The history of Methodism in Norway spans more than a century, but the link between that most Anglo-Saxon of religious movements and the most Lutheran of the Scandinavian countries retains the suggestion of fortuitousness. That Norway should be transformed from a fiercely Roman Catholic country into a strongly Lutheran one has, in retrospect, all the signs of inevitability, tied as the change was to the success of the Protestant Reformation in all of Scandinavia. The appearance in late 1853 of Methodism on Norwegian soil, on the other hand, would seem to have been a chance happening on the edges of history.

In point of fact, the introduction of Lutheranism to Norway was no more inevitable than the entry of Methodism was accidental. Lutheranism was established from above, by fiat of the Danish monarch, with no relationship to developments among the Norwegian people. Champions of Methodism, on the other hand, may justly claim to have entered Norway at the invitation of the people themselves. The difference in the modes of entry are rooted in history, between an age in which religion was a matter of state and a time in which
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it was a concern of the individual. Neither movement was inevitable nor accidental; both were tied to broader currents of history.

1.

In the case of Methodism, there were important pre­conditions in Norwegian history for its introduction and development. Most significant was the passage of the Dissenter Law of 1845, which in its decisiveness for the country’s religious life is rivaled only by the introduction of Christianity and the Reformation. Tracing the passage of the Dissenter Law and other earlier developments in Norway would be to move beyond the scope of this article, which is to focus on the American origins of Methodism in that country.¹

The topic is not without importance for readers of the publications of the Norwegian-American Historical Association. Much scholarly attention has deservedly been paid to the acculturation of Norwegian immigrants in America. Only recently has interest developed in the neglected question of American influence “in the old country.” Fascination with America led not only to emigration, but also to the “Americanization” of segments of Norwegian life. Perhaps no phase of it was so prone to American influence as popular religion — that is, the religion of the laity as opposed to that of the clergy. Historians are in general agreement that between 1845 and 1914 religious life in Norway became “American” in outlook and style.²

For decades scholars have been aware of an American mode of religious life, one closely related to its English antecedents. Robert T. Handy has recently called it “the pluralistic style.” It has four main components: acceptance of religious freedom; voluntarism; activism; and, finally, “the internalization of pluralism,” which obscures the differences among the churches.³ These

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components have as their basis not simply the acceptance of religious freedom, which is psychological, but the fact of religious freedom, which is legal.

The legal acceptance of the Norwegian transition from a monopolistic religious style to a pluralistic one was the result of the Dissenter Law of 1845. This law did not introduce religious freedom as Americans know it; rather, it introduced *toleration* of non-Lutheran Christians. It represented a shift, not to religious freedom — because non-Christians were excluded — but to religious tolerance. A legally supported and privileged state church now agreed to allow other Christians to worship and proselytize in their midst. This step tended to modify the ways in which the pluralistic style was accepted; it lent the prestige of a legally favored church to anyone who wished to oppose the practical recognition of religious toleration. With this modification, however, all the conditions for the introduction of the pluralistic style were granted by the Dissenter Law.

Methodism entered Norway officially in 1853 and quickly became the chief proponent of the pluralistic style during the remainder of the nineteenth century. Simply by being present in significant numbers, the Methodists pioneered in society’s acceptance of religious freedom; their church served as the primary model of voluntarism, particularly through the introduction of revivalistic preaching (preaching for conversion), testimony meetings, the distribution of easily read books and tracts, and the translation of popular evangelical songs such as those of Ira Sankey; they stimulated religious activism by challenging the Lutheran hegemony; and, finally, they served as the chief agents in the internalization of pluralism — much to the chagrin of ecclesiastical leaders who bemoaned the loss of Lutheran confessional consciousness among the laity. By 1890 Methodism had become the largest of the free
churches and the most important non-Lutheran religious force in Norway. It was characterized by all that was regarded as “American” in Norway’s religious life.

It is of interest to both Norwegian-American Methodists and Lutherans — not to mention students of American influence in Europe — to ponder the origins of Norwegian Methodism and to have clearly defined the specific channels by which American influence penetrated via Methodism. There is found in this story a combination of sweeping historical forces and the lives of individuals who shape and are shaped by these forces. Parts of the story have been told before, but there is need to gather together all the evidence resulting from modern research.5

2.

Three developments in American history bore directly on the beginning of a Methodist mission to Norway. The first was the growth of international commerce. World trade doubled between 1830 and 1850, and shipping tonnage increased to meet the demand. Prior to the Civil War, two thirds of American imports and exports were carried on American ships, but, with the breakthrough of free-trade policies, stiff competition from European merchant fleets lowered the American percentage.6

Norway was among the nations that profited most from the introduction of free trade. Her shipping grew steadily throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, but rapid growth came only in the 1850s. The fleet almost doubled its tonnage in that decade; in 1851, 36 percent of it was engaged in purely overseas activity.7 Norwegian ships thus became a common sight in the ports of North America, and with them came the sailors, who were to become important agents of cross-cultural stimulation.

The backbone of Norwegian participation in trans-
Atlantic shipping was provided by the emigrant traffic. The decade of the 1840s marked a new era in European migration; between 1845 and 1854 the numbers involved quadrupled. Most of the emigrants came from Ireland and Germany; not until after the Civil War did the rate from Scandinavia reach similar proportions. Nevertheless, migration from Norway also increased markedly in the 1840s and 1850s, and “America letters” and promotional pamphlets became widespread and influential enough to cause alarm in Norway’s official circles. The country was awakening to the promise of America, and the ground was being prepared for the mass movement of people that followed the Civil War.

By 1850 Methodism, or, more accurately, the Methodist Episcopal Church, was already the largest American denomination in membership and corporate wealth, but it was still not a “respectable” church. Built by mobile men of the frontier, whose energies were harnessed by an extraordinarily effective discipline, Methodism appealed to the common people of the period. Frequent revivals—in which stress was on individual conversion, heartily sung hymns, and “heart-touching” sermons—were the principal means of winning the loyalty of plain folks. Camp meetings filled a spiritual and social need, and if those who gathered for them sometimes erupted into extraordinary emotional displays, this conduct was not as important as the discipline to which they subjected themselves. All members found their most intimate religious fellowship in instructional classes, from which they reached out to become active in every phase of church life.

Methodists preached free will and free grace: God had given everyone the ability to respond to the gospel. Every sinner could receive assurance of personal salvation, and from there could confidently go on to seek the “second blessing” of entire sanctification. He would be
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cleansed of all sin and would gain power to fulfill the commandment to love God with heart, soul, and mind, and one’s neighbor as oneself. Free will, universal atonement, and the promise of perfectibility — these were the optimistic doctrines on which Methodism’s growth rested.¹¹

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the Methodist Episcopal Church confined its mission to the United States alone. In a country whose population was burgeoning through immigration and whose borders were constantly expanding in the spirit of Manifest Destiny, this geographical limitation did not appear to the majority as onerous. The efforts of Stephen Olin to call attention to the missionary task in foreign countries fell on largely deaf ears in the period before 1850.¹²

The Methodists, nonetheless, were beginning to awaken to a consciousness of world mission as mid-century approached. Prior to the 1844 schism over slavery, which added the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, to the list of denominations, responsibility for missions rested with the annual conferences, whose efforts were normally confined to their own territory. Following this schism, the Methodist Episcopal Church inaugurated a series of changes that transferred the administration of all but the domestic missions, which remained under the immediate jurisdiction of annual conferences, to the Missionary Society.¹³ At the same time, the conferences were related to the Society’s formation of policy and program in such a way that both domestic and foreign missions became a responsibility of the church at large.

These changes, supported by increasing financial contributions to missions, only needed capable leadership to be fully effective. This leadership came with the appointment in 1850 of John Price Durbin as corresponding secretary, the chief executive officer of the Missionary Society.¹⁴ A former pastor, teacher, editor, college
At the time of Durbin's appointment, the largest portion of expenditures for home missions was absorbed by work among immigrant populations. From an early date, Methodists had worked unsuccessfully among French-speaking people and had later turned with increasing success to the northern Europeans, chiefly Germans and Scandinavians. Among the most fruitful of the so-called language missions, and a model of its kind in the history of evangelism, was that led by Olof Hedström (1803-1877) at the Bethel Ship in the port of New York.

Hedström had been a Swedish seaman until 1825, when he settled down in New York state. Four years later he was converted, and in 1835 he was received on trial in the ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church and appointed to the Charlotte circuit of the New York Annual Conference. Another Swede, Peter Bergner, had in the meantime developed a concern for the thousands of Scandinavian sailors who touched New York harbor every year; his shipboard preaching indicated the possibility of success for an established work. Bergner asked Hedström to accept the task, and, with the co-operation of the Missionary Society, a condemned brig anchored on the North River was purchased, remodeled, and rechristened John Wesley. On March 25, 1845, Hedström preached the inaugural sermon on the ship; this was closely followed by the organization of a Methodist society and Sunday school. Every Scandinavian vessel entering the port of New York was subsequently met by Hedström and a succession of assistants, who distributed Bibles, tracts, sermons, and invitations to the John Wesley. One of the sailors who responded was a young Norwegian by the name of Ole Peter Petersen.
Petersen was born April 28, 1822, in Fredrikstad, Norway, son of a ship’s carpenter, Peter Hansen, and his wife, Catherine. Peter Hansen deserted his family in 1825, and a year later Catherine died. The boy was placed in the care of a widow, who taught him to appreciate the Bible and Martin Luther’s Little Catechism. He took religion seriously. After his confirmation he had thoughts of becoming a clergyman, but his low social status and lack of opportunity for higher education combined to discourage such a notion. He opted for the sea instead, leaving Fredrikstad shortly after his confirmation in 1836.

For the next several years, Petersen sailed between Norway, England, and France. The sight of American ships in the port of Le Havre stirred “a strange love” for the United States and a desire to go there to make a better life for himself. He took hire aboard an American vessel in the autumn of 1843, and for the next few years sailed between ports of the eastern seaboard.

During a stop in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1845, Petersen heard a series of sermons that brought him to a consciousness of his sins and marked the beginning of a long spiritual struggle. In New York he attended meetings led by Hedström and publicly testified to his desire to seek God until he found Him. His conversion occurred while he was alone on the 8:00 p.m. to 12:00 p.m. watch at sea, March 2, 1846.

The differences between the denominations were not clear to him as late as six months after his conversion. At that time he discussed adult baptism with a Baptist minister in Boston but decided against it. In the same city he attended the meetings of the famous “Father” Edward Thompson Taylor at the Seamen’s Bethel. Although his mission was a nonsectarian venture, Taylor himself was a Methodist of the old school.
recorded that at this mission he first became acquainted with Methodism, finding in it what he had searched for in vain in other denominations: a faith that agreed with the Word of God and his own experience. He was already more Wesleyan than he realized.

Father Taylor’s mission acquainted Petersen with Methodism; subsequent services at Hedström’s mission taught him, in his words, “to distinguish the Methodists as a separate people, where I felt a more union of spirit [sic] than among any other denominations [sic] of Christians.” He joined the Bethel Ship congregation and began, as he wrote, to make some progress in the divine life.

A year and a half later, sometime in 1848, his progress led him to the heart of the “burned-over district” in Albany, New York, where a holiness movement was in progress. There a friend introduced him to a pamphlet on sanctification. It made a deep impression, and Petersen, in his faulty English, described how the presentation of the doctrine of justification and sanctification and the feelings associated with them affected him:

“This [section on justification] I read with many tears while I was wondering how a man could write down the feelings of my own heart in such a manner. I even came to another chapter, and another subject, headed above perfect love; while I was reading I lost myself, I did not know where I was; I saw clearly that I had not the religes therein described. I was thus brought into trials about myself, and he delivered me.”

A subsequent talk with Hedström on the difference between justification and sanctification clarified the issue for him, and he resolved to seek the blessing of sanctification. On January 28, 1849, while on a ship that remained at anchor for a month at Mobile, Alabama, Petersen experienced the “cleansing power” that was “more than tongue can tell” and could say with full certainty that he “loved the Lord with all my heart.”
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Petersen recounted his experience in a letter to his fiancée in Fredrikstad. She and her friends were amazed by it, and they joined in requesting him to return to share more about what had happened to him. By that time, five years had passed since Petersen’s last trip to Norway, and he evidently thought it was time to return. He left New York on May 1 and arrived in Fredrikstad on June 30, 1849.

4.

The changes in Petersen’s life were evident to his fiancée and friends within hours of his arrival in Fredrikstad. No sooner had he met his fiancée Anne Marie Amundsen at the home of a merchant, Tobias Jacobsen, than he felt obliged to reject his host’s offer of a glass of wine to celebrate his homecoming. Instead, he explained that drinking was incompatible with his new faith, which he then proceeded to testify to, reducing the household to tears.

Petersen’s refusal of the glass of wine was quite in character for a Methodist of his day, as was his rejection of smoking, dancing, gambling, and the like. In his case, Methodism’s self-denying ethic was united to a somber piety far more characteristic of the Haugeans than of the Methodists. Methodists were marked above all by their sense of joy.

In the course of the years since Hans Nielsen Hauge’s death, his spiritual disciples, the Haugeans, had replaced the liberating message of grace with a heavy legalism. Historians have detected a more evangelical tone among Haugeans from the 1840s on, but usually the name of one man recurs to illustrate the transition; the experience of Petersen among Haugeans in 1849–1850 suggests that the evangelical spirit was not as widespread as claimed.24 Among the Haugeans that Petersen encountered, Christianity remained somber, humorless, pietistic, and legalistic.25 So strong was emphasis on the
necessity of a thorough conversion that the assurance of actually having been converted could drag on for months and even years. Even when a modicum of certainty was granted, it was not to be spoken of in tones other than those emphasizing the total depravity of man — even of the saved man — and with an attitude of complete abjection before the throne of God. God alone was to be glorified among Hagueans, and that was its strength, but His glory came entirely at man’s expense.

Petersen’s seriousness, temperamental rather than acquired, thus fitted well into the Haugean mold; it was among followers of Hauge in Østfold and along the south coast of Norway that he found a welcome in 1849. His fiancée’s family belonged to the group, as did the merchant who first welcomed him. Eleven days after his arrival Petersen accompanied Jacobsen on a business trip along the south and southwest coasts; at the various stops, they attended Haugean gatherings at which Petersen usually spoke. In the Fredrikstad region itself, he was warmly welcomed by John Sørbrøden, one of the signers of the Norwegian Constitution in 1814 and the Haugean leader in the district around Fredrikstad. Petersen also held meetings in Fredrikstad with Erik Tønnesen, the rising heir to Sørbrøden’s mantle, and even drew a number of Tønnesen’s followers into his own sphere of influence. So warm was Petersen’s reception among Østfold Hagueans, and so numerous were the invitations to preach among them, that he felt compelled to postpone his return trip to the United States.

Although Petersen’s devout Christianity was endearing to the Hagueans, they nonetheless recognized that he had a spirit different from their own. He preached that God’s grace to the penitent sinner was immediately available through faith; Haugean piety normally insisted on a long period of penitence before one could, with any degree of certainty, believe oneself converted. Petersen insisted, to the astonishment of the Hagueans, that one
could be assured that one was a child of God; to them such confidence was not possible and, indeed, was indicative of spiritual arrogance. Petersen stressed sanctification as an experience distinct from regeneration and attainable in this life; for Haugeans sin was the all-pervasive fact of life from which one could never be freed.

In spite of these differences and occasional questions raised about them, Petersen was accepted among the Haugeans. Even the Fredrikstad state-church clergymen remained friendly and unconcerned about his doctrinal peculiarities. In a discussion with the senior clergyman, Lars Christian Arup, a friendly argument ensued over whether or not one remained a sinner throughout life. In response to Petersen’s views, an associate of Arup’s stressed that Petersen’s experience resembled Paul’s, but that in recent times such experiences were rare.

This theological tolerance, so much in contrast to later developments, resulted from three factors. One was Petersen’s piety, which was virtually indistinguishable from the Haugean type. Another one was the somnolent Lutheran confessional consciousness; the Dissenter Law had yet to be tested in practice. The threat of the “sect” and Professor Gisle Johnson’s confessional preaching were still events of the future. Further and more importantly, Petersen made no attempt to have converts withdraw from the state church. He later recalled: “The number of converts was large, but I did not keep a count of them. It never occurred to me that the religious awakening was to be the cause of the establishment of Methodism in Norway, so that was not what moved me to work for the salvation of souls among the people.” Consequently, on April 24, 1850, Petersen and his bride of a few months set sail for New York and what they hoped would be a better life.

For several months after arriving in America, Petersen
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held secular employment. His participation in the Bethel Ship mission prompted some of the members, including Hedström, to encourage him to become a preacher. Petersen was willing, and on December 4, 1850, the corresponding secretary of the Missionary Society, David Terry, appointed him to be Hedström’s assistant. A year later he was authorized to be a local preacher and to join the New York Annual Conference on trial. The assistantship was short-lived. Urgent calls from Wisconsin for a missionary to newly arrived Norwegian settlers had been sent to the Society, and in the autumn of 1851, he turned west to fill the post.

5.

In Norway, meanwhile, events were unfolding that were to lead to Petersen’s return. Converts who looked to him as their spiritual mentor and leader continued to meet in Fredrikstad. They were led by the merchant Tobias Jacobsen and his stepsons, Captain Svend Peter Larsen and Emil Larsen, a dye master. Jacobsen’s boat had carried them along the coast on the original trip. At that time, during a stop at Egersund, Skipper Johan Andreas Jensen, the fourth leader of the little flock of adherents, was converted.

So long as Petersen was present, the small group had not aroused opposition. It had, however, appropriated Petersen’s holiness views, and soon its members began to propagate them openly. Later events suggest that the manner in which they presented the doctrine of Christian perfection differed from Petersen’s, as the state clergy soon took to warning the public against “Methodism.” They especially pointed to the doctrine that the true Christian could attain freedom from sin in this life. The clerical opposition restricted itself to warnings because the group at first expressed its religious convictions in an orderly fashion.
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Within months of Petersen’s departure, the group had grown despondent. In 1851 Jensen wrote to Hedström lamenting the “lukewarmness” of members compared to the fervor of Petersen, the “zealous loving shepherd.” They felt that they were held in bonds of “fearfulness” (probably because of clerical opposition that had developed) and were unable to keep “the evidence of living faith.” Only recently had they realized the worth of Petersen, “with his true scriptural teaching and humble example.” They earnestly wished him to be sent back to them if it could be arranged. No action was taken that year in response to the request, and by the spring of 1852 the Fredrikstad state-church clergymen reported that only four families remained in Petersen’s flock.

At this point of low group morale, the leaders broke out of their depression with an aggressive, misguided campaign to exhibit “the evidence of living faith.” Jacobsen started it at a church service on May 2, 1852, when he arose from his pew to accuse Arup of preaching in a way that would land him in hell. Warned that his behavior was subject to penalty, Jacobsen countered with the charge that the service was an offering to the Devil rather than to God.

That evening the Haugean leader, Erik Tønnesen, preached for three hours to a congregation of what the conservative local newspaper called “the pious” and “the curious.” When Tønnesen finished his sermon, Jacobsen began to sing a lusty sea shanty and then proceeded to deride religion, the church, and the clergy “enough to make one’s hair stand on end.” Some people left the premises; among those who remained “a real hurricane” of catcalls, screaming, singing, coughing, and spitting broke out — “a true Sodom.” In the midst of it all stood Tobias Jacobsen with his arms waving in the air, “brawling like a demon.”

The situation now became tense. Arup consulted his
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brother, the bishop of Christiania, who replied that he had every confidence in his brother's ability to handle the situation. The civil authorities, however, charged Jacobsen with disturbing the peace. In the course of the subsequent hearing, he added to his problems by testifying that Arup did not follow in the steps of Christ and that he, Tobias Jacobsen, was free from sin. The case was postponed indefinitely.

No sooner had Jacobsen been freed than he began to preach to a throng from a ship tied to the Fredrikstad dock. The state church, he said, was a whorehouse and its ministers devils disguised in clerical collars. His refusal to restrain himself led to another arrest but once again he was released because of administrative haggling. He returned to preaching at the dock and to disruption of state-church services.

The inevitable occurred: on June 16, 1852, Jacobsen and Skipper Johan Andreas Jensen were arrested for refusing to stop their singing and marching through the streets of Fredrikstad. During the trial that followed, they banged the table with the Bible and their fists, cursed officials, and ran up and down the floor. That was the least of it. Witnesses reported that Jacobsen had also claimed to be Christ on earth, and in the trial itself he admitted to being God and accused the judge of being the Devil. Not to be outdone, Jensen was also said to have stated that he was “the true and only son of God, united with the Father.”

By this time the case had reached national proportions and had gone to the supreme court. Jacobsen was sent to the mental asylum in Christiania for observation; he escaped twice before he was put in prison for safekeeping. The medical faculty of the university was consulted and concurred four to three with the insanity judgment handed down by a middle-level court; this decision, if upheld, would have released Jacobsen. The margin of
doubt, however, was close enough for the supreme court to uphold the lower-court sentence of one year’s imprisonment. The severity of the sentence was not based merely on disturbance of the peace, for in the course of events both Jacobsen and Jensen had compounded their troubles by accusing the king of being a liar. Jacobsen’s stepsons received minor sentences.

One of the stepsons, Svend Peter Larsen, was fined for calling the authorities “of the Devil.” He no doubt felt that he had reason to make the charge, because by then he was in contact with missionaries of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He had heard about Hans Peter Petersen, whose proselytism in the area around the coastal town of Risør since September 11, 1851, had aroused the ire of both the public and government officials. Larsen made contact with Petersen, and in April, 1852, he and his wife were baptized in Denmark and joined the Mormons. On May 14 he withdrew from the state church, and one month later his brother, Emil, also withdrew without stating any alternate affiliation.

Shortly after the formation of the Risør Mormon congregation, Sven Larsen and Hans Peter Petersen purchased a schooner, christened it Zions Løve (Lion of Zion), and made their first missionary journey to Fredrikstad, arriving on July 23. Another Mormon missionary, Jeppe L. Folkmann, a Dane, awaited them. Folkmann had already been welcomed by the families of the two brothers and had experienced some success as a missionary: within days of his arrival, the first five converts had been baptized, among them Emil Larsen and his wife.

The Mormons soon experienced problems with the Dissenter Law. Pending approval of their application for recognition as an organized religious corporation, the justice department informed local authorities that the
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Mormons were prohibited from holding further meetings until a decision had been reached as to whether they qualified as Christians under the Dissenter Law. The Fredrikstad Mormons refused to obey and eight were arrested.

Half of the Mormons were imprisoned in the quarters occupied by none other than Jacobsen and Jensen. In spite of his stepsons’ defection, Jacobsen proved such a bitter opponent of Mormon proselytism, which continued in the prison, that six days later he was, at his own request, moved to a single room.

Jensen, however, thought he could manage to resist. In a letter from prison, dated September 10, 1852, he gave an estimate of the state of affairs among the original group of converts from Petersen’s days. They were, he wrote, losing their confidence. Though their revival had spread quite widely, many Lutheran “old believers” (Haugeans) opposed it for fear of the “profession of freedom from sin.” Furthermore, the Mormons had come with their teachings on baptism and the laying on of hands, “and like wolves among sheep without a shepherd have swallowed up many who had gone far in the way of faith and prayer.” Jensen himself had less power to resist than he had thought, and on April 24, 1853, he converted to Mormonism. Upon completion of his sentence, he was baptized and migrated to Utah, where he died in 1882.

While the group in Fredrikstad was attracting national attention to “Methodism,” two individuals had already developed a much more official relationship to the Methodist Episcopal Church as employes of the Missionary Society on the other side of Christianiafjord. Hans Isaksen (also known as Hans Tangen) was a sailor who had been converted in the first half of 1850 or ear-
lied through the influence of Olof Hedström on the Bethel Ship. Upon his return to Norway in the fall of 1850, Isaksen preached in the Skiensfjord area, particularly in Porsgrund, Skien, and Brevik. His activity was accompanied by some success, and he could report that “many are coming to awakening, and are happy in the Lord.” Success there was, but it was not undiluted, as Isaksen reported in a letter to his spiritual mentor, Hedström: “Dear brother, it appeared hard for me at first, for I was despised both by friends and relations, so that I found none that I could trust myself to, and with the old Christians here I could not agree, for they are against me because I kneel down before God in prayer; secondly, that I confess God to have forgiven my sins; thirdly, that I am so courageous and happy. In this they say I am wrong.”

In the course of his preaching, and perhaps before, Isaksen made contact with Markus Nielsen, a Porsgrund lumber merchant and former seaman who had also been converted on the Bethel Ship. It is not clear by whom the initiative was taken, but, according to a report of the Missionary Society, Hedström now persuaded Isaksen and Nielsen to enter the Society’s service “as colporteurs in fact, though not in name — more properly perhaps, as exhorters.” The initiative was confirmed by vote of the general missionary committee on April 28, 1852, when $500 in aid was granted. This was enough to support Isaksen, and perhaps Nielsen too, in full-time employment by December of that year.

The action of the Missionary Society did not mean withdrawal from the state church for either of the men. Instead, they worked with like-minded persons within the state church, at least some of whom were Haugeans. Also included was the elite of Porsgrund, represented by the schoolteacher, Mathias Øvrum, and the state-church clergyman, Gustav Adolf Lammers. The group’s activity
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was not favorably regarded, even by Lammers' colleagues, as Nielsen related in a letter to the corresponding secretary of the Missionary Society:

"The Lutheran priests look upon us with jealousy, and say [we] lead astray the people; and if it were not for the law which permits a layman to preach, they would long ago have stopped us. As long as we are allowed to stay in the church of the state, it will be well, but the time is drawing near when they will cast us out of the synagogue. Although we stand as members, yet do they look upon us as separatists. Well, as the Methodists are, so are we — separated from the unclean and false, and therefore we add this name. A Lutheran without a living faith in Jesus Christ is like a naked bird. A Methodist with a living faith is, with the Lutheran faith and confession from the Bible, a true Lutheran, whatever he is called."48 The letter shows that Nielsen still thought of himself as a Lutheran, but a Lutheran close to being on the way out.

The analysis was perceptive, because by 1856 the leading member of the dissenting group, Gustav Adolf Lammers, had laid down his office in the state church and gained fame as the first Lutheran to withdraw in order to form his own congregation. By that time he had developed Baptist views, but prior to his withdrawal he had on several occasions expressed interest in Methodism.49 Nielsen was evidently the prime agent in urging Lammers to look into the doctrines and practice of Methodism, and he saw to it that David Terry, corresponding secretary of the Missionary Society, sent to Lammers a copy of Porter's Compendium of Methodism and the Discipline.50 Historians have acknowledged "Reformed" influences on Lammers and his movement, most obviously on the issue of baptism.51 "Reformed" has not explicitly included Methodism, but Nielsen's as-
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association with Lamers represents a definite Methodist influence that requires further investigation. 52

Whatever results Isaksen and Nielsen had in their work, the fruits apparently went into either the Lamers movement or the state church revival in the Skienfjord region. It is also possible that some of the persons won over by Isaksen and Nielsen found a spiritual home in Methodism, which established a congregation in Porsgrund on May 22, 1858, with Nielsen and his wife as two of the three charter members. 53 For various reasons, the employment of the two men by the Missionary Society ceased shortly after the arrival of Ole Peter Petersen as the first official missionary of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

7.

Petersen's return as a full-time missionary was the result of several requests, of which Jensen's letter asking the Missionary Society to send Petersen back to them was only the first. Jacobsen and his stepsons, after conferring with others, apparently wrote in a similar vein. 54 Finally, the reports of Isaksen and Nielsen, as well as a specific plea from Nielsen and a friend by the name of Aslak Pedersen, appeared to the Missionary Society to confirm the need for a missionary in Norway. 55

Olof Hedström, as the Scandinavian-speaking representative of the Missionary Society, was responsible for translating these requests and bringing them to the attention of the executive officers. Following a meeting with the foreign German committee, held on March 16, 1853, Hedström and Corresponding Secretary John Price Durbin were empowered to bring the matter to the attention of the bishops in charge of foreign missions. 56 As a result, Bishop Evelyn Waugh sent a letter to Petersen, by that time a missionary among the Scandinavians...
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of Iowa, ordering him to proceed to New York to confer with Durbin prior to departure for Norway. Before doing so, Petersen hastened to the session of the Wyoming Annual Conference, where his ordination as an elder completed the requirements for full ministerial status within the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Petersen’s letter of commission, dated September 30, 1853, and signed by Bishop Waugh, read in part as follows: “You are hereby appointed and authorized to return to your native land as a missionary of the Methodist Episcopal Church, for the purpose herein set forth, namely — 1st, To preach the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. 2d, To teach and instruct those of your countrymen to whom you may have access the doctrines, experience, and practice of Christianity. 3d, To organize and promote the Sabbath-schools among the children and youth where you may find it practicable. 4th, To take the pastoral over-sight of those who are professors of religion in connexion with the Methodist Society, and those who may be brought to God through your instrumentality, and to organize them into classes conformable to the discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church. 5th, To administer baptism and the supper of the Lord, according to the discipline and usages of our Church. 6th, To circulate the holy Scriptures, and religious books and tracts, as far as you may be able. 7th, In a word, to raise up a people for God.” In this task Petersen was advised to use caution, avoiding whatever would excite the prejudices of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities.

Corresponding Secretary Durbin added a few practical instructions: Petersen was to take with him a copy of the “Manual,” make exact records of his accounts, oversee the two brethren working in Norway, make quarterly reports, and read and study as much as work and circumstances allowed. Thus armed, Petersen and his family left New York on October 29, 1853, arriving in Chris-
tiana on December 3, from where they proceeded by horse to Fredrikstad.

8.

Ole Peter Petersen went on to lead in the establishment and consolidation of Methodism among Norwegians of both the old country and the new. In his story and that of the group in Fredrikstad, as well as in the events surrounding Hans Isaksen and Markus Nielsen, one may discern the human side of the process of acculturation. In so far as they did not withdraw from the state church, the flocks in Fredrikstad and Skiensfjord may be regarded as sectarian forms of Lutheranism, part of the history of Haugean protest against the “godlessness” of official Lutheranism. In so far as they were inspired by Methodist men and ideas, on the other hand, their activity was a prelude to Methodism in Norway. In short, they represented the transition of one religious form into another, and to that extent they did not wholly represent the one or the other. From their points of view, they were simply communicating to Norwegians the gospel as they had experienced it in the ports of America, particularly at that remarkably influential institution, Olof Hedström’s Bethel Ship. They did not and could not have known that they were also the harbingers of “the pluralistic style” in Norwegian religious life.

NOTES

1 For a more extended treatment, see Arne Hassing, “Methodism and Society in Norway, 1853–1918,” 11–21, a doctoral dissertation at Northwestern University, 1974. A revised version of this study will be published in the near future by Universitetsforlaget, Oslo, publishers to the Norwegian universities.

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4 For a full treatment of the Dissenter Law and its effects, see Knut Rygnes­tad, Dissenter­spørsmålet i Noreg fra 1845 til 1891: Lovgjevnings og ad­minis­trativ praksis (Oslo, 1955).
5 For earlier treatments, see Johan Thorkildsen, Den norske metodistkirkens historie (Oslo, 1926); Andrew Haagensen, Den norsk-danske methodismes historie paa begge sider havet (Chicago, 1894); Odd Hagen, Preludes to Methodism in Northern Europe (Oslo, 1961); Arlow W. Andersen, The Salt of the Earth: A History of Norwegian-Danish Methodism in America (Nashville, 1962).
10 Barclay, Widening Horizons, 2, 49.
12 Barclay, Widening Horizons, 115.
13 Barclay, Widening Horizons, 115–121.
14 Barclay, Widening Horizons, 122.
15 For a biography of Olof Hedström, see Carl Thunström, Olof Gustaf Hedström (Stockholm, 1935); for an informative sketch, see Barclay, Widening Horizons, 271–274; a recent scholarly account is by Roald Kverndal, “Den første nordiske sjømannsmisjon,” in Kirke og Kultur, 79:630–634; Kverndal has expanded the topic in “The Bethel Ship ‘John Wesley’: A New York Ship Saga from the mid-1800s with Reverberations on Both Sides of the Atlantic Ocean,” in Methodist History, 15:211–233.
16 The most important source for the life of Ole Peter Petersen is Carl Fredrik Eltzoltz, Livsbilleder af Pastor O. P. Petersen: Grundlægger af den biskoppelige methodistkirke i Norge og medgrundlægger af den norsk-danske methodisme i Amerika (Chicago, 1903); unless otherwise noted, information on the life of Petersen is drawn from this book. A shorter biography based on Eltzoltz’s work is Aage Hardy, O. P. Petersen, metodistkirkens grunnlegger i Norge: En livskildring (Oslo, 1953).
18 For a biography of Edward Thompson Taylor, see Gilbert Haven et al., Life of Father Taylor: The Sailor Preacher (Boston, 1904).
19 Eltzoltz, Livsbilleder, 21.
21 Petersen to Durbin, January 31, 1856.
22 Petersen to Durbin, January 31, 1856.
23 Petersen to Durbin, January 31, 1856; Eltzoltz, Livsbilleder, 34.
24 The name mentioned most often as representative of a stronger evangel­ical accent in Haugean circles is that of Anders Nielsen Haave; see Andreas
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For examples, see Eltzholtz, Livsbilleder, 48-50, 52, 69-70, and Hardy, O. P. Petersen, 36-39, 46, 55.

For a characterization, see Ludvig Hope, Svømningar, 5, and Oscar Handeland, quoted in Fredrick Wisløff, Den haugianske linjen: Norsk lekmannsforkynnelse sett i historisk lys, 17-18 (Oslo, 1949).

Hope, Svømningar, 5; for another example, see Eltzholtz, Livsbilleder, 69-70.


Martin Dehli, Fredrikstad bys historie, 2:457 (Fredrikstad, 1964).


Eltzholtz, Livsbilleder, 52-55; Hardy, O. P. Petersen, 40-41.

Petersen, “Nogle erindringer,” 100.

Unless otherwise noted, the facts concerning Tobias Jacobsen and Johan Andreas Jensen have been drawn from Martin Dehli’s detailed account in Fredrikstad bys historie, 2:457-469.

Eltzholtz, Livsbilleder, 50-51; Hardy, O. P. Petersen, 37-38.

Johan Andreas Jensen to Olof Hedström (1851), tr. from the original into English by Hedström for presentation to the Missionary Society, in the United Mission Library, New York.

For accounts by Mormon historians of their work in Norway, see Carl Hegberg, Den norske misjons historie, 5-9 (Oslo, 1928), and Andrew Jenson, History of the Scandinavian Mission, 33-38, 45 (Salt Lake City, 1927).

Jenson, History of the Scandinavian Mission, 57-58.

For more on the Mormons, see Bygnestad, Dissentarspørsmålet, 345-374.


Johan Andreas Jensen, Fredrikstad, to Olof Hedström, September 10, 1852, reprinted in Christian Advocate, December 7, 1852.


Johan Thorkildsen, Den norske metodistkirkes historie, 75-76.

Hans Isaksen, Norway, to Olof Hedström, March 17, 1851, reprinted in translation in Missionary Advocate, November 6, 1851. The letter is also reprinted as part of an article about Hans Isaksen and Markus Nielsen by Peder Borgen, in Kristelig Tidende, 105:6 (October 21, 1976).

Hans Isaksen, Norway, to Olof Hedström, March 17, 1851.


Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Thirty-Fifth Annual Report (1852-1853), 118.

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49 For an example, see Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, *Thirty-Sixth Annual Report* (1854), 64.
50 Olof Hedström, New York, to Ole Peter Petersen, January 23, 1855, in archives of the Metodisme Historisk Selskap, Oslo.
52 Brun noted a similarity between Lammers and Methodism on the subject of conversion, but he made no mention of direct influences through Markus Nielsen or Methodist literature; see Brun, *Den lammerske bevægelse*, 27.
53 Thorkildsen, *Den norske metodistkirkes historie*, 76.
54 Aahl Petersen, in *Kristelig Tidende*, 31:50 (1902).
56 *Thirty-Fifth Annual Report*, 118.
57 *Thirty-Fifth Annual Report*, 118.
59 *Thirty-Fifth Annual Report*, 119–120.