DANISH METHODISTS IN AMERICA

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The separate histories of foreign-language missions present a special challenge to students of American church history. Descendants of the immigrants, more and more of mixed ancestry, lack the ability to read and translate material published in the language of their forebears. To make matters more difficult, the children and grandchildren of the pioneers often shun the tedious work of research and writing. Their handicaps apply to the offspring of all foreign-speaking peoples in America. Of the nineteenth-century immigrants, the Danes come to mind.

In proportion to the total immigration of Scandinavians the number of Danes was very small. It is estimated that about 300,000 Danes emigrated to the United States by 1920. The vast majority of these argonauts, mostly young people, bore the stamp of Lutheranism. We are concerned here with the small minority who either arrived as Methodists or, more likely, turned to Methodism in America.

As proselytes from the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Methodists of Danish Descent first belonged to missions, administered by American bishops in Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa. In 1880 a Norwegian-Danish Conference was organized in Racine, Wisconsin, the home incidentally of many Danish immigrants. The accepted designation was “Norwegian-Danish” rather than “Danish-Norwegian.” Norwegians outnumbered the Danes. To illustrate, a survey of Wisconsin ministerial appointments, until the merger of 1943 with the respective American conferences, would reveal that of the 250 men and one woman who filled Norwegian-Danish pulpits, 23 (about ten percent) were of Danish origin.

Methodism Comes to Denmark

The teachings and the spirit of John Wesley penetrated Denmark itself through Danish-American evangelists like Burrel (Boie) Smith, Christian B. Willerup, Peter K. Rye, and Karl Schou. These forerunners had encountered Methodism in America in various ways. Smith was confronted by it in New York City and, upon returning to Denmark, became the first to preach the Wesleyan doctrine there. Willerup arrived in Denmark in 1858, a year after Smith. He had joined the Methodists in Savannah, Georgia, around 1838. It was he who organized the first Methodist society in Denmark, in Copenhagen on January 11, 1859.¹

¹Source material on the Methodist mission to Denmark may be found in the Annual Reports of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church; Andrew Haagensen, Den Norsk-Danske Methodisms Historie paa Begge Sider Havet (The History of Norwegian-Danish Methodism on Both Sides of the Ocean) (Chicago, 1894); Wade Crawford Barclay, ed., History of Methodist Missions, volume 3, 946-955 (New York, 1957). For the above paragraph see 39th Annual Report of the Missionary Society (1859) 66, and Andrew Haagensen, Den Norsk-Danske Methodisms Historie paa Begge Sider Havet, 26, 190, 283.
Peter K. Rye graduated from Garrett Biblical Institute in Evanston, Illinois. He was first appointed to an English-speaking congregation. Drafted for the Union Army he was permitted, through the intercession of Willerup, to proceed to Denmark. His wife's failing health brought him back to America in 1869. Here he served two Wisconsin charges. The fourth man, Schou, joined the Methodists in Lafayette, Indiana. In 1872 he replaced Willerup as superintendent in Denmark, when Willerup was recalled to America. 2

While converts were few and progress was slow, some developments were more encouraging. Occasionally wealthy or influential persons came to the side of the "dissenters." One convert donated $1,500 (3,000 Rigsdollar) toward the building of a church in Copenhagen. The church was dedicated in 1866 as St. Mark's. Harald Dollner, Danish consul-general and successful merchant in New York, provided funds for additional churches, and M. J. Cramer, United States minister to Denmark and himself an ordained Methodist minister, also gave timely support to the Danish Methodists. 3

Karl Schou, upon winning legal recognition in 1872 by taking an oath of loyalty to the state, supervised the Methodist organization, elevated from a mission to a full-fledged conference in 1868. He visited simple meeting places, often in remote rented halls. Official Lutheran opposition was almost negligible, but Schou complained of conditions in Odense, a thriving seaport city on the island of Fyn. There "Grundtvigian youth" indulged in dancing, drinking, and gambling. "Everything is pure for them," he wrote. "These are our bitterest opponents." Mild persecution notwithstanding, Schou was able to report in 1884 a membership of one thousand but with two thousand attending services of worship regularly. Adherents hesitated to transfer their memberships from the state church for fear of social and economic discrimination. Included in Schou's report to the board of missions in New York were 22 Sunday schools with 1,400 children enrolled. He believed that the state church inaugurated its own Sunday school program mainly in response to the Methodist example. 4

Had Schou's life been prolonged he would have witnessed further progress. In the year of his death in 1889 the Dollner Memorial Church, an imposing Gothic structure, was dedicated in Odense. By 1890 a Methodist Book Concern in Copenhagen was publishing two weekly papers, Den Christelige Tidende (The Christian Times) and Sondagsskolen (The Sunday School). The congregation at Veile, on the Jutland peninsula, grew rapidly. In 1893 they dedicated a sanctuary capable of seating eight hun-

2Haagensen, 42-44, 57, 62-63.
dred worshipers. By 1895 the conference numbered fifteen preaching points and a like number of ministers. The New York office received a report that year of 2,540 members, 2,790 adherents, and 32 Sunday schools with 3,659 pupils.5

From the point of view of the average Dane the presence of non-Lutheran missionaries may have been hardly noticeable. Danes were probably only vaguely aware of Mormons, Baptists, Adventists, and Methodists in their midst. The Evangelical Lutheran Church was only mildly challenged. The state-supported institution reflected Danish patriotism, even moreso with Bishop Nikolai F. S. Grundtvig's emphasis upon the God-given destiny of the Danes and other Nordic peoples. Why then should one transfer one's denominational allegiance to a foreign church? Why encourage a Norwegian-Danish Methodist organization which, in America, was predominantly Norwegian? The national church was broad enough to accommodate almost every mind and soul, from the light-hearted Grundtvigians to the sober and devout supporters of the Indremissions (Inner Mission) with its bedehuser (prayer houses or chapels) and lay leadership.

Origins and Growth

One could turn to Scandinavia for the roots of Norwegian-Danish Methodism. In Norway Hans Nielsen Hauge, a layman, inspired a movement which in later years would be identified most closely with the Inner Mission. In so doing he provided an example for dissenters in the nineteenth century. His name is now revered in Norway, although in his lifetime he suffered imprisonment for conducting devotional meetings secretly in private homes. He himself never withdrew from the Lutheran church, nor did he advocate dissension. Hauge was not alone in challenging the existing order. In Denmark Bishop Grundtvig had a significant impact upon Lutherans not only in his own country but throughout Scandinavia. His so-called happy Christianity and his daring innovations going beyond the scope of the Bible and tradition shook the establishment. The Grundtvig Church, with its impressive pipe-organ facade, stands today in Copenhagen as a memorial to him.

Of the several roots of Norwegian-Danish Methodism in America one of them is discernible in the person and work of Danish-born Christian B. Willerup, who served briefly in the Philadelphia and Genesee Conferences of the American church. In 1850 he was transferred to the Wisconsin Conference, first becoming a missionary to the Norwegians and Danes of Cambridge, about twenty miles southeast of Madison, Wisconsin. To-

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day's Willerup United Methodist Church in Cambridge commemorates his pioneering efforts. He organized the congregation in 1851, and the church building, still in use, was dedicated in 1852. It is the oldest Scandinavian Methodist church structure on either side of the Atlantic.

Despite adversities Norwegian-Danish Methodism gained in membership and influence during the 1850s. The secret may be found in the pre-eminent leadership of Willerup and his ministerial colleagues and in the deep spiritual cravings of the parishioners. Few among the Americans surpassed Willerup and his associates as administrators and evangelists, and their advice was sought by numerous persons on religious matters. Willerup wrote that not a day passed but that ten to twenty persons sought his counsel. Cambridge church records also reveal that 120 persons were baptized by Willerup in the six-year span from 1851 to 1857.6

**Carl Frederick Eltzholtz**

In addition to the Danes already cited, others qualified as spiritual guides to their countrymen in the new world. Carl Frederick Eltzholtz ranks as chief among them both for the length and the diversity of his service. His diary covers the period from 1867 to 1888. Only parts of it appeared in *Den Christelige Talsmand* (The Christian Advocate). Born in Denmark in 1840, he came under the influence of Willerup. He emigrated in 1866. His first appointments were in Wisconsin and to Chicago's First Church, where he served from 1873 to 1876 and caught the spirit of resurgence in that city after the great fire of 1871. His recollections of the year 1875 indicate that he visited homes in south Chicago and found there some thirty families, mostly Danish. This group eventually became the Bethel congregation, one of seven Norwegian-Danish Methodist congregations in the big city. Chicago appointments at this early stage fell within the bounds of the Wisconsin Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, within the Norwegian District.7

Back in Denmark from 1878 to 1887, Eltzholtz assumed leadership in a nationwide temperance movement which is said to have attracted 200,000 members by 1917. He edited its official organ, *Afholds Basunen* (The Temperance Trumpet). Upon returning to the United States he joined the California Conference. In 1890 he was sent "back east" to an Omaha district and in 1896 was transferred to the Norwegian-Danish Conference. There he retired in 1912.8

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7 Carl Frederick Eltzholtz, "Reviderede Blade fra min Dagbog" (revised pages from my diary), *Den Christelige Talsmand*, August 23 and December 27, 1917; January 31, 1918. The spelling was changed in 1904 from Christelige to Kristelige.

8 Andersen, *Salt of the Earth*, 83 note 2.
Eltzholtz personifies the pioneers who were alert to the promising growth of the nation westward. California fascinated him. He boasted of the climate, the schools, irrigation, artesian wells, giant trees, wool, honey, fruits, and land values. Later, from Omaha, he called for help. He travelled 12,000 miles in one year. "What is one preacher among so many thousands of people?" "Eventually we should possess a line of mission stations from the shores of Lake Michigan across Wyoming to the Golden Gate of the Pacific Coast."9

To a considerable degree the concerns of Eltzholtz on public issues represent the views of his ministerial colleagues. He urged temperance demonstrations by children as befitting the Fourth of July. In the weekly Chicago-based *Talsmand*, which he edited from 1898 to 1905, he frequently devoted an entire issue to the fight against King Alcohol. In line with the policy of the Methodist Episcopal Church as a whole, he supported the Anti-Saloon League. In 1904 he visited Denmark to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the temperance movement. Eltzholtz's zeal for temperance extended beyond the use of intoxicating beverages to chewing gum and cigarettes. Beware of distorting facial muscles, he warned, and wasn't it shameful that the nation had to reject thousands of smokers for military duty in the Spanish-American War? Ominously he prophesied, "Either the cigaret (sic) or our progress as a people must give way." Friends of wild life would have found a kindred soul in this Danish clergyman. He disliked bird feathers on women's hats.10

Released from his duties in the editorial chair but remaining a steady contributor, Eltzholtz voiced is hopes for America during the presidential campaign of 1912:11

If America will continue to observe the day of rest, an open Bible, a non-sectarian school system, an unprejudiced judiciary, free and unfettered right of voting, together with the peculiar American institutions that lift America high above other lands and make it such a desirable country in which to live, then it will for a long time remain a promised land for the world's poor and oppressed peoples.

The above lines were written in the year of his retirement, but this hardy man lived to be ninety years of age. His life is not only a cross section

9*Den Christelige Talsmand*, March 19 and 26, and April 9, 1889; February 17, 1891. Haagensen, 170. *Protokol over Forhandlinger i den Norsk-Danske Konference* (Protocol of the Transactions in the Norwegian-Danish Conference) (1890), 9; (1894), 16. *Year Book of the Norwegian-Danish Conference* (1929), 46. During the 64 years of the Conference the title of the annual minutes varied. For the sake of simplicity and uniformity, *Minutes* will be used hereafter.

10*Minutes* (1892), 17; (1902), 27; (1911), 46. *Den Christelige Talsmand*, February 22 and March 1, 1898; July 5 and August 23, 1900; June 9 and August 4, 1904; February 1 and May 10 and July 19, 1900. *Den Kristelige Talsmand*, June 21, 1905; October 8, 1908; February 16 and June 15, 1911; August 22, 1912; March 13, 1913.

of the American experience but a strong testimony to his faith in the new country and in the Christian message.

**Christian Omann**

Perhaps equally important to Danish Methodism in America was Christian Omann. As a young immigrant he joined Chicago’s First Church in 1874. His letters to the *Talsmand* from the thinly populated northern part of Dakota Territory (North Dakota after 1889) provide illuminating information on religious and social conditions in the area. Showered with inquiries from Scandinavians concerning prospects on the remote agricultural frontier, he cautiously avoided giving specific advice. Promotion of the Northwest was not his primary business, he explained. As a minister of the Gospel, he declared, “The question of migration to Dakota should be taken to God in prayer.”

Many members had moved to Dakota territory from the east and implored his help through letters in securing church services in their new establishment.

In 1884 Omann summarized his three-year experience in the territory. In Hillsboro, where his first meeting place was above a horse stable, the Methodists had a church and a parsonage. In the district as a whole they used fifteen school houses for their meetings. The area covered five counties, two of them in Minnesota. Never blest with appointments to large congregations, Omann finished his ministerial career in Wisconsin. He succumbed to tuberculosis in 1894 at the age of 42, leaving a wife and seven children. Neenah and Waupaca, two of his appointments, both markedly Danish in character, engaged his attention in his last years. Cambridge was his final appointment. His diary tells a story of conspicuous effort and sacrifice. He delivered some 2,500 sermons, received about 500 members, and made about 5,000 house calls. The city of Waupaca named a street in his honor.

**Struggle for Survival**

Denominational pride and sensitivity were strong. It may have happened on a Sunday evening in Chicago, when hymns were eventually being sung in English, that one congregation was singing through open windows, “Will there by any stars in my crown?” Across the street another congregation of a different denomination responded with, “No not one. No, not one!” Yet there were signs, however blurred, of what is now called ecumenism in the church as a whole. Barriers between Protestant com-

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12 *Den Christelige Talsmand*, January 18, 1882; March 7 and May 23, 1883.

13 John Lorentz, a later minister in North Dakota, discusses Omann in *Evangelsk Tidende* (Evangelical Times) of March 28, 1940. The *Tidende* succeeded the *Talsmand* in 1922, when the *Talsmand* merged with *Ostens Missonaer* (The Missionary of the East) and *Vidnesbyrdet* (The Testimony), published by the Western Norwegian-Danish Conference. Haagensen, 92.
munitions showed signs of weakening. With Roman Catholics, however, it was more difficult to come to terms. In the late 1890s and beyond, many Protestants sympathized with the aims of the American Protective Association, which was designed in part to put a stop to immigration from Italy, Poland, and other Catholic countries. Some Protestants were fearful of a merger of the Tiber River with the Potomac.\(^{14}\)

Both before and after the Civil War the Norwegian-Danish branch of American Methodism faced several formidable problems and suffered considerable retardation. First was the prevailing Yankee suspicion of foreigners. With the swelling immigrant tide nativism bristled in the newspaper press and from public platforms. As European cultures came to be less appreciated and often denounced as dangerous to true American patriotism, Danes and fellow Scandinavians bore some of the stigma of alien birth and strange speech. A second handicap was a shortage of pastors. Willerup and others were transferred to Denmark. Low salaries, in no way helped by hard times, discouraged potential recruits. Several promising men died early deaths. A more persistent obstacle was the hold of traditional Lutheranism upon the transplanted Nordics, notwithstanding sensational gains of the Methodist church as a whole in frontier America.

**The Mission to Mormon Utah**

One of the strangest episodes in American religious development concerns the migration to Utah. Stimulated by a desire for statehood, as well as by genuine missionary motives, Mormons engaged in serious efforts to win proselytes. Many converts were won at the expense of Scandinavian Lutheranism, particularly through the Copenhagen mission. In the second half of the nineteenth century Mormons enrolled over 45,000 Scandinavians, of whom 30,000 migrated in large parties to Utah, shepherded by Mormon guides. Of the total emigration 57 percent were Danish, 32 percent were Swedish, and only 10 percent Norwegian.\(^{15}\)

As early as 1879 Christian Treider, the Norwegian editor of *Den Christelige Talsmand*, deplored the Mormon influence, the defection of so many Danes and Norwegians. He joined with the American press in its “Mormon scandal” allegations and regretted that *Den Danske Pioner* of Omaha seemed to condone polygamy. With the arrival of Martinus

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\(^{14}\)Editors Eltzholtz and Wilhelmsen were both apprehensive of Roman Catholic dominance in the Philippines. See *Den Christelige Talsmand*, November 8 and December 6, 1898; April 19, 1900; *Den Kristelige Talsmand*, November 16, 1911.

Nelson in 1883 the Methodist mission to Scandinavian-American Mormons got under way. The son of Marcus Nelson, a Methodist minister who had served both in Norway and Denmark, Martinus may have been of Danish descent. He organized a congregation of eighteen members in Salt Lake City in 1883 and remained in Utah for twelve years.  

Martinus Nelson took issue with Anders W. Winberg, editor of *Bikuben* (The Beehive), the Scandinavian Mormon newspaper, mostly Danish, of Salt Lake City. Having served as a guide for Scandinavian immigrant groups, Winberg had challenged Nelson's article published in the *Talsmand*. Nelson countered by calling Mormon freedom a farce: "I have never found a people who feared each other more or are more distrustful of each other. Hundreds of Mormons," he charged, "have not dared to write home to Scandinavia to tell their relatives what the conditions really are."  

The peak of Norwegian—Danish Methodist accomplishment in Utah came around 1890. The mission had recently been reorganized into a district of the English-speaking Colorado Conference. In 1891 the district numbered 114 members, plus sixty on trial (in preparation). Fourteen churches and chapels lent support to the view that a fair number of adherents, not members, attended services. Day schools enrolled 405 pupils. The General Conference of 1892 authorized the Western Norwegian-Danish Mission to include within its boundaries California, the states of the northwest, and the Territory of Utah.  

For various reasons the mission in Utah declined. Immigrants who had lately been attracted from Lutheranism to Mormonism were not easily persuaded to join a third denomination. Admission of Utah to the Union as a state in 1896 may have given the followers of Joseph Smith a new respectability. The seven-day week in the mines played havoc with Sunday services in many instances. And the restlessness of a transient and money-minded people threatened religious endeavors of any kind.  

**Across the Rockies**  
The initial achievements of Methodism among Danish and Norwegian immigrants on the Pacific Coast are largely traceable to the unflagging energy and superior organizing ability of Carl J. Larsen, a Norwegian who arrived in Oakland, California, in 1875 and joined the Methodist church there. His English-speaking pastor encouraged him to conduct services in Scandinavian homes in the community. By 1879 he became a "local  

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17*Den Christelige Talsmand*, June 25, 1884.  
18*Den Christelige Talsmand*, July 16, 1889; June 23, 1891.
Methodist History

248

preacher," a licensed layman, and organized a class of 24 members. A church building followed in 1880. In 1887 Carl Frederick Eltzholtz came to fill the Oakland pulpit. Another Dane, Greberet Andersen, succeeded him in 1890, when Eltzholtz returned to the East. Andersen had met the pioneer Burrel Smith in Perth Amboy, New Jersey, and had graduated recently from the Norwegian-Danish theological seminary in Evanston, Illinois.19

Scandinavian Methodist activity accounted for new congregations in Washington (Spokane, Seattle, Port Townsend, and Fairhaven) and in Portland, Oregon. A mission conference in 1892 could report 567 members in 25 churches. Although the Central Church of San Francisco and the Bethany Church of Los Angeles both come into being in 1895, total membership had hardly changed by 1900. Statistics of 1917, during World War I, when foreign languages were being put to the test of patriotism, revealed that nineteen preaching places as of the year 1900 were no longer active, and only three new places had been added. One indication of permanence, however, was the weekly publication of Vidnesbyrdet (The Testimony), beginning in 1889.20

The number of congregations in the West reached a peak of 28 in 1928. Total membership probably never exceeded 1,300. How many members were of Danish heritage it is difficult to determine. Looking beyond the numbers, Norwegian-Danish Methodist progress west of the Rockies benefited from strong personal leadership and a steady influx of immigrants and easterners. Having fulfilled its purpose, the church surrendered its identity to the larger American communion.21

The East

Andrew Haagensen, who published his history in 1894, reported only three organized congregations in the east, namely Perth Amboy (Wesley Church) in New Jersey, Concord in Massachusetts, and Bethelship in Brooklyn, New York. Of these, Perth Amboy profited most from arrivals from Denmark. Beginning as class in 1872, Perth Amboy prospered largely through the warm personality and skill of Danish-born Burrel Smith, who served the parish from 1874 to 1880 and again from 1891 to 1898. Years

19Some sources on the church in the West are lacking. Minutes of the Western Norwegian-Danish Conference are incomplete. Basic information may be gleaned from a booklet by Martin T. Larson entitled Memorial Journal of Western Norwegian-Danish Methodism Portland, Oregon, 1944); Haagensen, 167-190; and Andersen, Salt of the Earth, 122-149.
21Andersen, Salt of the Earth, 145, 149.
later, during the ministry of Peter M. Peterson (often called P. M.) from 1925 to 1929, the congregation built an annex to the main structure.\footnote{On progress in the East see Haagensen, 190-198, and Andersen, Salt of the Earth, 183-210. Brief accounts appear in Andrew Hansen's "Methodistkirkens Norsk-Danske Virksomhed i de Ostlige Stater" (The work of the Norwegian-Danish Methodist Church in the Eastern States) in Evangelisk Tidende, September 9, 1926, and in Hans A. Ofstie's untitled article in Evangelisk Tidende, November 3, 1938.}

Historical Concord, where a church was dedicated in 1893, was first cultivated by Jens P. Andersen, who in time persuaded the young P. M. Peterson to prepare for the ministry. Of Danish clergy in the east the two men are perhaps best known. Both were to have large families, and both would make significant impacts upon an American-born generation not only in the east but in the middle west. In the 1920s Peterson guided the partly Danish flock of Perth Amboy as well as that of Racine's Trinity Church, in Wisconsin. On the final Norwegian-Danish Conference roll of 1943 P. M. Peterson appears as a lone Dane.

Brooklyn's Bethelship (the later spelling) and the Swedish Immanuel Church derived from the original Scandinavian mission centered in the Bethel Ship in New York harbor. The Swedes cut their moorings in 1866, the Norwegians in 1872. Apparently there were but few Danes among them.

Norwegian-Danish Methodism in the east usually had no separate status. In 1915 its eleven congregations and three missions were scattered over seven states and a like number of Annual Conferences of the American church. At a preachers' meeting of 1919 it was reported that there were fourteen churches and better than a thousand members. The General Conference of 1928 granted the Eastern Mission permission to dissolve. The Norwegian-Danish Conference of the middle west was then authorized to extend its boundaries to the Atlantic coast. By 1934 four churches (Jersey City, Perth Amboy, Queens Village, and Boston) had withdrawn from the enlarged Norwegian-Danish Conference and had joined American Conferences.

Danes and Norwegians formed distinct congregations in the east. Inspiration came not mainly from Scandinavia or from England, the land of John Wesley, but from midwestern pioneers and their successors. The patriotic spirit engendered by World War I, a decline in the use of foreign languages, and the merger of 1939 of three large branches of American Methodism contributed inevitably to the absorption of the Norwegian-Danish effort in the east.

The Conference Yields to English

By 1906, according to yearbook statistics, the number of congregations in the middle west reached nearly one hundred. Total membership,
not counting Sunday school pupils, hovered around five thousand. Numbers for the Pacific and Atlantic coasts would probably have raised the total nationally to about seven thousand. In 1943, when the Norwegian-Danish Conference merged (the western and eastern churches had already merged), there were 58 churches, 43 pastors, and 55 Sunday schools.

For all Americans of Danish or Norwegian descent, whether Lutheran or Methodist or other, the Great War of 1914-1918 was a turning point. Foreign-language newspapers were censored, with no exception for the religious press. Speaking in a foreign language was frowned upon or actually forbidden. An overzealous governor of Iowa declared that all foreign conversations, including by telephone, should cease.

The churches were already moving toward the use of English. For the older generation the shift was often a serious blow. To them God had always spoken in Danish or Norwegian. Now the holy scriptures were being read in an inelegant language. Even the pealing of the church bells somehow sounded sour. For pastors born abroad there was a new challenge. Some were not able to meet it very successfully. The plight of one such pastor comes to mind. In Danish and Norwegian the word for forehead is pande. The struggling preacher, searching for its English equivalent, shouted, "And David picked up a stone and he hit Goliath right in the pan!"

An Appraisal

This sketch of Norwegian-Danish Methodism in America, lacking in detail and coverage, is far from adequate. One could speak at length of ministers and their wives and children, of lay people, of institutions, and of editors of the weekly printed messengers of the east (Ostens Missionaer), the middle west (Den Kristelige Talsmand), and the west (Vidnesbyrdet). Several foreign missionaries were of Danish descent. Maren Bording and Alfrida Kostrup served in Korea for practically a lifetime. John Brastrup labored in the Belgian Congo (now Zaire). Anna Stahr Espinal gave many years to Guatemala. And John Schevenius, partly Danish through his mother, held forth as a civil engineer and evangelist and educator in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). John's father, Carl W. Schevenius of Minneapolis, recently passed his 108th milestone. Carl was one of the most outstanding men in the former Conference.

One may have mixed emotions when visiting the site of a once flourishing church. Such was the experience of the Norwegian Hans Kristian Madsen, superintendent of the Chicago District, as he stopped in Ashippun, Wisconsin, in 1914. Depression came over him. Both the building and the adjoining cemetery had deteriorated sadly. There from 1869 to 1892 a rural congregation thrived. Its first pastor, Carl Frederick Eltzholtz, had already distinguished himself, as we have seen, in his native Denmark. Later he became a bulwark of strength in California, in the
Western Conference. For a few moments despondency overtook Madsen. "Is this the end?" he thought. Then he took heart as he recalled the many sons and daughters of the charter members who had joined the neighboring American Methodist congregation in Oconowomoc or had found a spiritual home among Methodists farther west. Suddenly the importance of this quiet and forsaken place assumed a new meaning for Madsen. He was consoled in a way that once moved Bishop Grundtvig of Denmark to write, "Kirken den er et gammelt hus, sta omend ta faller" (The Church is an old institution. It stands even when steeples are falling).

Great movements in history represent but a flicker of time on God's calendar. It would be even truer of movements of lesser magnitude, as in the case of Norwegian-Danish Methodism in America. Still, it is appropriate and gratifying to pause and to commemorate its personnel, both lay and clergy, to loose their tongues and to reread their letters, diaries, memoirs, and reports. There is growth in great memories.