

THE TWO KINGDOMS: THE NORWEGIAN SEAMEN'S CHURCH IN LONDON 1865-1905¹

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Introduction

On 31 August 1864 the Evangelical Society for Scandinavian Seamen in Foreign Ports was founded in Bergen by seven laymen and two clerics.² Its guiding hand and first secretary was Johan Cordt Harmens Storjohann, who became the vicar of the city's Church of Mary the following year. A native of Bergen, he had studied Lutheran theology in Christiania, the name under which the Norwegian capital was then known, and Erlangen in Germany. The autumn of 1863 saw Storjohann installed in Edinburgh, where he had travelled to learn more about the Scottish Free Church. After an experience in which a seaman went to great lengths to seek him out, he became interested in preaching the gospel among this particular group. Back in Bergen he took steps to make an evangelical society for seamen a reality.

The Evangelical Society established a mission in London which in due course became the Norwegian church. The church's story is sometimes one of conflict, mirroring the struggle of Norwegians for democratization and independence from Sweden in the late nineteenth century. In a research note by Virginia Hoel, the author of a monograph on the Norwegian seamen's mission in the Low Countries, it is suggested that how nationalism affected the Evangelical Society is worthy

¹ I am grateful to the Norwegian church in London for funding the article and making its materials available to me. The anonymous referees for this journal, whose comments have substantially improved the article, also deserve thanks. Any remaining shortcomings are mine alone.

² R. Kverndal, *Sjømannskirkens grunnlegger Johan Cordt Harmens Storjohann (1832-1914)* (Bergen: no publisher given, 2014), 11-12.

of study. Especially after 1905, the year independence was achieved, it saw its role not only as proselytizing, but also in promoting Norwegian culture and values to its fellow citizens abroad.³ This is less apparent in the period covered here, but makes the study of the evolution of such feelings relevant. Before 1905 a nebulous and instinctive form of nationalism existed, which was the driving force behind the expansion of the mission's remit in London. Connected with this issue is the timing of the mission's metamorphosis into a church for Norwegian expatriates, because that development belied that it was solely for seamen. This article thus investigates exactly when London residents became involved in the church and in general seeks to add to our knowledge of foreign religious activity in Britain. The evolution of the Norwegian congregation also matches those of other foreign Protestant churches in London, which tended to originate with a split from a larger congregation, initially meeting in a hall and then succeeding in erecting a church building for its use.

Bud og Hilsen, the journal of the Evangelical Society, is the main source used. It was aimed at both the interested public at home and seamen abroad.⁴ Each port with a mission received attention in the form of reports written by staff on the ground, providing church-related information. There were also general articles on religion, seafaring and news from headquarters in Bergen. Its purpose was to showcase the work of the Evangelical Society and to acquaint the churches under its umbrella with developments in other locations. It was tightly controlled and there was no correspondence from readers. Since it was published monthly and, towards the end of our period, fortnightly, it was reliable as the events to which it referred had only recently taken place. Validity was somewhat restricted due to the need to present the mission's accomplishments in a favourable light. Conflicts were glossed over and the motivations of individuals were presented so that they

3 V. Hoel, "The Norwegian Seamen's Mission to two North Sea Ports 1864-1920: A National 'Home' in an International Maritime World," *International Journal of Maritime History* 27, no. 4 (2015): 811-815, 814.

4 V. Hoel, *Faith, Fatherland and the Norwegian Seaman. The Work of the Norwegian Seamen's Mission in Antwerp and the Dutch Ports (1864-1920)* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2016), 19.

would be acceptable to the Evangelical Society. There was little interpretation or historical perspective. Such details must be supplied from other sources and contextual understanding. Books published by individual missions are of greater validity, but lower reliability as they covered much longer periods.

The religious census of 1851 for England and Wales listed a total of eleven foreign Protestant churches active in these countries.⁵ Limitations of space preclude considering any but the six which were Lutheran. Suffice it to say that Protestant congregations originating overseas went back to 1550 when Dutch and French Calvinists were allowed their own churches in the City of London, three months apart.⁶ Lutherans on English soil were granted a royal charter in 1669 permitting the establishment of a church for their denomination, which stood ready in London in 1673.⁷ Although it largely came about as a Swedish initiative and with significant Swedish funding, it was German-dominated and later became known as the Hamburg Lutheran Church.⁸ The Scandinavians broke away to found a new congregation in 1692.

The first service in the concomitant Danish Church was held in 1696.⁹ The Swedes felt aggrieved by Danish dominance in the new church and war between the two countries in 1710 acted as a trigger for the establishment of a separate Swedish congregation.¹⁰ The Swedish church, called Ulrica Eleonora, stood ready in 1728. All the other Lutheran churches in England in 1851 were

⁵ *Census of Great Britain, 1851. Religious Worship. England and Wales. Report and Tables. Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1853), cxv.

⁶ A. J. Kershen, *Strangers, Aliens and Asians. Huguenots, Jews and Bangladeshis in Spitalfields 1660-2000* (London: Routledge, 2005), 76.

⁷ N. M. Railton, *No North Sea. The Anglo-German Evangelical Network in the Middle of the Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 71.

⁸ S. Evander and L. Sjöström, *Svenska kyrkan i London 1710-2000. En historia i ord och bilder* (London: Ulrika Eleonora svenska församling, 2001), 11.

⁹ H. Faber, *Danske og Norske i London og deres kirker* (Copenhagen: Erslev & Hasselbalch, 1915), 48, 57.

¹⁰ Evander and Sjöström, 12.

German. There was one in Liverpool, founded in 1847, as well as three more in London.¹¹ These were St Mary (founded 1669), the German Court Chapel (founded 1700) and St George (founded 1762). In addition, St Paul (founded in 1697) was originally not Lutheran but became largely so under the Prussian Church Union of 1822. The total number of Lutheran churches in England and Wales in 1851 was therefore eight by this reckoning.

As with the Scandinavian churches, St Mary had been founded after a section of the congregation in the Hamburg Lutheran Church broke away.¹² In the second half of the eighteenth century, these two churches underwent decades of internal strife, including law suits and outbreaks of physical violence, relating to the control of the congregations. While the British authorities were not directly involved, the court system faced a challenge in judging between different factions in autonomous foreign churches.¹³

The origins of the Norwegian church in the British capital lay in missionary efforts to seamen. In 1817 the Methodists started proselytizing on ships moored by the Thames.¹⁴ Inspired by this, two dissenting missions, the Port of London Society and the Bethel Union, were set up in 1818 and 1819 respectively. The *primus motor* of the latter, also involved in the founding of the former, was George Charles Smith, a former seaman who became editor of the *Sailor's Magazine* and a minister of the Baptist church in Penzance, Cornwall. Within the Anglican Church, the Liverpool Mariners' Church Society was established in 1825.¹⁵ Thus the mission to seamen was well under

¹¹ S.Steinmetz, "The German Churches in London, 1669-1914" in P. Panyani (ed.), *Germans in Britain since 1500* (London: Hambledon, 1996), 49-71, 54, 68.

¹² Steinmetz, "The German Churches" in Panyani (ed.), *Germans in Britain*, 52.

¹³ P. Broadhead, "Contesting Authority and Assimilation within Lutheran Churches in Eighteenth-Century London," *The London Journal* 40, no. 1 (2015): 1-20, 14.

¹⁴ *Appeal to the Public being an Answer to the Misrepresentations and Calumnies of the Rev. G. C. Smith, against The Port of London Society and Bethel Union, For imparting religious Instruction to British and Foreign Seamen* (London, 1829), 7.

¹⁵ R. Kverndal, *Seamen's Missions: Their Origin and Early Growth. A Contribution to the History of the Church*

way in Britain in the 1860s, but there was no dedicated organization looking after sailors from Scandinavia.

The shipping industry provided Norway with one of its greatest economic successes. In 1865 its merchant fleet accounted for 41.4 per cent of export earnings and shipping remained the top export in 1905, though its share had by then fallen to 32.5 per cent.¹⁶ At the beginning of the period under consideration, trade across the North Sea was spiralling upwards. The tonnage of the Norwegian North Atlantic merchant fleet rose from 561, 000 to 984, 000 between 1860 and 1870.¹⁷ Its primary destination was the British Isles: 44 per cent of all journeys by Norwegian ships ended in a British or Irish port in 1865.¹⁸ There were no fewer than 520 moorings by Norwegian ships in the Scottish ports of Leith and Grangemouth in 1864.¹⁹ Leith duly became the first port to host a Norwegian seamen's mission, followed by North Shields, Antwerpen (all founded in 1865) and Cardiff (1866). The first seaman's parson in Cardiff was the renowned Lars Oftedal (1838-1900), then at the outset of his life as a cleric but who later became the leader of a popular evangelical movement in western Norway, the founder of the local newspaper *Vestlandsposten* and a member of parliament for the Liberals.²⁰

Maritime (Pasadena CA: William Carey Library, 1986), 287.

16 F. Hodne, *Norges økonomiske historie 1815-1970* (No place of publication: Cappelen, 1981), 160.

17 L.R. Fischer and H.W. Nordvik, "Maritime Transport and the Integration of the North Atlantic Economy, 1850-1914," in W. Fischer, R. M. McInnis and J. Schneider (eds.), *The Emergence of a World Economy 1500-1914* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1986): 519-544, 532.

18 E. Merok and E. Ekberg, "Partners in World Trade. Anglo-Norwegian Shipping Networks, 1855-1905," in H. Ø. Pharo and P. Salmon (eds.), *Britain and Norway: Special Relationships* (Oslo: Akademika, 2012): 73-98, 82.

19 G. C. Wasberg, *Med norsk sjømannsmisjon i hundre år 1864-1964. Sjøfartskultur og misjonstanke* (no place of publication: Norwegian Seamen's Mission, c. 1964), 32.

20 *Beretning til den 2den Generalforsamling "Foreningen til Evangeliets Forkyndelse for Skandinaviske Sømænd i fremmede Havne" over Foreningens Stilling og Virksomhed i Tidsrummet fra 15de Septbr. 1865 til 31te Decbr. 1866* (Bergen, 1867), 13.

Although Scotland, the North of England and Wales were important too, the Evangelical Society had set its sights on London from the beginning. The first annual general meeting of the Evangelical Society in 1865 approved that the society had contacted the Ulrica Eleonora Church, the Swedish, and for political reasons therefore also the Norwegian, congregation in London.²¹ The reply from the congregation was less than enthusiastic, however, stating that it did not have the means to help support the appointment of a pastor specifically for seamen. This could have been an opportunity lost. The number of Norwegian seamen was growing at a rate of about 30 per cent a decade at this time.²² The occupation gave young men a reasonable livelihood and the chance to see foreign parts, but there were very real drawbacks too. Not being able to see family often meant loneliness, discipline on board ships was harsh and, additionally, Norwegian seamen had to put up with lower wages, heavier duties and worse food than their British counterparts. Not until 1891 was there an attempt by sailors and stokers to form a trade union in Christiania, under the tutelage of the British Seamen's Union, and it did not get off the ground.²³

The first years of the mission

The efforts to establish a Scandinavian seamen's mission in London continued. In 1866 the Reverend Peter Meyer, from the North Shields station, travelled there privately, preaching to seamen in the Swedish church and in an assembly hall.²⁴ The next year the Evangelical Society directed the Reverend Andreas Hansen, from the Leith station, to do likewise.²⁵ At a meeting held at the capital's Queen's Hotel, he launched a committee preparing the ground for a London chapter of the Evangelical Society. Its leader was the minister of the Swedish church, C.O. Svedberg.

²¹ *Beretning til den 2den Generalforsamling*, 14-15.

²² Hodne, 162.

²³ Hoel, *Faith, Fatherland and the Norwegian Seaman*, 70.

²⁴ *Beretning til den 2den Generalforsamling*, 15

²⁵ J. Ursin, "London stasjon," in V. Vilhelmsen (ed.), *Den norske sjømannsmisjon i 75 år 1864-1939. Festskrift* (Bergen: Norwegian Seamen's Mission, 1939): 111.

Norwegian subservience to Sweden both in the Scandinavian community in London and in the union, which had come about in 1814, meant that there were clear restrictions on the lines along which the committee could work. It was forbidden to set up a separate Norwegian congregation and no services could be held for members of the established Swedish congregation. Services could not take place at the same time as those of the Ulrica Eleonora Church and the Norwegian pastor was required to send an annual list of activities to that church. The Evangelical Society stated it would not be possible to heed the condition relating to the timing of services. On 2 September 1867 it advertised the post of seaman's pastor in London.²⁶

Storjohann himself applied for the position and was selected. He arrived in London on 22 May 1868, initially preaching in the Ulrica Eleonora Church and then specifically for seamen at an attic of which a makeshift chapel was made.²⁷ In 1870 Storjohann was able to rent an empty house for this purpose from a trader in spirits. During this time he collected funds from the congregation, the Swedish-Norwegian legation and resident Scandinavians towards the purchase of a plot where a church could be built. There was a clear Scandinavian dimension to these efforts. The Danish Church in London was in a state of dissolution in the late 1860s. In 1868 it was transferred to a committee consisting of various British authorities, including representatives of the Bishop of London.²⁸ The Evangelical Society wanted a share of the £ 2000 sales price, as it argued that Norway had been part of the Danish realm until 1814 and had contributed to all Danish institutions. It was not successful in achieving this, but a parallel Danish society inspired by and with the same name as its Norwegian counterpart was founded in 1867. By 1869 it had managed to send a Danish pastor, Carl F. A. Nielsen, to London. ²⁹ He cooperated with Storjohann in holding Bible readings

26 *Beretning til den 3die Generalforsamling i "Foreningen til Evangeliets Forkyndelse for Skandinaviske Sømænd i fremmede Havne" over Foreningens Stilling og Virksomhed i Aarene 1867 og 1868* (Bergen, 1869), 22.

27 *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 7, July 1868, 2.

28 Faber, 185.

29 Faber, 194, 195.

on board ships in the docks.

It was always Storjohann's ambition to inspire the other Nordic countries to take up mission to the seamen. Although hardly even established in London, in 1869 he travelled to Sweden and Finland in an attempt to lay the groundwork for similar organizations to his own. In late 1868 Surrey Commercial Docks agreed to provide a site for a church building, although it would have to be constructed of iron rather than stone.³⁰ The next year this was changed to a plot where a stone church could be built.³¹ The laying of the foundation stone in 1871 was a triumph for the Evangelical Society, but at a symbolic level also for the Norwegian unionists and Swedish suzerainty in the union. Naturally the incipient Norwegian church was delighted that a personage as eminent as the crown prince of the union was willing to undertake the laying of the stone. It was known that Prince Oscar would be in London during July 1871 and early that month the Norwegians made contact with the legation to request an interview with him.³² He fell in with their plans and thus the only remaining hurdle was obtaining permission from the king.³³ This must have been granted speedily, as the church informed the Surrey Commercial Docks about the opening ceremony two days later.³⁴

The Times published a lengthy report about the events taking place on 26 July 1871:

“The Royal party embarked yesterday at 10 o'clock from Westminster-bridge, which was specially fitted up for the occasion, and proceeded down the river in the direction of the Commercial Docks. [...] The steamer hoisted what is known as the 'Union' flag— a kind of Swedo-Norwegian Union Jack having three tongues or forks, to designate that it belongs to the Government service.

30 *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 1, January 1869, 1.

31 *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 3, March 1869, 47.

32 London, Norwegian Seamen's Church, Volume marked “Korrespondanse fra 6/2 1869 – 13/5 1921”, fol. 29v.
Møller to Steenbock, 7 July 1871.

33 Seamen's Church, “Korrespondanse”, fol. 31v. Møller to Steenbock, 18 July 1871.

34 Seamen's Church, “Korrespondanse”, fol. 32r. Møller to Griffin, 20 July 1871.

Within the walls Prince Oscar was received by a Royal salute by a guard of honour of the 23d Surrey Volunteers and the loyal greetings of many hundreds of northern sailors, who cheered him with manifest heartiness and good-will. [...] The business of lowering the stone into its proper position was then performed, and Prince Oscar speaking, like the Pastor, in the Norwegian tongue, declared the stone to be duly laid, and expressed a hope that the building of which it was to form a part might be blessed to the purpose of which it was intended.”³⁵

Although the prince, a gifted linguist, and Storjohann spoke in Norwegian, it hardly disguised that the Swedes were in charge. The prayer which began proceedings was in English, the gospel reading in Swedish. The prince dominated the ceremony and thanked his hosts on behalf of his country “the united country of Sweden and Norway.” So dense was the Thames Embankment with Swedish dignitaries that *The Times'* reporter found it hard to believe he was not in Stockholm. Then Storjohann proved himself a friend of the union by declaring that as a clergyman, the motto of the Swedish monarch Oscar I, “Right and Truth”, was a more appropriate emblem for him than the Norwegian lion.³⁶ This was said in the emotional moment of learning that he had been honoured with the Cross of St. Olaf for his accomplishment. The Norwegian nation was clearly in abeyance, a situation which at that stage might have lasted indefinitely.

³⁵ *The Times*, 27 July 1871, 5.

³⁶ *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, Nos. 7-8, July-August 1871, 123.



Figure 1. The foundation stone of the Seamen's Church (author's photo)

1871 would in fact be too early to expect Norwegian political nationalism to blossom. The new church was there for *Scandinavian* seamen and the main official reason why its parson was a Norwegian, was that there were more Norwegian than Swedish seamen in London. They allegedly found it difficult to follow sermons in Swedish.³⁷ Also, there was an element of compensation for the fact that the minister of the Ulrica Eleonora Church was always a Swede. That church saw itself

³⁷ *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 10, July 1867, 18-19.

as a spiritual home for both nationalities, united under one monarch and part of the same state. Had it not been for the special case of the mission to seamen, it is unlikely that the Ulrica Eleonora Church would have allowed the nascent place of worship to be established. It still insisted that no Norwegian congregation must emerge, separate from the church of the union.

It could take comfort from the fact that the Evangelical Society itself was for Scandinavian seamen. Its daily work involved pastoral care of all the nationalities of the Nordic region. This was recognized widely. Baron Carl Joachim Hambro, a Dane and founder of Hambros Bank in London, surprised the church by giving £ 40 of his own volition.³⁸ The fact that the Danish Church had folded might have been a factor in his decision, but since 1814 there had only been sentimental ties between Denmark and Norway. Very early in his mission Storjohann offered to officiate at the marriage of a Finnish sailor, though it came to nothing when the prospective groom fled his ship the day the wedding had been due to take place.³⁹ In 1869 an assistant to the seaman's parson, Thor Frette, was appointed and he also cooperated actively with the Danish seaman's pastor through helping him with assembling a congregation.⁴⁰ Storjohann of course was called out to minister to Swedish seamen too.⁴¹ He received £ 25 a year from the management of Greenwich Hospital, also in the estuary area of London, for comforting the many Scandinavian sailors who were patients there.⁴² Thus the four Nordic nations (there is no mention of Icelanders) were welded together in the matter of the physical and spiritual care of their seamen.

London provided a tolerant home for these Protestant denominations. The Surrey Dock Company donated £ 100 towards the party celebrating the laying of the church foundation stone and

38 *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 1, January 1869, 7-8.

39 *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 9, September 1868, 5.

40 *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 3, March 1869, 199.

41 *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 6, June 1870, 92.

42 *Beretning til den 4de Generalforsamling i "Foreningen til Evangeliets Forkyndelse for Skandinaviske Sømænd i fremmede Havne" om Foreningens Stilling og Virksomhed i Treaaret 1869-71* (Bergen, 1872), 28.

British people took part in the festivities.⁴³ Storjohann was of the opinion that the company had provided the best plot of land available.⁴⁴ When the church, called Ebenezer, stood ready in 1872 its strategic location made it easy to find for seamen.⁴⁵ It was in Rotherhithe, South London, close to the Commercial Dock Pier. Having pioneered the work in London, Storjohann resigned his position that year. He had built the mission from scratch, overseen its transformation into a church and cooperated well with both the host nation and the other Scandinavians. He was a loyal subject of the Swedish-Norwegian monarchy and his experience of living and studying in larger countries may have made him regard Norway as too limited on its own.⁴⁶

Even so, the 1860s in effect witnessed the end of Scandinavianism as a political ideology. It imploded due to the lack of support from the other countries for Denmark in 1864, when it was defeated by Prussia and Austria in the war about the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein. The Norwegian Church had never been a protagonist for such political currents, as particularly strong ties between the national churches did not exist, although all were Lutheran. The Nordic Church Assembly in Copenhagen in 1871 deliberately avoided the term “Scandinavian” in order to distance itself from the old political vision of a union between Denmark, Norway and Sweden.⁴⁷ Scandinavianism had been resurrected in the 1840s and received support from the Swedish monarchy in the 1850s.⁴⁸ But the Norwegian Church was not partial to enthusiasms regarding politics or cultural identity. It also took a pragmatic view of its own country's position.

43 *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, Nos. 7-8, July-August 1871, 118.

44 *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 1, January 1869, 1.

45 *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 6, June 1872, 87.

46 The main impulse behind Scandinavianism was that these countries were too small to matter on their own. M. Hilson, “Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. Pan-Scandinavianism and Nationalism,” in T. Baycroft and M. Hewitson (eds.), *What is a Nation? Europe 1789-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006): 192-209, 203.

47 D. Thorkildsen, “Fra kirkelig skandinavisme til Nordisk kirkelig samarbeid,” in H. Haggrén, R. Hemstad and J. Marjanen (eds.), *Civilsamhällets Norden* (Helsinki: Centrum för Norden Studier, 2005): 32-40, 37.

48 J. A. Seip, *Utsikt over Norges historie II* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1981), 39.

Norwegian nationalism in the early days of the new state, 1815-1836, had involved the defence of its constitution, agreed at Eidsvoll in 1814, against the encroachments of King Carl XIV Johan.⁴⁹ From the 1830s it had been strengthened by a cultural revival in literature, scholarship and art, but the political stage of Norwegian nationalism was yet to come. This suited the clergy, who tended not to sympathize with “radical” political views.⁵⁰ Vicars of the established church were trained at universities (rather than seminaries) where they were exposed to conservative impulses. In the 1860s almost half of all theological candidates at Norway's only university in Christiania were the sons of civil servants, traditionally the most privileged class.⁵¹ Upon being ordained, vicars became notables in most communities and sometimes even socialized with royalty.⁵² And there was another impediment to political nationalism for the clergy in London: they required assistance from the Swedish-dominated legation of the union, a dependence which acted as a brake on any Norwegian aspirations.

The new church finds its feet

The new seaman's parson was Morten Kierulf (1841-1918). He was a schoolmaster in Drammen when he was appointed to the position. He had only very recently completed his theological studies.⁵³ He was destined to serve for five years, leaving London in 1878.⁵⁴ During his tenure and

49 J. A. Seip, *Utsikt over Norges historie I* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1974), 68.

50 The Lutheran doctrine of society valued the maintenance of political order and hierarchy. Ø. Sørensen and B. Stråth, “Introduction: The Cultural Construction of Norden,” in Ø. Sørensen and B. Stråth (eds.), *The Cultural Construction of Norden* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1997): 10.

51 D. Mannsåker, *Det norske presteskapet i det 19. hundreåret. Sosialhistoriske studier* (Oslo: Det norske samlaget, 1954), 198.

52 Anders Grøndahl, then seaman's parson in London, conversed with Scandinavian royalty when attending the wedding of Prince Oscar, the second son of Oscar II, in Bournemouth in 1888. *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 8, August 1888, 146.

53 *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 11 November 1872, 179.

54 *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 5, May 1878, 85.

that of his successor Sven Holst Jensen (1846-1908), who served from 1878 to 1881, the church perfected the *modus operandi* which Storjohann had pioneered.⁵⁵ The Sunday services were the main weekly event, sick visits continued to be important and the reading rooms within the Ebenezer Church became a valued feature. They formed an important connection with the home country for the seamen and exemplified the club-like atmosphere which was to prevail in the church. During the week Bible readings, talks and pastoral care of seamen took place there. Later, in 1897, an additional reading room was opened in Regents Canal Dock, Stepney on the north side of the Thames, which had begun welcoming more Norwegian ships than Rotherhithe.⁵⁶

By 1868 the Evangelical Society had set up five Norwegian churches abroad, four of which were in Britain.⁵⁷ The model for what the mission should be was probably British in inspiration, as indicated by this description of the activities of the British and Foreign Sailors' Society, a merger between the aforementioned Port of London Society and the Bethel Union.⁵⁸

“There is, besides the church, a reading room with a good library, containing magazines, journals, marine charts and other things which may enlighten, tuition in writing, arithmetic, mathematics and navigation is available; there is a savings bank, in which sailors may deposit money and receive interest; there is a bookshop, where one may buy books and other things connected with seafaring; there is a café, where one may eat for very little, etc.”⁵⁹

This went beyond what the Norwegian Seamen's Church could offer before 1905, although looking after sailors' money became a feature towards the middle of the period. The first mention of transferring sailors' money to Norway occurs in 1885.⁶⁰ According to the sociologist Max Weber,

⁵⁵ Jensen belonged to a seafaring family and, like his predecessor, had only recently been ordained. *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 2 February 1873, 32.

⁵⁶ *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, Nos. 13-14, July 1897, 199-200.

⁵⁷ *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 6, June 1872, 93.

⁵⁸ Around 1870 traditional Norwegian scepticism about British Christianity abated. O. Uglem, *Norsk Misjonshistorie* (Oslo: Lunde forlag, 1979), 154.

⁵⁹ *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, Nos. 3-4, March- April 1868, 27.

⁶⁰ *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 3, March 1885, 39.

Christianity can be conducive to business between private individuals because belief in it acts as a guarantee that neither party will deceive the other.⁶¹ A service which earlier became part of the church's functions was tracing lost seamen. For this it relied on its network of other missions. By 1876 formal announcements of missing persons were circulated to the parsons of the stations abroad.⁶² Another staple of the church's life, Christmas presents for the seamen, was instituted in 1879, when a small number of gifts were received from individual women and societies in various parts of Norway.⁶³ Two years later there were so many that some were distributed to the seamen's church in Cardiff.⁶⁴ Since the recipients must have appreciated these gifts, it provided a means of communication between them and some of the donors. The church believed that most of the sailors enjoyed writing to acknowledge the present and giving some details of their lives.⁶⁵

A recurring theme which emerged in the 1870s and which from then on required considerable efforts was the district of ill repute Ratcliff Highway. It was a major thoroughfare in East London between The Tower and Limehouse. Close to the docks and containing accommodation for sailors as well as bars, restaurants and entertainment, these establishments allegedly lured the weak-willed to part with their hard-earned wages. In common with British evangelical churches at the time, the Norwegian Seamen's Church deplored that working-class people took to drink, which clouded the spiritual faculties and, it was believed, caused poverty.⁶⁶

61 M. Weber, "The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism," in H.H. Gerth and C. W. Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (London: Routledge, 2009): 302-322, 303-304.

62 *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 4, April 1876, 65.

63 *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 4, April 1879, 59.

64 I. T. Aarseth and C. Bruun, *Den norske Sjømandsmission i Bristolkanalens Havne 1866-1916* (Cardiff: South Wales Printing and Publishing Company, n.d.), 12.

65 *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 2, February 1893, 37.

66 D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain. A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 113.

The London City Mission also found Highway a difficult area in which to work.⁶⁷

Though the area presented huge challenges, the church disapproved of another Scandinavian mission which took root there. Its preacher was Miss Agnes Hedenström (1844-1928), a young Swedish lady initially operating from the mission house “Strangers’ Rest”.⁶⁸ She was regularly granted the use of the reading room of the Ulrica Eleonora Church, which the Norwegians felt nullified their own efforts.⁶⁹ They claimed that she did not succeed in improving her flock, exemplified by worshippers at one of her matinées being found dead drunk in Highway the next day.⁷⁰ Because they did not see eye to eye, there had been attempts to reason with her from the Norwegian Seamen's Church, though without success.⁷¹ Although missionaries did not have to be ordained, it was sceptical about her theological understanding and also objected in general to a woman preaching.

However, with the exception of priestly functions, the Norwegian Seamen's Church welcomed the contribution of women to its ranks. A group for women was set up in the autumn of 1885.⁷² It would evolve into an important facet of the church. It raised money through tea parties, bazaars and from its members. The first bazaar was incorporated into a party for seamen held on 27 and 28 October 1886 and raised 420 kroner (£ 23 2s) for the church.⁷³ As early as 1889, the church declared that its good economic position was “largely due to our women's group” and that loans or extra fundraising would otherwise have been required.⁷⁴ Since the women were residents of London

⁶⁷ I. Howat and J. Nicholls, *Streets Paved with Gold. The Story of the London City Mission* (Fearn and London: Christian Focus and London City Mission, 2003), 71-72.

⁶⁸ J. Lindskog, *Agnes Welin och hennes livsverk* (Stockholm: Svenska kyrkans diakonistyrelse, 1930), 18, 20.

⁶⁹ *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 6, June 1878, 100.

⁷⁰ *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 4, April 1880, 57.

⁷¹ *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 11, November 1879, 175.

⁷² *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 9, September 1886, 145.

⁷³ *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 2, February 1887, 22.

⁷⁴ *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 3, March 1889, 61.

and not peripatetic like the sailors, it also means that the church was becoming more residential at this time. It was also increasingly Norwegian rather than Scandinavian. This was partly a result of the Finnish Mission to Seamen extending its reach from Grimsby and Hull to London in 1883.⁷⁵ Its emissary took care of the many Finnish sailors in London, relieving the Norwegian parson, who did not always have a language in common with them, of this task.⁷⁶ Later that year, another Finnish missionary was reported as taking care of the Finns and also the majority of the Swedes.⁷⁷ This freed up time for the Norwegian parson to visit compatriots in the hospital daily. The church was still officially for Scandinavian seamen, but Michael Barnes has interpreted these trends as meaning that Norwegian expatriates were becoming more vital to the church.⁷⁸ In 1883, for instance, it was reported that the flagpole by the church flew the Norwegian flag, rather than the Bethel flag signifying a seamen's mission.⁷⁹ The postal address of the church also stated that it was Norwegian.

In reality, there was no single point at which expatriates were welcomed into the fold. Ministerial functions were always both for seamen and residents, though each had their own niche in the type of rites performed. In the period 1868-1886 few London residents got married in the Norwegian Seamen's Church, but baptisms and confirmations were overwhelmingly for their children. Because being a sailor was prone to many hazards, burials were divided more evenly between expatriates and those who met their end in London without living there. In order to show that the church at all times ministered to Norwegian residents of London, an analysis of baptisms performed is here appended.

Table 1. Baptisms taking place in the Norwegian Seamen's Church 1869-1887

⁷⁵ *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 4, April 1883, 56; *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 1, January 1882, 15.

⁷⁶ *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 5, May 1882, 71.

⁷⁷ *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 8, August 1883, 126

⁷⁸ M. Barnes, "A Short History of the Norwegian Church in London," in L. Frivold (ed.), *Vår arv. Streif fra norsk kirke- og kulturhistorie i London* (London: Norwegian Seamen's Mission, 1967):179-196, 184.

⁷⁹ *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 6, June 1883, 82, 84.

Year	Resident in London	Resident in Norway
1869	0	3
1870	3	0
1871	0	0
1872	3	0
1873	1	0
1874	2	0
1875	1	0
1876	2	0
1877	1	0
1878	4	0
1879	0	0
1880	4	0
1881	3	0
1882	3	1
1883	4	1
1884	0	0
1885	3	0
1886	3	1
1887	2	1

(Source: Ministerial Book of the Norwegian Seamen's Mission in London 1868-1887, A-5281, pp. 5-13, Archives of the Norwegian State, Bergen.)

In the above table, the children of church staff are excluded since those baptisms were not cases of the church ministering to expatriates.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, the tendency is clear: from 1870, two years before the church building was completed, the seamen's mission was also a place of worship for Norwegian residents of London. This may not have been patent before the late 1880s, and it is understandable that the church did not draw attention to it since it contradicted the terms under which it had been set up.

Major political changes at home

The greater concentration on Norwegian, as opposed to Scandinavian, affairs in the Seamen's Church in the 1880s coincided with a challenge to the *status quo* in the homeland. Elections, which traditionally had been fought on the basis of personalities and occupational status rather than ideology, were becoming more meaningful. In 1882 it was clear to the voters that supporting candidates described as Liberal would result in changes to the political system. Participation rose to 72 per cent from 48.6 per cent three years before.⁸¹ After enough Liberal parliamentarians were elected to force the impeachment of the ministry of Christian August Selmer in 1883, parliamentary sovereignty was introduced the next year. This had consequences for the union with Sweden as it took control of the Norwegian government away from the king in Stockholm, who until then had been able to appoint men of his own liking. Johan Sverdrup's new government taking office in 1884 was the first to depend on parliament for its mandate.

These were momentous events: Oscar II, who had succeeded to the throne the year after he laid the foundation stone of the Norwegian Seamen's Church in 1871, contemplated a *coup d'etat* in Norway. Since the plans did not come to fruition, the Norwegian Church was still relatively

⁸⁰ There was a single case of residency in neither London nor Norway: Karl Vitander of Finland was baptised in 1874.

⁸¹ R. Danielsen, *Det norske Storting gjennom 150 år* II (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1964), 63.

unaffected by the trend towards democracy. Its reasoning was partly theological since Paul's letter to the Romans (chapter 13) ordered Christians to support whoever held temporal power.⁸² Through their work the clergy were guarantors of royal ascendancy, tasked with securing divine assistance for the monarchy. These considerations had manifested themselves in the rather harshly worded proclamation "To the friends of Christianity in our country", published in the conservative daily newspaper *Morgenbladet* on 28 January 1883. Its author was Gisle Johnson (1822-1894), professor of theology at the University of Christiania and head of the domestic mission.

The proclamation argued that the increase in political radicalism and the growth of faithlessness were two sides of the same coin.⁸³ Radicalism had a demoralizing effect on the people and injured truth and justice. All the Norwegian bishops, four university teachers, more than 70 members of the clergy and many laymen who were respected in their communities had signed. "To the friends of Christianity in our country" was representative of the views of the leading clergy and urban centres in the east of the country, which tended to vote for conservative parliamentarians. But although taking Christianity for itself, the proclamation in fact bifurcated the religious community in Norway. The west of the country was hardly less religious and nevertheless was inclined to support liberal candidates in elections. Both Storjohann and the former seaman's parson in Cardiff, Lars Oftedal, subscribed to Johnson's revivalist theology.⁸⁴ Even so, Storjohann signed the proclamation, whereas Oftedal had been elected to parliament in 1882 and voted to impeach the Selmer ministry.⁸⁵

82 D. Thorkildsen, "Da den norske kirke ble nasjonal," *Nytt Norsk Tidsskrift* 22, no. 4 (2005): 406-417, 408.

83 Thorkildsen, "Da den norske kirke," 409.

84 B. Furre, *Soga om Lars Oftedal I* (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 1990), 61, 82.

85 See *Til Christendommens Venner i vort Land* (Christiania, 1883), 15. F. Bætzmann (ed.), *Rigsrets-Efterretninger. I. De sex første Rigsretssager, Forhandlinger om Rigsret 1814-60, Rigsretssagen mod Ministeriet Selmer, Rigsrettens Sammensætning og Virkemaade* (Christiania, 1883), 52.

It is therefore not possible to second-guess the political views of the clergy in the foreign city of London. Apart from benefiting from the financial support of the Swedish-Norwegian legation, the Norwegian Seamen's Church occasionally welcomed Swedish royals, which helped to enhance its standing in the community. However, it had never accepted a totally subservient role to the Ulrica Eleonora Church as the official church of Sweden-Norway. A more Norwegian atmosphere pervaded in the Ebenezer Church than in Ulrica Eleonora, which after all had been a Swedish church for eight decades before the Norwegians joined the union in 1814. Due to its Norwegian ambience, liturgy and members of staff, Ebenezer provided Norwegian sailors with a better home from home than Ulrica Eleonora possibly could.⁸⁶ The difficulty for the Swedes was that those same reasons made the Seamen's Church more appealing also to Norwegian *residents*.

In the next decade that would lead to some conflict, but another “turf war” was coming to an end. The quarrel with Agnes Hedenström, the Swedish lay preacher, was healed in 1887 or 1888 while Anders Grøndahl (1849-1927) was the seaman's parson.⁸⁷ We see this indirectly through a February 1888 notice in the Evangelical Society's journal which mentioned her “Scandinavian Temperance Home” as one of its recommended hostels for seamen in Highway.⁸⁸ In 1888 the Norwegian Seamen's Church declared that the interest shown by expatriates both in its activities and in contributing financially was growing.⁸⁹ In 1890 there was a surprising rise in visits to the church and reading rooms.⁹⁰ This may well have been due to residents as after 1884 it had been

⁸⁶ A politico-administrative unit such as Sweden-Norway cannot easily create attachments in the same way as a nation. B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 53.

⁸⁷ J. Smidt, “Fotefar,” in Frivold (ed.), *Vår arv*: 54, 49. A former teacher, Grøndahl held the position 1881-1894, before becoming vicar of Østre Slidre in the district of Valdres.

⁸⁸ *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 2, February 1888, 28.

⁸⁹ *Beretning og Regnskab for Aaret 1887-1888, vedkommende “Foreningen til Evangeliets Forkyndelse for Skandinaviske Sømænd i fremmede Havne”* (Bergen, 1888), 46.

⁹⁰ *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 4, April 1890, 72.

claimed that Norwegian ships were now dispersed over a wider area, making the sailors' task of finding the church more difficult.⁹¹ There was no actual reduction in the number of sailors arriving in London on Norwegian and Swedish ships, with a total of 16, 120 in 1886 against 15, 240 in 1885 and 15, 530 in 1884.⁹² The proportion of Norwegians remained steady at about 70 per cent of these.

Conflict in the union— and in London

The Swedish Seamen's Mission celebrated its 25-year anniversary in 1894 and Storjohann was lauded in that country's *Missjonstidningen* for his role in starting it up.⁹³ Even so, *Missjonstidningen* pointed out that the mission to seamen in Sweden was receiving paltry conditions compared to other forms of evangelism.⁹⁴ A Swedish Seamen's Church was not established in London until 1905, far later than those of the other Nordic nationalities.⁹⁵ However, only the Swedes had a functioning regular church in London throughout this period. The Norwegian Seamen's Church continued to believe in Nordic cooperation in its missionary efforts. But at this time of rising turbulence within the union, it could not completely divorce itself from what was going on at home. The starting gun for a more assertive Norwegian policy vis-à-vis Sweden had been fired by the Liberals' conference in 1891. In 1892 Parliament voted to establish separate Norwegian consulates abroad and a few months later granted funds for this purpose.⁹⁶ The king refused to sanction the law, which Parliament again passed the next year. In 1893 it also demanded that the union insignia be removed

91 Ursin, "London stasjon," in Vilhelmsen (ed.), *Den norske sjømannsmisjon*, 112; Beretning og Regnskab for Aaret 1887-88, p. 46.

92 *Berening til den 9de Generalforsamling "Foreningen til Evangeliets Forkyndelse for Skandinaviske Sømænd i fremmede Havne" om Foreningens Stilling og Virksomhed i Treaaret 1884-86* (Bergen, 1887), 70. Some of these will have been repeated visits.

93 *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 2, 31 January 1895, 25.

94 *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, Nos. 23- 24, December 1894, 359.

95 Evander and. Sjöström, 232.

96 G. Hagemann, *Det moderne gjennombrudd 1870-1905. Aschehougs Norgeshistorie IX* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1997), 209, 211, 212.

from the Norwegian merchant flag, provoking another royal veto.

Against this background of strife, the Norwegian Seamen's Church occasionally also asserted itself. At the beginning of the 1890s the question of the annual contribution of £ 100 which the Norwegian parliament from 1824 annually had voted to the Ulrica Eleonora Church, arose as a matter of debate. Anders Grøndahl had in 1886 suggested that half of this sum should be set aside for seamen in need and be administered by his church.⁹⁷ This was accepted in 1891 by the Swedish-Norwegian legation, but in 1894 the new Norwegian seaman's parson, Gustav Barman (1853-1938), ended the arrangement.⁹⁸ He returned the £ 12 6s received from the Ulrica Eleonora Church when its Swedish minister asked for a breakdown of how the money had been spent.⁹⁹ Barman objected to the implicit superiority of the Ulrica Eleonora Church over his own mission. He made it clear that no further contributions would be accepted. For the next four years the Norwegian Seamen's Church therefore received no funds from its national parliament. On 11 July 1898, however, Parliament decided that the entire £ 100 which it contributed should go directly to that church.¹⁰⁰ This was in the context of ever increasing nationalism, which also led Parliament to vote for a purely Norwegian merchant flag for the third time that year.¹⁰¹ Even the clergy of a church devoted to the wellbeing of Scandinavian sailors were not immune to this rising national feeling.

The ban on the Seamen's Church becoming a Norwegian congregation was unenforceable and had been breached from the beginning. The church stated in the 1880s that it conducted

⁹⁷ Smidt, "Fotefar," in Frivold (ed.), *Vår arv*, 62.

⁹⁸ Barman had only recently been ordained when he became the seaman's parson in Quebec-Pensacola in 1888. After returning to Norway in 1904, he represented the Liberals in Parliament 1913-1918. *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 8, August 1888, 148.

⁹⁹ London, Norwegian Seamen's Church, Volume marked "Kaldsbog for Den norske Sømandsmissions Station i London", p. 5.

¹⁰⁰ Smidt, "Fotefar," in Frivold (ed.), *Vår arv*, 62-63.

¹⁰¹ Hagemann, 212.

baptisms, confirmations, marriages and interments, without mentioning that many of these were not for seamen.¹⁰² By the end of 1886 the church had conducted a total of 27 marriages, including four in which the groom was ordinarily resident in London.¹⁰³ In order for such marriages to be valid in English law, the groom needed to apply for an individual licence or certificate from the Registrar-General.¹⁰⁴ Desiring its own licence, in the 1890s the church was willing to admit that it was in fact a congregation. Nevertheless, it proceeded with more caution on this issue than over the subsidy from its parliament.

Upon making contact with the Registrar-General, the church learned that twenty regular worshippers with a local address would suffice to sign the application for a general wedding licence.¹⁰⁵ Thus the British authorities did not present it with any impediments. The Ulrica Eleonora Church, however, was witnessing exactly the development it had originally sought to prevent. If the Seamen's Church was registered with a residential congregation, it was *de facto* the Norwegian church in London. Although its wish violated the terms under which it had been established, the Seamen's church chose to put its case to the Swedish-Norwegian minister in London, Count Carl Lewenhaupt (1835-1906). As foreign minister of the union 1889-1895, he had been conciliatory towards Norway. The church signalled its willingness to withdraw the claim if it was perceived as harming the interests of the Ulrica Eleonora Church. Lewenhaupt discussed the matter with the Swedish Church Council and persuaded it to allow the Norwegians some leeway. The marriage licence was granted in 1896.

¹⁰² *Beretning til den 7de Generalforsamling "Foreningen til Evangeliets Forkyndelse for Skandinaviske Sømænd i fremmede Havne" om Foreningens Stilling og Virksomhed i Treaaret 1878-80* (Bergen, 1881), 61; *Beretning og Regnskab for Aaret 1887-1888*, p. 46.

¹⁰³ They were Shipmaster Doxrud in 1880, August Tofte in 1881, Quartermaster Olsen in 1883 and Engineer Eide in 1885. Ministerial Book of the Norwegian Seaman's Mission in London 1868-1887, A-5281, pp. 51-55, Archives of the Norwegian State, Bergen.

¹⁰⁴ A full explanation is given in *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 9, September 1883, 146-147.

¹⁰⁵ London, Norwegian Seamen's Church, Volume marked "Kaldsbog", p. 4.

Nationalist feelings usually remained below the surface and there were obvious limits to how far the clergy could go. A poem published in the journal of the Evangelical Society in 1898 heartily concluded “Long live King Oscar!”¹⁰⁶ There was no mention of the dramatic political events in the homeland, which in 1895 had even brought Sweden and Norway to the brink of war. Barman, who had rejected what he regarded as subjection to the Ulrica Eleonora Church, gave a warm welcome to Oscar II when the latter visited the church for the Sunday service on 13 May 1900. In his sermon, purportedly speaking on behalf of the seamen, the parson said that it was a special privilege for them, whom circumstances alone necessitated a life outside the homeland, to worship in a foreign country in the presence of the father of the nation.¹⁰⁷ Just at the moment when Barman announced they were beseeching the Lord to bless and preserve His Majesty and the royal family, six hundred voices began singing “God save the King”, which is in use also in Norway specifically to honour the royals.¹⁰⁸ He later wrote that he had never heard such a gripping evocation and the king was moved to tears. Yet a mere five years later, Oscar II had been deposed as Norwegian monarch through that nation's unilateral withdrawal from the union.

The first stirrings of nationalism seen in the context of the Evangelical Society were the lyrics for a song entitled “Parliament and People” printed in its journal in 1900.¹⁰⁹ Parliament was the most vital symbol of Norwegian statehood because it had defended the rights of Norwegians since 1814, when it had unwillingly ratified the union with Sweden. That was the result of military defeat in the short war of July and August 1814. In 1880 it had finally succeeded in making it legal for government ministers to attend its sessions, a stepping stone towards making them accountable

¹⁰⁶ *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, Nos. 1-2, January 1898, 8.

¹⁰⁷ *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 10, 31 May 1900, 158.

¹⁰⁸ *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 10, 31 May 1900, 159.

¹⁰⁹ This tallies with Thorkildsen’s assertion that the dominant Christian movement of revivalism began to show some nationalist traits around the turn of the century. D. Thorkildsen, “Religious Identity and Nordic Identity,” in Sørensen and Stråth (eds.), *The Cultural Construction*: 155.

to itself, which was completed in 1884. However, the song promoted only moderate nationalism.¹¹⁰ Claiming in 1900, as it did, that God allowed Norwegians to rule their own country celebrated Parliament's achievements in this regard, while ignoring that progress had been slow and painful. Probably the position of the leading lights in the Evangelical Society was that it supported this moderate nationalism, while remaining loyal to the king in Stockholm. All who were ordained, as civil servants, were duty bound to obey the king. The seamen themselves were freer to take a principled stand supporting all of their country's demands. Axel Welin, the husband of the preacher Agnes Hedenström, claimed in 1906 that the quarrels within the union after 1893 had made his work as the manager of a home for Scandinavian seamen “almost unbearable.”¹¹¹

Norway becomes independent

When independence came in 1905, ultimately due to the conflict over a separate Norwegian consular service and the king's inability to appoint a government acceptable to Parliament, it occurred suddenly. The national government of Christian Michelsen unilaterally declared on 7 June that the union had come to an end. The next Sunday, which happened to be Pentecost, was turned into a day of celebration in Norwegian churches at home and abroad. It was only at this late stage that the Norwegian Church joined the bandwagon of nationalism. The reality of independence having been declared awakened greater belief in the nation and latent feelings of self-sufficiency. In 1814 most Norwegians who held an opinion had wanted to be a separate and independent nation. Lack of great power support and the proven might of Sweden had put an end to the dream. In the decades that followed, Norwegians got on with the tasks in hand, consoling themselves with the thought that they enjoyed considerable national autonomy. Ambitious men saw opportunities to advance their own prospects through interaction with the Swedish power holders.¹¹² For the clergy,

¹¹⁰ *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 18, 30 September 1900, 261.

¹¹¹ R. Hemstad, *Fra Indian Summer til nordisk vinter. Skandinavisk samarbeid, skandinavisme og unionsoppløsningen* (Oslo: Akademika, 2008), 356.

¹¹² Including even Christian Magnus Falsen, the “father of the Norwegian constitution”. See Seip, *Utsikt over Norges I,*

there was not much scope for a contrary opinion. The Norwegian Seamen's Church in London had replicated the attitude of the Norwegian Church in general.

The fact that the Norwegian church in the British capital had originally been set up as a mission for *Scandinavian* sailors was no hindrance to its taking part in the national day of celebration.¹¹³ By 1905 it was in any case understood that the Norwegian Seamen's Church cared primarily for its own compatriots. "The parson here is only mindful of his own nation," as the Evangelical Society put it.¹¹⁴ The political mobilization inherent in the Whit Sunday services included the reading of the government proclamation that Norway was now an independent state, the singing of the national anthem and the patriotic hymn "God bless our precious homeland", as well as prayers for the government and nation.¹¹⁵

After Norwegian independence had been declared, though it might still need to be defended by arms, the mood among the clergy swiftly turned away from supporting the union. In October 1905 what was to have been the first Swedish-Norwegian conference of vicars was cancelled when the Norwegian delegates refused to travel to Stockholm.¹¹⁶ When the government announced that there would be a referendum to confirm independence on Sunday 13 August, in many cases churches were to be used as polling stations.¹¹⁷ Churches were also utilized by the government to mobilize support for the national cause. No church or lay Christian organization were unwilling to take part in such efforts. Although enhanced rights for Norway within the union had originally been

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¹¹³ *Beretning og Regnskab for Aaret 1905-06 vedkommende "Foreningen til Evangeliets Forkyndelse for skandinaviske Sjømænd i fremmede Havne"* (Bergen, 1906), 94.

¹¹⁴ *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, Nos. 13-14, July 1905, 209.

¹¹⁵ D. Thorkildsen, "Kirken og 1905," in Ø. Sørensen and T. Nilsson (eds.), *1905— Nye perspektiver* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 2005), 165-185, 168.

¹¹⁶ Hemstad, 324.

¹¹⁷ Thorkildsen, "Kirken og 1905," 175

a Liberal rallying cry, the Conservatives had by now come aboard.¹¹⁸ The majority for independence was overwhelming— 368, 208 votes against 184.

On 10 December 1905 the Norwegian Seamen's Church held a special service of thanksgiving for Norway's new-found independence. Most churches had slotted the service for 7 December, a Thursday, but it was found unsuitable in London, probably because the expatriates needed to travel longer distances across the metropolis.¹¹⁹ By this time, it was certain that there would be no war with Sweden and another referendum had confirmed by 259, 563 votes to 69, 264 that Norway would be a monarchy with Prince Carl of Denmark as its king (who duly became Haakon VII). The text of the sermon preached by the new parson, Henrik Horneman (1859-1944), focused on the miraculous events of 1905, which had overturned a situation whereby the Norwegians for five centuries had been forced to share a head of state with Denmark and then Sweden.¹²⁰ He felt the country had never entirely lost its status as a kingdom, but, especially abroad, had been seen as a mere province. Perhaps surprisingly for such a red-letter day, Horneman blamed the Norwegians themselves for this outcome: they had not felt themselves to be a single people.¹²¹ But he gave praise to God for restoring Norway's independence and quoted psalm 118: this is the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our eyes. In the same way Providence had been at work through the Constitutional Assembly at Eidsvoll in 1814.¹²² There was some logic to this position, since both the re-emergence of Norway as a state in 1814 and independence in 1905 had happened suddenly and unexpectedly. While there had been more than a decade of agitation for greater rights for the Norwegian nation, few could have foreseen that it would lead to the break-up

¹¹⁸ The Conservatives represented the elite, who “had an incomplete sense of national identity.” A. D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1983), xii.

¹¹⁹ *Beretning og Regnskab for Aaret 1905-06*, 93-94.

¹²⁰ Horneman had previously served as seaman's parson in Cardiff. Before that he had been a missionary in Trondheim and an assistant vicar in Nøtterø, Vestfold county. *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, No. 2, 31 January 1895, 32.

¹²¹ *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, Nos. 1-2, January 1906, 3.

¹²² *Bud og Hilsen, Tidende*, Nos. 1-2, January 1906, 5.

of the union.

Dag Thorkildsen, using the work of Anthony Smith and John Hutchinson, has observed that the Biblical account of the Israelites could be mapped onto the history of the Norwegian nation too.¹²³ Both started with a migration story: Norwegians had journeyed from north-eastern Scandinavia, in a similar way to Israel's wandering in the desert. Equivalent to the Israelites conquering the promised land, the Norwegian founding myth involved an era of greater power during the Viking raids and the unification of the country. From this emerged a golden age of splendour, in Norway the Middle Ages with Christianization, peace and prosperity, matching the reigns of the kings David and Solomon in the Near East.¹²⁴ This was followed by a period of inner decay: the Union of Kalmar (1397) which led to Danish suzerainty and the loss of Norway's independence, as paralleled to some extent by the absorption of Judah into the Babylonian empire and the Babylonian captivity. Finally, there was a promise of regeneration: the adoption of the constitution in the case of Norway or God's promises in the book of Isaiah of a new future which led to hope being restored. The metaphor used by Horneman was how the seasons changed, winter being succeeded by spring and then summer, but the account was still of how God was working wonders in their lifetime.

Conclusion

What began in 1865 with an explicitly Scandinavian objective of reaching out to sailors from all the Nordic countries, gradually transformed itself into an unequivocally Norwegian church. At its inception the seamen's mission had ignored the stricture not to hold services at the same time as the Ulrica Eleonora Church. It had quietly allowed itself to be a place where the Norwegian residents of London could celebrate life's transitions, especially new additions to the family. By 1883 it had

¹²³ D. Thorkildsen, "Nasjon, nasjonalisme og religion— tre sentrale problemstillinger innen nasjonalismeforskningen," *Norsk teologisk tidsskrift* 107, no. 4 (2006): 199-210, 207.

¹²⁴ Thorkildsen, "Nasjon, nasjonalisme og religion", 208.

begun flying the Norwegian flag and self-consciously calling itself the Norwegian church, rather than its official title of a mission to Scandinavian seamen. In 1885 a women's group was established, making it obvious that the church was no longer exclusively for seamen. The next year it demanded half of the annual grant of the Ulrica Eleonora Church from the Norwegian parliament for itself, which eventually was conceded in 1891. In 1894 the seaman's parson Gustav Barman ended this arrangement in a pique about not wanting to render an account to the Swedes and in 1898 Parliament voted the entire sum to the Norwegian Seamen's Church. In the 1890s it took its case for becoming a venue for weddings recognized in English law to the Swedish-Norwegian legation, securing this right in 1896.

The Norwegian Seamen's Church thus showed some assertiveness in its dealings with the Swedish authorities in London, in parallel to its country's demands for greater recognition and rights within the union. Nevertheless, the policy of most seaman's parsons was to concentrate on their daily work and leave politics to others. Their kingdom, after all, was not of this world. Continual efforts among all Scandinavian seamen and prevalent cooperation with other Nordic missions also fostered a sense of unity beyond the nation. The church needed support for its activities from the Swedish-dominated legation, which acted as a brake on any nationalist aspirations. King Oscar II had been a constant in the life of the church since he had laid its foundation stone in 1871. Loyalty to him and his family, reinforced by the clergy having sworn allegiance to the monarch, made it unthinkable to deprive him of one of his kingdoms. Only when this in fact had occurred through independence having been declared in 1905, did the Seamen's Church, in common with the Norwegian Church as a whole, become an open supporter of Norwegian nationhood.