheran clergyman, Hugo Hahn, who had been a missionary to the Herero in German Southwest Africa (subsequently Namibia) but since 1874 had been ministering chiefly to Europeans in Cape Town. In harmony with his own keen linguistic interests, Astrup was especially impressed by Carl Hahn's *Grammatik und Lexikon der Hererosprache*, which had been published in 1875.[11]

Astrup and his family then continued to Durban on the *Warwick Castle*, and both that bustling port city and its Zulu population impressed him deeply. In a letter to the leadership of the Schreuder Mission he described the urban flora in glowing terms. "If death did not exist, the depraved and sensual human race here would soon forget about Heaven," Astrup feared. The Indian "coolies" promptly caught his attention as the "most colourful" element in the polyglot population of Durban. "They are dark, attractive, slim people of slight build, erect as candles, with figures which are hardly inferior to those which inspired sculptors in Italy and Greece." Of course, Astrup understood that he had ventured far beyond the pale of Western culture, and his cognizance of the otherness of his vast, new environment sharpened upon leaving Durban by rail for Verulam, some thirty kilometres distant. The agricultural landscape differed from anything he had previously encountered, as the train meandered past "sugar cane fields and more sugar cane fields" as well as exotic "tropical trees". Architecturally, too, Astrup perceived that he and his family were entering a transitional zone, where "coolie houses and Kaffir kraals alternate even here with the well-kept gardens of the many colonists." At Verulam they disembarked, leaving behind "civilisation" to make their way to Untunjambili by ox wagon.[12]

To be sure, Astrup's attitudes towards southern Africa and its indigenous people underwent significant changes during the next several years, *i.e.* before he undertook his lengthy trek in 1889. These shifts lie outside the scope of this Introduction but are discussed in an article published in the *Journal for the Study of Religion*.[13] However, Astrup's perceptions of various African tribes as well as of Europeans, Indians, and others whom he

and his entourage encountered on their 1889 trek will emerge lucidly in the following pages.

Announcing the Projected Trek in the Norwegian Press

On the day after Christmas in 1888 Astrup penned a long letter to a daily newspaper in the Norwegian capital outlining his concerns about sub-Saharan Africa as it faced the unsavoury prospect of further European imperialism. Addressed to the "Friends of the Dark Continent's Enlightenment", it conveyed his perception that Africa was at a decisive point in its history and facing enormous European exploitation in the near future. Astrup envisaged the forging of alliances in an effort to halt the incursions of Europeans. At the end of the day, however, this missionary believed that the continent's peoples could be spared from misfortune and steep decline and subjugation only by accepting the Gospel. Towards that end, he proposed undertaking reconnaissance expeditions as far north as the Zambezi River (which now forms the border between Zambia and Zimbabwe) and promised to keep readers informed of his findings. Astrup also mentioned the possibility of investigating possibilities for Scandinavian emigration to places in southern Africa. In 1882, a group of more than 200 Norwegians from Ålesund and environs had settled near the Indian Ocean coast south of Durban, something of which Astrup was in all likelihood aware. In the short term, he declared his intention to undertake an expedition lasting three to three and one-half months through Swaziland and Tongaland as far north as the Limpopo River in the winter (*i.e.* roughly midway through the year) of 1889. Astrup acknowledged that such a trek entailed unspecified risks but assured readers that it was probably less hazardous than traversing Greenland.[14]

CHAPTER ONE

OVER THE TUGELA TO THE PONGOLA

Monday, 17 June 1889. We left home with seven permanent porters and one boy who was to follow us to Dinizulu's kraal and one small boy, uNxagamatye, who finally wanted to come along as a donkey driver; but according to the law his father came after him and stopped us on the road before we had crossed the Tugela. He did not like it that "the boy wanted to go along with us and die." I promised to send him home from Mount Inkandhla on the other side of the Tugela. We reached the Tugela after four and a half hours of difficult descent. Both of the donkey bags had been cut and sewn by us, even though we did not have any experience in that sort of thing, and the donkeys were completely untamed and untrained. They tore several things apart already on this first segment of the journey.

Precisely that day, 17 June (which otherwise was a cherished day for us to remember), marked the sixth anniversary of our arrival at Untunjambili. Since the children and Mr. Altern had left us, we were fifteen people. Later Natanael from the church at Ntumeni came and helped us over the river. At the point where we crossed it, Mrs. Wright gave us a tea and coffee strainer, of which we made good use, and let our baggage be taken across without charge, while the donkeys were led through a place where they could wade across.

Tuesday, 18 June (Bishop Schreuder's birthday). Cheated by the person who in exchange for a red handkerchief was to show us the way, and after experiencing how the sun can burn in the dry low country (the blood ran profusely from Henrik [*sic*] Otte's nose, so I had to pour water from my canteen over his head, in spite of our burning thirst), after dark yesterday evening we reached a kraal where a child who had been lost from our group of catechumens, Unyamazane, was said to have been seen by someone in our entourage but hid from us and in spite of our plea did not come to our devotions. Here we distributed the good equipment from my wife and Mrs. Otte to our entourage, spent the night at the kraal, and the next morning reached Uhrungu's kraal, where we were to eat breakfast after crossing the Inzuse River. My dear son Johannes and Heinrich Otte left us this morning.

They went to Ntumeni, the centre of our missionary activity in Zululand. They had nearly a day's walk ahead of them. Salomon, the leader of my native entourage, decided to follow a route west of British Zululand. For the sake of the donkeys this route was said to be definitely preferable, but in the end I decided to adhere to the one through Zululand, which in good faith I had begun to plan.

We spent the night with Umbuzwane up in the middle of Inkandhla's mountain passes.

19 June. He[15] and Uhrungu are my special friends, and we were cordially received in both places. Uhrungu is a friend of Cetshwayo and the guardian of his grave, but on this occasion he was ill and seemed to be poor. He had been one of Dingane-Mpande's and Cetshwayo's most important chiefs and lord of the entire mighty Inkandhla mountain fortress and its surroundings. Goldminers now surround the place along the Inzuse River with their little pioneer huts and their larger storehouses.

Finally, thank God, we have gone through all of the beautiful but fearsome Inkandhla. It is not fearsome for us because of its panthers, hyenas, and wild pigs, its large, dark forests, its terrible crevices and abysses, into which a frothing, white waterfall plummets into an unfathomable depth. No, for us Inkandhla was fearsome because of its road and its stones, not because it was previously a hiding place for a warlike people, who did not wish to subjugate themselves. Immediately this morning we had an accident when the horse, "Sampi", fell on a slippery forest path and fell on its back down into a depression on the side towards the precipice. Fortunately, the reins, saddle, and baggage (namely the tent, tied up in the shape of panniers, and filled with various items and tied across the saddle) were not damaged. It was a miracle from God that we reached our friendly host Umbuzwane yesterday evening, when darkness surprised us because of the stoniness of the path in the dangerous precipices along the abyss and down through a cleft in the mountain. The passage was so difficult there that with good reason I can say that God has preserved us through and rescued us from the fearsome Inkandhla.

20 June. We rested at Umahlangeni's kraal after we had spent the night at the home of the magistrate, Mr. Shepstone. We were warmly received in both places. I spoke to the people about our Saviour. The young people knew me from Dinizulu's kraal. All of them listened attentively and were not at all hostile to the Word of God. Our people received abundant food, namely porridge, *inkobe* (cooked mealie meal), and beer. I had some of the last-named poured into a pumpkin bottle and an empty powder horn so that

it would not be drunk in excess. It was also meant to give strength along the way.

My dear Karl has a painful hand, because he sewed so much with an awl working on donkey bags, etc. during the final days before our departure. At one place on the hand there is a bad growth had developed. Many of those present spoke about the name of Jesus and declared that it should be worshipped and not *amadhlozi* (the spirits of the dead). They lived fairly close to the English missionary Robertson's station. Mount Itala lay ahead of us to the left. We reached it at ten o'clock and rested for several hours. Both Karl and I have colds. But, praise God, on the whole we both feel strengthened by the hardships. Last night twelve of us slept in one hut, but it was very roomy. I spent today in the house of a native believer. It is isolated, but its inhabitants belong to Mr. Robertson's church. The people had migrated there from the Revd. Johnson's station at Isandhlawana. I urged the wife, who was home, to pray in the name of Jesus, which she took to heart. We were shown to a place across from the ford at the Umhlatusi River by an old man from the kraal who was afraid that if the donkeys crossed the ford they would bring bad luck to the drinking water, which he thought could be avoided if they crossed a little further upstream. However, in order to do that we had the arduous task of removing the donkeys' burdens and carrying them across on our shoulders, because it was deep there. After a time of hiking we reached a white man's home. I assumed that we now were in the South African Republic but just walked past, because I did not know whether there was anything to gain by announcing my journey through the country. But we were soon fetched by a Zulu boy who began to examine me on behalf of the white man and finally said that that man was inviting me. I knew that it was very important to be on good terms with the Boers on the journey through their country and immediately went back together with Salomon (the captain of my native entourage) with orders that Karl and the others should wait for further information. The man was a handsome, worthy Boer, a former veld cornet.[16] His brother-in-law knew me from a journey through Untunjambili. This, together with my report of what I intended to do on my journey, secured for me a letter and reception from no less a man than Revd. Turnbull. He invited me and my people to come over the following day. While I was sitting down next to him and his wife on the bedding outside the barn, where they were entertaining the brother-in-law and the young sons, who were planing beams. He asked me to preach a sermon to the natives the next day. As I had a severe cold and, as a result of it, was very tired, and since it would be useful for our expenses to get free lodging, I agreed to do so. Word was immediately sent to all the natives in the vicinity and to my entourage. The natives were all summoned

to come early the following morning. The brother-in-law and his wife, her sister, and his children were with him. There were a lot of nice young girls in the house in addition to those already mentioned friendly young men. The man's name was Vermaak. We were led into the lounge, from which, in the African style, four or five open doors caused both social mingling and ventilation which, however, is quite intolerable, especially when one has a cold.

In the middle of the floor stood a square table covered with decorative glass objects, glassware, and the like, and directly opposite against the interior wall was a large physharmonica,[17] on which the youths immediately began to play and sing songs by Moody and Sankey[18] in clear, piercing voices. In the corner behind the physharmonica there was a modern chaise longue or sofa. Otherwise, there were movable chairs along the walls. The man and woman of the house had, as is customary among the Boers, their respective chairs standing beside each other at the end of the aforementioned table. At the other end stood an obviously homemade sofa. The young girls were cheerful and very natural with very white hands like ladies from the cities. Tallow candles were later placed on the table without a candle snuffer, and now young and old competed to polish these candles with their fingers and snuff the wick out, when it fell burning down to the coconut mat rug. The man came in after a while, put on his evening attire after work and sat down in the place of honour. After we had conversed a while he announced, "Supper is ready," and we were led into an inner dining room, where we were served mutton, rice, mashed pumpkin, maize meal, bread, butter, and tea. He offered a very solemn, lengthy prayer of thanksgiving. (The Reformed like to use long prayers.) Then we went back to the lounge, where the man of the house led a fervent devotion with a rather long prayer. As is usually the custom out here all members of the family kneeled during the prayer.

Among the Boers the walls are decorated with very cheap paintings, especially coloured prints, which the merchants give their customers as a form of advertising.

I had the opportunity to look at a large book in Dutch about the Transvaal's war of independence against the English. At the front of the attractive book was a photograph of Kruger, the author of victory and subsequent president. His face expresses a genuine farmer's strong determination in every muscle. "My will is the will of the people; therefore, it will be the law and shield of the people." Thus far it has been essentially that. The question is now whether he can master the many thousands of English goldminers and the enormous development of conditions.

We were then taken to our bedroom, where pigeons lived up in the loft, which consisted of some boards laid out at random across the beams. We had to block the door with a package, because the lock was defective. (Something similar had happened to me at the home of a magistrate in Zululand, who had cordially received me. When he saw that I dreaded the open door in the cold wind, he said to the servant, "Close the door." "Sir, there isn't any lock." "Well, then, hold the door shut." The servant then sat down and held the door shut with his foot.)

Then one of the young sons laid some pillows on a mattress which covered a double bed, placed a single, thin woollen blanket on it, and the bed was finished. We were very comfortable, however, when we added two of our blankets as a cover, since it was very cold. Because of my cold I had had to introduce myself wearing a thick, white woollen scarf (a gift from friends in Norddal) around my neck, but I had the satisfaction that immediately thereafter the young lady also appeared in similar attire. Otherwise they wore urban clothing, as is the custom among the Boers.

Saturday, 22 June. We left at 9h30 after eating breakfast, and after God had allowed my sermon based on John 3:16 to be successful. Two manacled cattle rustlers were present as well as approximately forty or fifty people who had been summoned. The host prayed for God's presence during my journey. We travelled for about five hours or fourteen English miles and cooked food by a brook, where we had to stop for nearly three hours, because we had to dress the donkeys' sores and change the position of the belly cinches. Our progress thus far has been as follows: first day, ca. fourteen miles; second day, ca. eleven miles; third day, ca. eleven miles; fourth day, ca. twelve miles; fifth day, ca. fourteen miles; Saturday, ca. twelve miles. Before the excursion began I had calculated approximately fifteen miles per day. But it is going relatively slowly at first because of the condition of the path and the donkeys' inexperience along with a shortage of bindings. The horse is delaying us, because it does not walk as fast as the donkeys, which take off like goats down hills and on flat areas when the path is good.

Monday, 24 June. We rested on Sunday. About thirty people from the kraals heard the sermon in the cattle byre about Luke 16:19.[19] Otherwise, I rested all day, since there was a sharp, penetrating wind up on the mountains we were crossing. Thank God for the magnificent day of rest. Karl's hand has almost healed again. I put Bates' excellent bandages on it. He had not been able to sleep much for several nights.

I bought a half-bushel basket of maize for the animals, which ate it to their heart's desire, and for the people about a yard and a half of *ulembo* (blue spider web cloth).

The man in the kraal by the Umfolozi, where we rested, gave us a lot of fresh milk. At first he did not want to welcome us, but he became very mild and, after a sharp little exchange of words during which I explained to him that I was an itinerant teacher, a friend of Dinizulu as well as of the English and the nearest Boer authorities, he extended his hand and offered his friendship. The place was right under Inhlazatshe's majestic mountain with a view of the Isihlalo (Saddle) Mountain.

On Saturday afternoon we reached this kraal in an indescribably magnificent evening illumination. The dry aloes landscape let the golden red flowers of the aloes stream out between the thick bluish green leaves surrounding then in the blaze of the evening sun. The clear sky showed the mountains in their violet evening tones, and through the light green of the bushes bathed by the outpouring of the final sunbeams moved the colourful procession: red and blue, the main colours of the Kaffers, alternating with the sunlight reflected from the sheet iron on the packets on their heads. After walking for three or four days through grey, treeless high country, convoluted by deep sandy clefts (*izindonga*), which make the journey very difficult for laden donkeys since their burdens tend to get stuck in sunken roads, the colours of this more gently sloping, open, partly forested landscape make a wonderfully refreshing impression on the soul.

We are now resting by a pleasant brook, where we have enjoyed hot tea and sandwiches while the people have cooked a lot of porridge for themselves. I bathed in the brook. I dared to, because the sun was warm and I felt much better yesterday evening after warming some water and mixing about one glass of cognac with four teaspoons of sugar and drinking it before we went to bed. We wrapped ourselves up carefully against the cold, and I slept better than on any previous night and coughed up a lot of mucous. My tongue is still very sore. During the entire journey it has been painful to swallow. Also with regard to the aforementioned cure it is true that "every creature of God is good and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer."[20] Now it is 13h05, and we have rested for two hours. We still get underway much too late in the morning, but I hope that this will improve as soon as Karl and I are completely healthy again and the donkeys are more accustomed to their burdens. May God's angels guide our way as they once did that of Jesus, Mary, and the infant Jesus. Dear child, do not turn away from us! I hope that my dear children will still be able to have some enjoyable rides on the donkeys, as they did before.

25 June. We spent the night near the home of Umbamba, one of Umnyamana's people, just opposite his kraal. He welcomed us in a friendly way and complained about hunger, as was often the case at the kraals along our way. We left at 7h30 this morning. I have a yard and a half of *ulembo* along with a knife with a red handle. Two boys, Jonas and Sembe, are falling behind. Jonas carries the flour with which Karl and I are supposed to cook our soup. If I do not find a way to punish this frequent straggling, our journey will go badly. They claim to be indispensable.

26 June. Wednesday. We spent yesterday evening until 9h30 this morning at the kraal of Dinizulu's mother, Cetshwayo's widow. [21]It was small. She received us, however, when she heard that I was bringing greetings from her son, whom I had visited twice in prison in Eshowe. I had also brought him a blanket which had been sent to him by a lady from Nordfjordeide. He was very happy with it. At the home of the widow, the queen, I presented a woollen blanket and, for the little princess, Dinizulu's sister, a beautiful, brown-trimmed dress from Norway and other items. We received delicious milk to drink as well as cultured milk and millet, remarkably well prepared on order of the widowed queen right before my eyes in her own hut in the evening. We got the same refreshments the next morning. On the other hand, my entourage cooked some of the flour we had brought along, because Usibepu[22] and "Dick" (the first magistrate who was sent here) had destroyed or taken all of their fodder. On request I held a devotion in the evening in front of the house of he widowed queen, before we were called for our audience. Just as we were about to leave this morning at 9h00, the two stragglers, who had arbitrarily followed a different route for a whole day, well knowing that they were separated from us. I said that they were "children" and not "men", and the others also called them that. I also declared that I hoped the others would not embarrass me as these two had done. It had never happened before. But in my heart I was very grateful to God that the foolish scoundrels had arrived without being caught by the police, since one of them was carrying a rifle. I told a policeman who passed through just then that he should greet the magistrate and told him about my official letters from the highest authorities. For a long time we had been in English territory. We went past the burnt site of the royal kraal. The gigantic, level area was lying beautifully and peacefully, and in place of the devastation of war grass was sprouting as in the summer, and maize was sprouting for the second time.

We rested at a kraal where I dressed the arm wound of a young boy who had been shot by Usibepu's people in the war. The arm bone had grown very crookedly and hurt in three holes. I gave a solution of carbolic acid for