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Tórður Jóansson

Brethren in the Faeroes

**An Evangelical movement, its remarkable growth and
lasting impact in a remote island community**

**A thesis presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the
University of Glasgow by Tórður Jóansson, MA (University of
Glasgow), Exam.Art. (Faeroe Academy), PhD (University of Aberdeen),
BD (University of Glasgow)**

Submitted in January 2012

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UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

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UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

Faculty of Arts

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Brethren in the Faeroes



An Evangelical movement, its remarkable growth and lasting impact in a remote island community

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Januar 2012

*Dedicated to those
who dared break away*

Foreword and acknowledgements

This work has made me realise that the subject is far more interesting and challenging than anticipated. The Brethren in the Faeroe Islands have demonstrated that a globally insignificant evangelical movement can take root in a small, isolated community with considerable success. This book covers most aspects of a society which the Open Brethren penetrated and, in turn, influenced through the most significant stage in the islands' history: the revolutionary changes that new socio-economic conditions, secularisation and modernisation brought about.

The starting point of the research was a feeling of embarrassment of knowing very little about the Brethren, a feeling almost certainly shared by many Faeroe Islanders and others. Prejudice and bigotry is usually based on ignorance; and for decades I have encountered such negative attitudes towards the Faeroese Brethren, and I wanted to present a more scholarly presentation and discussion about the movement. Hopefully this book may help non-Brethren as well as Brethren themselves understand the socio-economic, cultural, historical and theological backgrounds of the movement.

Having completed my BD-degree at the University of Glasgow in 2004, I had considered applying for a grant from the Faeroese Research Council for some time; in the autumn of 2006 an application was sent, and at Christmas the same year I learned that they wanted this work done. After some administrative hurdles the work commenced in April 2007 and the same summer I made my first field trip to Iceland and the Faeroes. After that I participated at the BAHN-conference in Liverpool which was very stimulating; there I also established contact with the archivist of the Christian Brethren Archive at the John Ryland University Library of Manchester, Dr Graham Johnson, and

the convenor of the Brethren Archivists and Historians Network, Dr Neil Dickson, author of the splendid and scholarly book *Brethren in Scotland 1838-2000*. Later I have shamelessly exploited his kindness in that he has read and criticised chapter after chapter, made comments and suggestions. Of course my supervisor, Rev Dr Douglas Gay, was able to put me on the right track and, especially in the beginning, deemed much of the material irrelevant and rightly so. Many other people have done me the extraordinary favours of reading single or all chapters and given feedback. Dr. Rodmundur í Liða and Zacharias Zachariassen, evangelist, poet and writer, have read all the chapters – at least once. The Lecturer Árni Dahl and the author Marianna Dahl read chapters on culture and came up with relevant references. At the *Viva*, chaired by Dr David Jasper, my examiners Dr David Bebbington and Dr Heather Walton gave me crucial advice how to improve a final version of this work. I also want to thank my old friend and colleague Hans A. M. Joensen for constant encouragement during the work on this thesis.

The Christian Brethren Archive was visited several times as was the National Library and the National Archive in Tórshavn, the University and Royal Libraries in Copenhagen, Denmark, as well as the Danish Home Mission's Archive in Fredericia. But most materials were available at the Glasgow University Library. I thank the staff at all these institutions warmly for friendly help and advice. Many private Brethren members have enthusiastically provided much material for which I am very grateful. Without this the result would have been considerably poorer. However, all misunderstandings, possible errors and other – maybe unavoidable – flaws are wholly my responsibility.

Gorbals, Glasgow 28th August 2012,

Tórður Jóansson

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Foto and drawings are all by Eli Smith.
Maps produced from my list by Kári við Rættará.



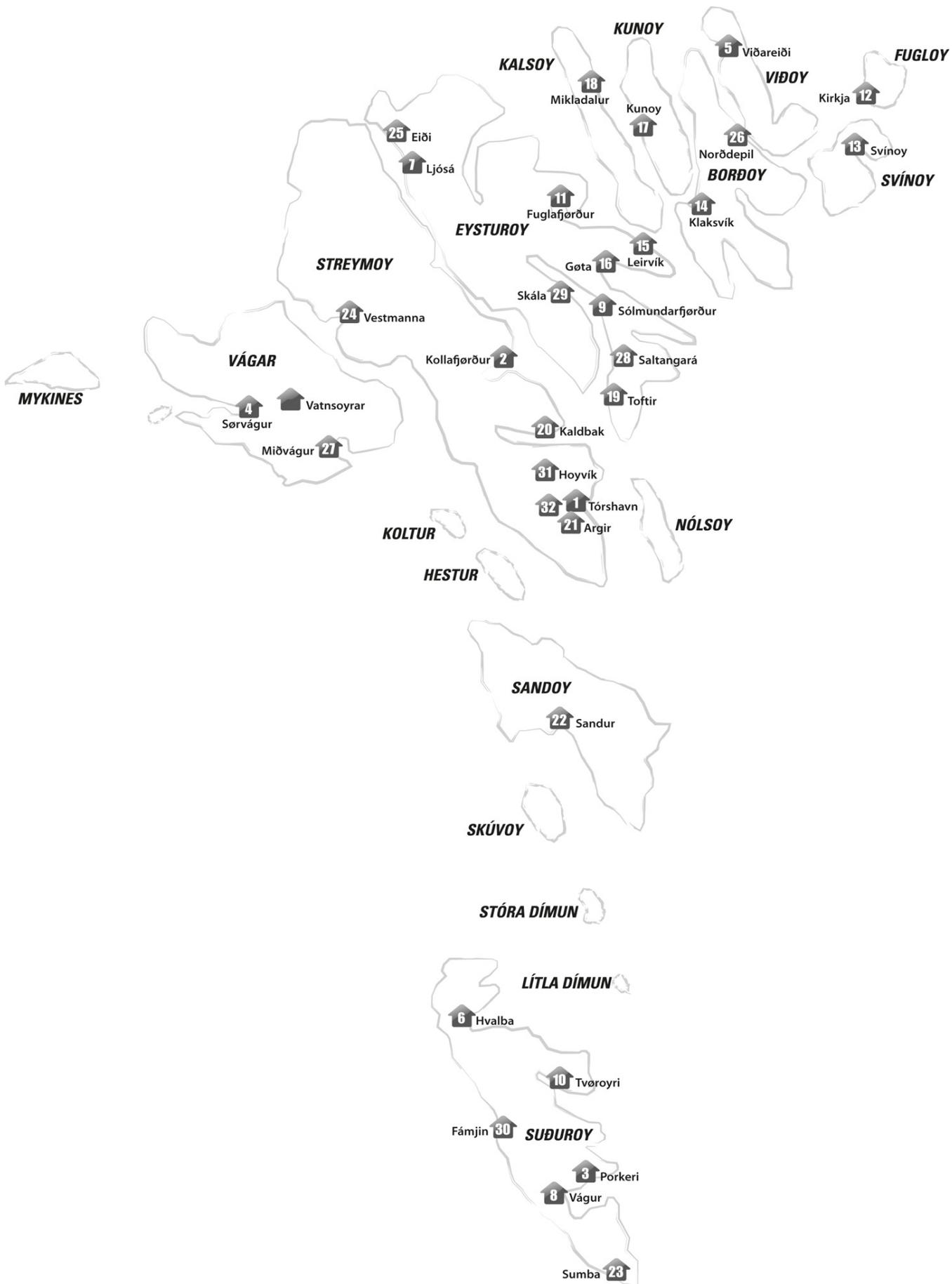
Faeroe Islands and neighbouring countries

Brethren Halls in the Faeroes

The map on the following page shows the geographical distribution of halls in the islands.

Each hall has a number (1-32) in chronological order.

- 1 Tórshavn, Streymoy. ‘Sloan’s Hall’ 1879. *Ebenezer* 1905, prolonged in 1932. Present one built in 1963.
- 2 Kollafjørður, Streymoy. Private home 1895. The hall, *Zion*, 1937.
- 3 Porkeri, Suðuroy. *Betania* 1907. Second hall 1921, new one 1975.
- 4 Sørvágur, Vágoy. *Kedron* 1907. Closed down in 1922; new hall in 1938.
- 5 Viðareiði, Viðoy. *Saron* 1906. New hall in 1910; present one from 1991.
- 6 Hvalba, Suðuroy. *Vitnið* (The Witness), 1914; new hall 1953
- 7 Ljósá, Eysturoy. 1916 private home; hall, *Bet-Kar*, in 1976
- 8 Vágur, Suðuroy. *Bethel* 1920.
- 9 Sólmundarfjørður, Eysturoy. *Elim* 1920; new hall in 1991
- 10 Tvøroyri, Suðuroy. Private home. *Salem* 1921; new hall in 1950
- 11 Fuglafjørður, Eysturoy. *Siloa* 1924; new hall in 1992
- 12 Svínoy, Svínoy. *Smyrna* 1926.
- 13 Kirkja, Fugloy. *Salurin* (The Hall) 1924.
- 14 Klaksvík, Borðoy. *Betesda* 1916; present site 1927, lengthened 1950, rebuilt 1963
- 15 Leirvík, Eysturoy. *Hebron* 1933; new hall in 1967.
- 16 Gøta, Eysturoy. *Filadelfia* 1934; new hall in 1978.
- 17 Kunoy, Kunoy. *Salurin* (The Hall) 1935.
- 18 Mikladalur, Kalsoy. *Malta* 1935.
- 19 Toftir, Eysturoy. *Nebo* 1935; new hall in 2008.
- 20 Kaldbak, Streymoy. Private home 1916; *Nazaret* 1935, new hall in 1989.
- 21 Argir, Streymoy. *Hebron* 1936; new hall in 1992
- 22 Sumba, Suðuroy. *Betania* 1944.
- 23 Sandur, Sandoy. Private home 1944. *Elim* 1962; new hall *Zion* in 2009.
- 24 Vestmanna, Streymoy. *Gideon* 1946.
- 25 Eiði, Eysturoy. *Mizpa* 1948.
- 26 Norðdepli, Borðoy. *Hermon* 1948; new hall in 1993
- 27 Miðvágur, Vágoy. *Salurin* (The Hall) 1957.
- 28 Saltangará, Eysturoy. *Berøa* 1965.
- 29 Skála, Eysturoy. *Nerija* 1979.
- 30 Fámjin, Suðuroy. Private home 1979.
- 31 Hoyvík, Streymoy. *Lívdin* (The Shelter) 2005.
- 32 Tórshavn, Streymoy. Samkoman við Marknagilsvegin (The Assembly at M.) 2004.
 - Vatnsoyrar, Vágoy. *Zarepta* 1967. Leisure and Conference Centre for all assemblies.



Introduction

This thesis is the first comprehensive academic work on the Brethren movement in the Faeroe Islands and is the result of five years' research into the history of the people in the islands, concentrating on cultural and church history relating to the Brethren, linked to the momentous socio-economic and cultural changes that took place, especially since around 1900. In spite of the Faeroes covering just a tiny area and the population being very small, the processes of interaction with other cultures have been similar to those in bigger and more populated countries. The socio-economic, cultural and religious changes have been heavily influenced by those in neighbouring communities, and this thesis aims at uncovering developments in the religious sphere over the past one and a half centuries when a new branch of Christianity, the Brethren movement, penetrated the Faeroese community and left its mark on it. In the National Danish Encyclopaedia, for instance, a short article on the Plymouth Brethren includes this:

“Plymouth Brethren...started...in the 19th century during an apocalyptic revival.... Globally there are only few members; an exception is the Faeroe Islands where their influence is considerable.”¹

The branch of Brethren in the Faeroes is the Open or Independent one, and the above emphasises that in an area within the Kingdom of Denmark the Brethren are quite influential. Around 15% of the population in the islands belong to a Brethren assembly² while in other countries it hardly exceeds 1%. In Scotland there were 30,000 members in 1933, a year of maximum strength and this corresponds to 1.95% of all Protestant church

¹ *Den store danske encyklopædi*, Damarks Nationalleksikon, Vol. 15, Ed. Jørn Lund, Copenhagen 1999, p. 311.

² Formerly called ‘meeting’, then ‘assembly, now often ‘evangelical church’ elsewhere; here ‘assembly’ is used throughout because in the Faeroes they call a Brethren congregation “samkoma”, i.e. ‘assembly’.

members and 0.62% of the population.³ In the US (c. 2000) there were around 98,000 members, i.e. 0.035%.⁴ Brethren figures for Europe in 2010 show 146,878 baptized believers against a population of 661.43 million which is 0.02% of the European population being Brethren.⁵ The figures for the UK are: 40,000 baptized believers in 2010 against a population of 62.13 million, i.e. 0.064%. The same pages incidentally give the Faeroese figure as 7000 baptized believers against a population of 50,000 which is 14%.⁶ Not much research has been done regarding this substantial religious minority in the islands, and this was undoubtedly why the Faeroese Research Council commissioned this work which can be seen as partly a narrative chronicling the Brethren in the Faeroes.

The beginnings, growth and development of a movement can not be seen in isolation and therefore it is crucial to put it into perspective. Consequently the history of the Faeroes, the socio-economic, cultural and ecclesiastical developments will be presented, analysed and discussed. The interdisciplinary approach draws on four main disciplines: Church History, Social and Cultural History, Cultural Studies, and Missiology. In respect of the former two, this thesis presents original research in an under-researched area; in relation to the latter two, it offers a case-study which is used to test the viability and value of Benedict Anderson's theories on nation, nationality and nationalism, presented in his *Imagined Communities – reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*,⁷ and Lamin Sanneh's theories on missiology in his

³ Dickson, N.T.R., *Brethren in Scotland 1838-2000*, Paternoster 2002, p. 376.

⁴ Balmer, R., *Encyclopedia of Evangelicalism*, Westminster John Knox Press 2002, p. 458.

⁵ Newton, K. and Chan A. (eds), *The Brethren Movement Worldwide: Key Information 2011*, 3rd edn, Lockerbie, Dumfries & Galloway: Opal Trust 2011, pp.x-xi.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.xii-xiii.

⁷ Anderson, B, *Imagined Communities*, London 2006 (1983).

*Translating The Message: missionary impact on culture.*⁸ Over the same one and a half centuries of Brethren presence in the Faeroes, the language and national movements emerged and were influenced by the Brethren with their culture of ‘autonomy’, i.e. independence of the established Danish Lutheran church. Brethren were the first to break away from this colonial institution and worship God in the vernacular, they published the first hymnary in Faeroese, and they even published the first Bible translation in the Faeroese language.

Although this research has been conducted in a different geographical area and cultural environment to those studied by Anderson and Sanneh, it is fascinating to see how their theories on language, nationality and missiology to a great extent are applicable to the situation in the Faeroes. While their books are based on experiences in Europe, the Americas and South East Asia (Anderson), and in Africa (Sanneh), this work is based on a minuscule community “on the windy edge of nothing”,⁹ first a Norwegian province, then a Danish colony, and now an autonomous region within the Kingdom of Denmark with its own, particular language and a relatively rich culture.

In order to discuss the influences of the new Christian movement in the islands, it is appropriate to cover new approaches to the history of Faeroe because the historical, economic, social and cultural contexts from the middle of the 19th century to the present day (2011) were decisive for the reception and, later, the consolidation and subsequent remarkable penetration of the Brethren movement. Furthermore, the

⁸ Sanneh, L, *Translating The Message*, Orbis, New York 2005 (1989).

⁹ Linklater, Eric, ‘Foreword’, Williamson, Kenneth, *The Atlantic Islands. A study of the Faeroe Life and Scene*, London 1948, p. 16.

nation-building process, secularisation and later political developments were also of crucial importance for the Brethren who, in turn, contributed significantly in these areas. In fact the growth of the language- and national movements in the islands coincided with the growth and consolidation of the Brethren movement.

Aims

Firstly, the aim of this work was to try and find out and explain why the Brethren in the Faeroes had got such support in the community, indeed by far the greatest number of adherents in proportion to the population anywhere in the world. Open Brethren are still a major force, indeed the most influential one, some would argue, in the religious life in the islands. Soon, however, I realised that the topic was much wider, more interesting and challenging; and having read relevant literature, talked to people and visited archives, it became obvious that there was more than enough material to embark upon a work with broader aims. Third, it felt highly apposite to present an account of the socio-economic, political and cultural history of the islands, emphasising the struggle for the vernacular, the nation-building process, the emerging Faeroese national identity and to examine the prominent role of the Brethren in this work. Finally, I wanted to explore how the internal culture of the Faeroese Brethren has shaped their contributions to economic, political and cultural life in the islands.

Scope and structure

Although the present work is about the Brethren movement,¹⁰ I find it impossible to discuss this phenomenon without references to other areas and disciplines which help explain the reasons for the initial response to the movement and, later, its undisputed successes in the Faeroes. In this introduction I shall explain how and why the thesis has been structured the way it is as well as argue that one of the reasons for embarking upon this work was that the modern socio-economic, political and cultural developments of the Faeroes coincided with the penetration of the Brethren movement. Therefore I would argue that the interaction between the two processes was essential in the nation-building in the islands as well as Brethren growth.

The work has been divided into three parts. The first one, ‘Setting the Scene’, covers chapters 1 and 2. The first chapter describes the history of the islands, the development of the community and the events leading up to the momentous changes which took place around the time when the Brethren movement was introduced in the Faeroes. The history of the people, and arguably its development into the imagined community called a ‘nation’,¹¹ is then discussed up to the beginning of the 21st century. In chapter 2, I give an overview of the social, theological and cultural origins of the Brethren, emphasising the Open Brethren because this was the branch which was introduced in the Faeroes. Open Brethren theology, beliefs, teachings and practices will be discussed.

¹⁰ Made up of autonomous assemblies; the designation ‘movement’ is used rather than ‘church’ or ‘denomination’, because the word ‘kirkja’ (Faeroese for ‘church’) solely refers to the Established Lutheran State Church.

¹¹ Anderson, B, *Imagined communities*, London 2006 (1983), pp. 5-7.

The second part, ‘Narrating the Introduction and Establishment’, chapters 3, 4 and 5, chronicles and gives a narrative of the beginnings and the consolidation of the Brethren movement in the Faeroes. In chapter three, I give give an account of the movement in the islands and an outline of its historical growth and development from 1865 until after World War I. Then I consider some key perspectives from within missiology, not least indigenisation.¹² Chapter four covers the unprecedented growth of the Brethren movement in the islands from the 1920s onwards involving an increasing numbers of halls, new forms of activism and outreach. The fifth chapter presents biographical portraits of the key figures within the Brethren, both British missionaries and, from quite early on, Faeroese Brethren workers.

Part three, ‘Evaluating the legacy’, consists of chapters 6, 7 and 8 as well as the conclusion. In chapter 6, I mainly discuss and analyse socio-economic and political developments in the Faeroes from the Second World War until 2012, and in chapter 7 I turn to the shaping of a modern Faeroese culture. It offers an overview of Faeroese language and culture, especially as these developed from around 1900 to 1965 when the nation building processes went on. Apart from Anderson’s and Sanneh’s theories, the theoretical base also includes Adrian Hastings’ work on the construction of nationhood.¹³ Furthermore I discuss the social and economic factors which proved favourable for the growth of evangelical movements. Especially the 1920s, 1930s and 1940/50s saw major changes in these areas; and this was when Brethren gained ground and firmly established themselves. Here the theories of two

¹² Gailyn Van Rheezen, *Missions: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Strategie*; Martin Kähler, *Schriften zur Christologie und Mission*; Andrew Kirk, *Mission of Theology and Theology as Mission*, Pennsylvania 1997.

¹³ Hastings, A., *The construction of nationhood. Ethnicity, religion and nationalism*, CUP 1997.

further scholars, Norwegian academic Stein Rokkan¹⁴ and Icelandic professor Pétur Pétursson¹⁵ will be applied and discussed.

In both chapters Brethren contributions are emphasised. Chapter 8 contains the ethnographic fieldwork based on trips to the islands in 2007, 2009, 2010 and 2011. This chapter offers insights into how contemporary Brethren¹⁶ read their past, experience the present and evaluate the future of the movement. The chapter also gives an insight into the tensions which have occurred with further secularisation, modernisation, individualism and globalisation. It considers how the Faeroese Brethren movement as a home-grown church will be able to meet and adapt to new challenges and future demands.¹⁷ Also it is worth mentioning that although the Brethren were the first Evangelical movement¹⁸ to establish itself in the Faeroes, a Quaker missionary, probably of the evangelical wing,¹⁹ had visited the islands a

¹⁴ Rokkan, S., "Dimensions of State Formation and Nation-Building: A possible Paradigm for Research on Variations within Europe", in Ch. Tilly (ed.), *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, London 1975, pp. 564ff.

¹⁵ Pétursson, P., *Church and social change*, Reykjavík 1990.

¹⁶ Also called The Christian Brethren; but not to be confused with other Brethren, e.g. Moravians.

¹⁷ Often misleadingly called "Baptists" in Faeroe, not to be confused with Baptists elsewhere.

¹⁸ Noll, M A, *The rise of Evangelicalism*, InterVarsity Press, Illinois 2003; Bebbington, D, *Evangelicalism in modern Britain*, Baker Book House, Michigan 1992 (1989).

¹⁹ Information in an email from Dr Timothy Stunt, 5th August 2010: "The point about the Quakers is that there were for many years two sorts of Quaker: the 'Evangelical' Quakers and the 'Inner Light' Quakers. Many of the evangelical Quakers felt they were being pushed out and seceded from the movement in the 1830s and 40s in what was known as 'the Beacon controversy'. Many who seceded became Brethren (for example Luke Howard and his sons Robert and John Eliot Howard, and members of the Wilson, Crewdson and Wakefield families in Kendal). About fifty years ago I wrote a brief paper on 'Early Brethren and the Society of Friends' which was published in 1970. A more recent and much larger work on the subject is by Rosemary Mingins, *The Beacon Controversy and Challenges to the British Quaker Tradition in the early nineteenth century: some responses to the evangelical revival by Friends in Manchester and Kendal* (Lampeter [Edwin Mellen Press] 2004). Long after the beacon controversy, there was still a small evangelical wing in the Quaker movement. I recall that when I was a boy growing up in Essex there was still an active Quaker group called 'The Friends' Evangelistic Band'. Isaac Sharp was a friend of Edwin Octavius Tregelles another evangelical quaker in whose biography there is an interesting account of a visit made with Sharp and Budge in 1846 to Scandinavia. They were visiting and ministering among Friends but they were repeatedly giving out evangelistic tracts during their travels...The fact that the

couple of years earlier but seemingly without any lasting effect.²⁰ The other Evangelical movement in the Faeroes is the Home Mission, introduced in the late 1890s but not established until 1905²¹, i.e. 40 years after the Brethren. This was a branch of the Danish Inner Mission working within the established Danish Lutheran State Church.²² It is not the focus of the present work, but inevitably I address both the established church and the Home Mission in this thesis.²³

Just before 1900 (population 15,230) there were 30 Faeroese Brethren,²⁴ i.e. 0.196 per cent, and in 1911 (population around 18,800) there were 5 assemblies with 197 members, i.e. 1.047 per cent; in 1921 (population 22,000) this had increased to 550, i.e. 2.5 per cent; and by 1950 it is estimated that around 3,000 or almost 10 per cent of the population, by then 32,000,²⁵ belonged to Brethren assemblies.²⁶

Origins and funding

In my childhood I had heard about ‘Baptists’, the misleading term used for Brethren in the Faeroes. My parents, both educated in Denmark in the 1930s, were leftwing, open minded and tolerant people. They encouraged me to go wherever I wanted, e.g. children’s meetings in the Home Mission, boys’ meetings at the YMCA, Sunday school in the Brethren hall ‘Ebenezer’, youth meetings with the Salvation Army and

life of Isaac Sharp was published by the old Quaker publishers Headley Brothers is an indication that Sharp and co were still a part of the wider Quaker movement...”

²⁰ Budge, F A, *Isaac Sharp, an apostle of the nineteenth century*, Headley Brothers, London 1898, pp. 36-40

²¹ Hansen, G, *Eindarmentan føroyinga og vekingarrørslurnar*, Tórshavn 1987, pp. 242-245.

²² Lausten, M S, *A church history of Denmark*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2002, pp. 278-284

²³ A brief overview of the Danish Home Mission will be given at the end of chapter one..

²⁴ Seems too low; but probably including baptized individuals only and counted from censuses.

²⁵ *Hagstova Føroya*, Faeroe Statistics, Tórshavn 2011.

²⁶ Sølvará, H. A., “Gudfrøðilig rák og vekingarrørslur í Føroyum og í Íslandi”, *Vísindavøka*, Tórshavn 23th September 2010.

so forth. Also I was a boy scout, went to traditional Faeroese dance and ‘English Dance’;²⁷ and like many of my friends I started drinking at quite a young age. None of us were or are serious believers, so when going to church, we sometimes went to the established Lutheran Church, sometimes to the Roman Catholic Church. In my late teens I regarded myself as an agnostic, a republican and a communist, attitudes which have hardly changed later. I have, however, always been on friendly terms with people of faith, and many of my Brethren friends were classmates, in the boy scouts, and some even played music in the same bands as I did.

In our home Brethren were held in high esteem, not least for their steady work, the energy and their abilities, especially when the *Bible* was first published in Faeroese. However, most church people²⁸ tended to ridicule and look down on Brethren members, and many ludicrous stories were circulated about them, e.g. that they behaved badly and got drunk when abroad, were unfaithful to their wives/husbands and so on. Maybe these were some of the reasons why I took sides with the Brethren, but there were also other reasons. They were reliable and understanding, I married a woman from Brethren background and her family soon became good friends. My treatment for the physical, mental and spiritual disease of alcoholism at the rehabilitation centre ‘Heilbrigdi’ and my subsequent joining Alcoholics Anonymous widened my ways of thinking, especially about spiritual matters, because the treatment actually works for me. Additionally I always took sides with minorities, including the Brethren, and have studied the interaction between ‘majorities’ and ‘minorities’, how ‘majorities’ (ethnic, political, cultural, linguistic,

²⁷ The Faeroese term for all dances apart from the Faeroese chain-dance accompanied by ballad singing..

²⁸ Faeroese term, ‘kirkjufólk’, for those belonging to the established Lutheran State Church.

etc.) come into being and are maintained and how to regard various ‘minorities’ (ethnic, national, political, cultural, sexual, etc.). In my early childhood, I belonged to a tiny minority (a Faeroe Islander) in Denmark, and later, in the Faeroes, belonging to a majority still governed by Denmark and with Danish as the main language. In principle Danes in the Faeroes must be regarded as a minority.

After early retirement I settled down in my old university town Glasgow, and shortly afterwards decided to study for a degree in Divinity where my final year’s dissertation was on the Brethren in the Faeroe Islands. I found this so fascinating that a couple of years after graduation I decided to apply for the opportunity to take this work further, either for an MTh- or a PhD-degree, and I was encouraged by many people, not least within the Faeroese Brethren movement. This work started in 2007 when the University of Glasgow had accepted my application and the Faeroese Research Council had decided to support the project financially. This grant has covered almost all expenses and a smaller amount for the scanning of the diaries of the Faeroese pioneer, William Gibson Sloan, was paid by an interested Brethren member.

Theoretical base

Life in the traditional Faeroese society was supported by primitive agriculture only, in addition to which there was some inshore fishing, whale hunting and fowling. Such a base could only sustain a population of around 5,000 people; and it was only because of significant changes in the productive sphere that the Faeroes were able to sustain almost 50,000 at the turn of the 21st century. Already around 1900 offshore fishing

and fish processing had overtaken agriculture in volume, value and persons employed. Until then “King’s Farmers”²⁹ formed the ruling elite while the majority consisted of farmhands, landless labourers and paupers. It was predominantly from the second group that the early Brethren were recruited. The beginning of the 20th century saw a totally different community materialize, and the main classes were now ship-owners and businessmen on the one hand, fishermen and workers on the other.

Correspondingly the ‘superstructure’ went through changes. In the economic sphere free trade was introduced after centuries of a trade monopoly;³⁰ in the political sphere a local advisory assembly, the Løgting, was established; in the social sphere work patterns and opportunities changed beyond recognition and people were paid for their work. Education changed from traditional home teaching to established school; but religious life changed little because the established church and its clergy were part of the dwindling traditional community, incapable of change; and maybe the majority of the population were so used to that kind of Christian life that change was discarded.³¹

The impact that Protestantism, especially the Puritan, Pietist and Evangelical brands, may have had on the socio-economic and other areas will be considered, and here Max Weber’s thought-provoking analysis *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of*

²⁹ Although they were in fact just tenant peasants; the King was the landowner but far away. Clergymen were also ‘King’s farmers’.

³⁰ Leased to various foreign aristocrats, companies and individuals until 1709 when the King took over the trade.

³¹ The opposition to adult baptism briefly discussed below.

capitalism is part of the theoretical base.³² In his groundbreaking work *Translating the message – the missionary impact on culture*, the African scholar Lamin Sanneh³³ convincingly argues that missionary work was undeniably the most characteristic and innovative aspect of the Christian religion.³⁴ Sanneh points out that the translatability and transmission of the gospel, the Gentile breakthrough, and the successful adoption of Hellenic culture paved the way for “cross-cultural appropriation and pluralism”.³⁵ He argues that by the 9th century

“the vernacular character of Christianity had been established in numerous parts of the [Roman] empire and beyond, with Armenians, Copts, Goths, and Ethiopians all following a version of the faith expressive of their national character.”³⁶

Consequently, Sanneh points out that ‘translation’ is not just a question of the technical translation from one language to another but equally the way in which the translated text influences that language which then, in turn, also starts a life of its own and may reciprocate with the former; and he emphasizes that

“language is the intimate, articulate expression of culture, and so close are the two that language can be said to be synonymous with culture, which it suffuses and embodies.”³⁷

In other words, any translation into a new language involves an adaptation of the text so that it complies with the culture receiving it. This text then influences that

³² Weber, M, *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*, (1904-5), translation, Dover Publications 2003.

³³ Professor of Missions and World Christianity at Yale Divinity School.

³⁴ Sanneh, L, *Translating the message*, Orbis, New York (1989) 2005.

³⁵ Sanneh, L, *Translating the message*, Orbis, New York (1989) 2005, p. 1.

³⁶ Sanneh, L, *Translating the message*, Orbis, New York (1989) 2005, p. 2.

³⁷ Sanneh, L, *Translating the message*, Orbis, New York (1989) 2005, p. 3.

culture in a productive way, often resulting in the formation of an indigenous literature, a language struggle and even a national movement.³⁸ Exactly this happened in the Faeroes, and it is amazing how little attention the Established Church paid to such a potential. I will argue that the Brethren penetrated the community because they engaged with these struggles.

In the passage of time Christian missions appealed to sentiments which were significant in the national struggles for independence, often incited by an awareness of the mother tongue. So when evaluating missionary work, it is worth bearing in mind that it will have other consequences than those anticipated. The starting point was translations of Scripture into vernacular languages, many of which did not even have a written form:

“The dramatic effects of vernacular translations thus prejudiced the colonial cause as much by coincidence as by ideological justification. For that reason, vernacular translations outdistanced and outlasted the fortunes of colonialism.”³⁹

As I shall demonstrate on the following pages, many of the points brought forward by Lamin Sanneh apply to the Faeroe Islands, although sometimes in a different way.⁴⁰ From the late 19th century onwards, however, the developments were very close to those described in Sanneh’s work, mainly thanks to the evolving Brethren movement in the islands.

³⁸ Here Sanneh mainly refers to African examples, such as on pp. 116-117.

³⁹ Sanneh, L, *Translating the message*, Orbis, New York (1989) 2005, p. 125.

⁴⁰ As will be explained in subsequent chapters; also the Faeroes were already a Christian country.

The language question

When the Faeroese written language emerged in the 19th century, the established Lutheran Church played an insignificant role. The Reformation did not have constructive effect in the islands, and while other peoples got the Bible in their vernaculars, this was not the case in the Faeroe Islands. Some states and similar entities were in the process of being centralised from the time of the Reformation onwards, and many small and minority languages did not obtain Bible translations until much later. Considering the Nordic or Scandinavian languages, the Bible was translated into Swedish in 1541, Danish in 1550, Icelandic in 1584, Norwegian in 1834, and Faeroese in 1949.⁴¹ It is interesting to see that within the Danish realm only Danish and Icelandic had a translation into the vernacular before the 19th century.

The Reformation took place in Denmark first, then in Norway, Faeroe and Iceland. The language of the new established royal Church changed from Latin to Danish in the whole realm apart from Iceland which was the only part of the Danish kingdom which opposed replacing Latin with another foreign language in its churches. Meanwhile the Faeroe Islanders came to terms with the foreign language of Danish in churches, and practically all clergymen were Danish or Norwegian. Of the few Faeroe Islanders graduating at the University of Copenhagen most preferred staying in Denmark.⁴²

⁴¹ The 1949 translation by Brethren, the Lutheran church translation in 1961.

⁴² West, J., *Faeroe: The emergence of a nation*, London 1972, p. 33.

Religion had been introduced from abroad, first Roman Catholicism, then the Danish form of Lutheran Protestantism which had a monopoly position, formally until 1849, but in practice much longer. Missionary work in the Faeroe Islands did not commence until 1865 century when the first modern Evangelical missionary, William Gibson Sloan, came to the islands, married a Faeroese woman and settled down in Tórshavn when the first Brethren Hall was built. Sloan and his helpers were well received, but antagonism between Church and Brethren flared up when the first islanders were re-baptised in 1880. A recent article suggests that Faeroe Islanders did not see infant baptism as merely of theological significance but also as the initiation into society where the ‘person’ got her or his identity.⁴³ When increasing numbers of Faeroese speakers joined the Brethren from the 1880s onwards, the language used at meetings was the vernacular, and Brethren were the first to use the newly constructed written language in printed materials.⁴⁴

The national question

In recent years controversies have arisen regarding the meaning of ‘nation’ when such entities emerged in modern times and how the word should be understood and defined. I would argue that Faeroe Islanders did not regard themselves as a ‘nation’ until around 1900 and among the first to do so were Brethren members. I concentrate here on two views which are still being discussed, the modernist view and the traditionalist view, based on two outstanding works: Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined*

⁴³ Guttesen, P., “Dópur, samfelag og samleiki” (Baptism, society and identity), *Frændafundur 5*, eds. M. Bnædal and Johannesen, Háskólaútgávan (University Publication), Reykjavík 2005, p. 19.

⁴⁴ However, a Bible history for children was translated into Faeroese by the teacher and member of the local parliament Joen Poulsen (1854-1941) and published in 1900.

Communities,⁴⁵ and Adrian Hastings's *The Construction of Nationhood – ethnicity, religion and nationalism*.⁴⁶ Anderson's starting point is that

“nationality, or....nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artefacts of a particular kind;” [and] “to understand them properly we need to consider carefully how they have come into historical being, in what ways their meanings have changed over time, and why, today, they command such profound emotional legitimacy.”⁴⁷

He argues that the artefacts of nationality and nationalism, as they have been perceived over the past couple of centuries, did not come into being until towards the end of the 18th century, and that the word ‘nationalism’ was not in general use until the late 19th century.⁴⁸ Gradually these artefacts became self-contained transplantable components which could be adapted and absorbed into various political and ideological environments and arouse deep emotions and opinions prevailing among a group of people. Anderson demonstrates how difficult theorists of nationalism have found it to produce a workable definition of ‘nation’ because of three inherent paradoxes:

“(1) The objective modernity of nations to the historian's eye vs. their subjective antiquity in the eyes of nationalists. (2) The formal universality of nationality as a socio-cultural concept ... vs. the irremediable particularity of its concrete manifestations... . (3) The ‘political’ power of nationalisms vs. their philosophical poverty and even incoherence.”⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Anderson, B, *Imagined communities*, Verso, London (1983) 2006.

⁴⁶ Hastings, A, *The construction of nationhood – ethnicity, religion and nationalism*, CUP 1997

⁴⁷ Anderson, B, *Imagined communities*, Verso, London (1983) 2006, p. 4.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4, n. 7.

⁴⁹ Anderson, B, *Imagined communities*, Verso, London (1983) 2006, p. 5.

He then points out that the concept of nationalism has never had a fundamental principle, and another problem is that concepts of nation and nationalism have unduly been classified on a par with other ideologies although ‘nation’ has more to do with ‘family’, ‘kinship’ and ‘religion’ than with ‘liberalism’ or ‘socialism’. Therefore Anderson suggests this “definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.”⁵⁰

A nation is imagined because its members will never know the majority of their fellow members; but in the mind of each member there is an image of their communion.⁵¹ However, in a small community such as the Faeroes, most individuals knew (of) most of their compatriots. A nation is also imagined as limited because of finite boundaries towards other nations, no matter how large such a nation may be.⁵² Furthermore a nation is imagined as sovereign because it came into being when the Enlightenment and the French Revolution did away with the authority of divinely ordained, vertical monarchical social organisation. Anderson suggests that there is an

“allomorphism between each faith’s ontological claims and territorial stretch, (and) nations dream of being free, and, if under God, directly so. The gauge and emblem of this freedom is the sovereign state.”⁵³

In the Faeroes the vast majority of the population regard themselves as being a ‘nation’ and ‘free’, no matter what the relationship with Denmark is; and even Unionists claim that Faeroe is a nation but should remain within the Danish realm for

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 6.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 6.

⁵² Ibid., p. 7.

⁵³ Anderson, B, *Imagined communities*, Verso, London (1983) 2006, p. 7.

practical, economic and cultural reasons. Other islanders do actually desire a sovereign state, e.g. most Republicans. Lastly, Anderson sees a nation as an imagined community because it is ‘always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship’⁵⁴ in spite of tangible inequalities and injustices. This definitely also applies to the Faeroes where the same processes of economic corruption and financial terrorism are just as rampant as in bigger countries; and deplorably just the concept of nation, this imagined community, is used to convince people that what is seen as a deep, horizontal comradeship requires sacrifices.

Considering the roots of nationalism, Anderson suggests the main preconditions for imagining the nation “only arose when, and where, three fundamental cultural conceptions, all of great antiquity, lost their axiomatic grip on men’s minds.”⁵⁵ First was the idea of one particular script language presenting and carrying the ultimate ontological truth and therefore being part of that truth.⁵⁶ Second was the idea of a society being organised under a high centre at the head of which was a divinely ordained monarch; therefore loyalties were hierarchical and centripetal. Third was the perception that temporality cosmology and history were impossible to tell apart and this led to the belief that the world and humans were created basically simultaneously.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 7.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 36.

⁵⁶ Such as Latin in Christianity or Arabic in Islam.

⁵⁷ Anderson, B, *Imagined communities*, Verso, London (1983) 2006, p. 36.

Gradually these certainties waned,⁵⁸ resulting in new ways of understanding society. Here the most profound factor was the rapid spread of print capitalism which combined speedy reproduction with capitalism's hunt for markets and profit.⁵⁹ Anderson sees this as the precondition for the formation of societies which became horizontal and secular.⁶⁰ Particularly after the Reformation books were published in the vernaculars to widen the market because the majority of readers were monoglot. Several dialects were standardised into one unifying print language to pave the way for bigger markets, leading to the disappearance of dialects as well as minority languages. This was the birth of state (not yet national) languages,⁶¹ and gradually hundreds of oral vernaculars were assembled into a small number of print languages. Consequently, the print languages created the preconditions for national consciousnesses in three ways: (1) they formed unified areas of communication between Latin and the spoken vernaculars; (2) they provided fixed written forms to the new languages (which gave rise to the image of antiquity, crucial to the subjective conception of a nation); and (3) they became the languages of authority.⁶²

Anderson concludes that “the convergence of capitalism and print technology...created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation.” However, modern self conceived nations have national print languages in spite of the fact that few inhabitants use this language, and many nation states have the same national

⁵⁸ Undermined by economic developments, social and scientific improvements and, not least, by ever speedier communication

⁵⁹ Anderson, B, *Imagined communities*, Verso, London (1983) 2006, p. 38f.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.

language, e.g. English is the ‘official language’ (print language) in many independent states and so is Spanish.⁶³ Between 1820 and 1920 came the onset of the age of nationalism in Europe which Anderson calls the ‘newer nationalisms’, changing the Old World and characterised by two features. First, most of them now had ‘national print languages’ which “were of central ideological and political importance”; and, second, “all were able to work from the visible models provided by their.....predecessors.”⁶⁴ Not until the early 19th century did the ‘nation’ become something that could be aspired to and fought for, and the ‘nation’ also proved to be an invention easily transferred or adopted by other communities.⁶⁵

These theories are confirmed in the developments in the Kingdom of Denmark, including the Faeroe Islands. The introduction of print language in the realm in the 16th century led to a standardisation of the dialects spoken at the time, and already in the 17th century the dialect spoken by the middle classes in Copenhagen and Malmoe formed the basis for Standard Danish.⁶⁶ A consistent orthography was not introduced until the 19th century with small changes made in the 20th century. In the Faeroes people also read Danish print language before realising that the everyday language spoken amongst the islanders was in fact a different language and not just a Danish dialect, but this was not finally acknowledged until towards the end of the 18th century. During the heated debates about the re-establishment of the local parliament and trade in the mid-19th century, the enlightened Faeroese lawyer and politician Niels C. Winther (1822-1892) bought

⁶³ Anderson, B, *Imagined communities*, Verso, London (1983) 2006, p. 46.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p 81.

⁶⁶ Skautrup, P, *Det danske sprogs historie*, (History of the Danish language), Copenhagen 1970, p. 259.

printing equipment from Denmark and set it up in Tórshavn where he published his paper *Færingetidende* during the campaigns, but the language used in the paper was solely Danish.

The aspirations to have a consistent written form for Faeroese increased, and in the latter half of the 19th century a standard orthography was constructed. However, it was difficult to have the written language accepted in schools, in church and in administration. The national movement did not emerge until the 1890s, and the primary concern was the position of the Faeroese language. To what degree Faeroe Islanders had much self-awareness as a people or any sense of national identity is questionable. The majority of the small and widely dispersed community with several dialects eked out their living close to nature and of nature, and the minority of comparatively wealthy farmers, Danish clergy and officials did not pay much attention to a special language and culture. Here, however, the earliest Brethren broke with tradition and used the vernacular at meetings right from the beginning. The attitudes to the work of Faeroese intellectuals around 1800 were on the whole negative. In people's minds the vertical dynastic system was everlasting: God – King – Church/Officials – Subjects. It was not until well into the 20th century that it is possible to consider a political and cultural national movement in the islands, especially after the Second World War when even plans for the establishment of a sovereign republic were seen as an option.

Adrian Hastings's work, *The construction of nationhood*, may be seen as a response to Anderson's theories, and in places Hastings is very critical of the views put forward by Benedict Anderson. Dealing with the socio-political history of

England and mentioning British political theorists, he writes that “Benedict Anderson’s astonishing claim that the English nation was only emerging at the heart of its empire in the later years of the nineteenth century⁶⁷ not only goes in the teeth of the evidence but is totally implausible.”⁶⁸ The divergence displays a conflict between two historical attitudes, especially regarding the question of nation and nationalism. Hastings represents the ‘traditional’ view, but he agrees that “every nation is a unique socio-historical construct.”⁶⁹ Anderson, however, represents the ‘modern’ view on ‘nation’ as being a modern phenomenon. Considering the Faeroese situation, I will argue that Anderson’s theories are more convincing.

Hastings points out that the most important factor for the development from ethnicities to nationhood is the presence of a widely used vernacular literature, sometimes strengthened by an external threat. He defines an ethnicity as “a group of people with a shared cultural identity and a shared language”.⁷⁰ These were the elements making up pre-national societies. ‘Nation’, however, is used for a more self-conscious society, made up of one or several ethnicities, possessing its own literature and territory and claiming the right to political identity and autonomy in the same way as biblical Israel. A nation-state, then, identifies itself as a nation in which the population are not just subjects but citizens, horizontally bonded together and belonging to one state;⁷¹ so here he obviously agrees with Anderson. Furthermore Hastings defines ‘nationalism’ as two things, first the theory that each nation should

⁶⁷ Anderson, B, *Imagined communities*, Verso, London (1983) 2006, p. 111.

⁶⁸ Hastings, A, *The construction of nationhood*, CUP 1997, p. 6.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁷¹ Hastings, A, *The construction of nationhood*, CUP 1997, p. 3.

have its state, and second a practice, based on the belief that one ethnic or national tradition is particularly valuable and requires expansion. Finally he argues that religion is a fundamental element in cultures, ethnicities and states, and that for the Christian world the Bible provided the model of a nation.⁷²

The main disagreement between modernist historians such as Anderson and traditionalist ones such as Hastings is the question of date, i.e. when nationalism and the modern concept of nation came into being. The former insist that nationalism is “a very modern phenomenon about which you cannot speak before the late eighteenth century” and it precedes the nation;⁷³ “the nation is a very recent newcomer in human history”;⁷⁴ and “it is nationalism which engenders nations”.⁷⁵ However, there is agreement about the role of language and culture in the formation of nationalism and the nation. Hastings argues that

“ethnicities naturally turn into nations.....when their specific vernacular moves from an oral to written usage.....being regularly employed for the production of literature, and particularly for the translation of the Bible.”⁷⁶

Regarding the Faeroe Islands this was the actual sequence when the community living there emerged as a ‘nation’. Towards the end of the 18th century a Faeroese scholar arrived at the conclusion that there was indeed a Faeroese language;

⁷² Ibid., p. 4.

⁷³ Kedourie, E, *Nationalism*, London 1960. Cited in Hastings, A, *The construction of nationhood*, CUP 1997, p. 9.

⁷⁴ Hobsbawm, E J, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, CUP 1990, p. 10. Cited in Hastings, A, *The construction of nationhood*, CUP 1997, p. 9.

Gellner, E, *Nations and nationalism*, Oxford 1983, p. 55. Cited in Hastings, A, *The construction of nationhood*, 1997, p. 9.

⁷⁶ Hastings, A, *The construction of nationhood*, CUP 1997, p. 12.

and in the early 19th century another one translated a small part of the Bible and had it printed. However, almost a century expired before the written form of the vernacular was in common use and printed in any quantity worth speaking of. So although Anderson's theory suits the Faeroe experience most closely, Hasting's views will not be ignored as there is much of value in his analysis.

Methodology

Apart from studying general and specialist works on Church History, Evangelicalism, the Brethren, Cultural History and Missiology as well as related topics such as the philosophy and sociology of religion, and not least ethnography, efforts have been made to find articles and other materials in newspapers, journals and websites, to get access to diaries and letters concerning the subject matters discussed. I have sought to get knowledge and insights into the Brethren movement as well as Brethren thinking and outlook from literature and from personal attendance at Brethren meetings and other gatherings; but some of the most profitable parts of the research have been informal conversations with numerous Brethren in the Faeroes and in Britain, as well as participation at conferences and seminars.

The more tangible research material is based on ethnographic principles and consisted of semi-structured interviews and conversations with Faeroese Brethren of all age groups from almost all assemblies, conducted during four fieldworks in the islands in the period 2007-2011. Having considered options for pursuing a more 'quantitative' investigation, I opted for ethnographic, qualitative fieldwork as the research method because this gives more opportunities to get detailed information

regarding attitudes and subtleties as well as personal experiences and views of the individuals. Maybe this method is more time-consuming in the initial stages but from my lifelong experiences as a journalist informal, face-to-face interviews over a cup of tea or coffee and without electronic gadgets are the most profitable. Especially older people prefer such an informal setting and do not seem to mind the interviewer taking notes during the conversation.

The research location was either in the interviewee's home or in her or his assembly hall. On a couple of occasions an interview took place in an hotel or a café. The best location proved to be in people's homes where they perceived me as a guest who had come to visit, talk and ask some questions. All were fully informed about the project, its aims and contents and all gladly agreed to participate because most, probably all, of them knew me, directly or indirectly, beforehand. Some individuals were visited again on subsequent fieldtrips to avoid misunderstandings or to expand on details discussed previously; and in many cases conversations or interviews were followed up by telephone calls or emails. Some of these developed into regular contacts with Brethren individuals in Faeroe and this was very helpful when unexpected questions or further clarification on specific points occurred during the final stages of the work.

I probably succeeded in covering just about all towns and villages in the islands, so the geographical distribution was satisfactory. Also the social distribution was adequate although most of the fishermen interviewed were retired when the conversations took place. The persons interviewed were between 18 and 93 years old, mostly men because of the Brethren view that, according to the Bible, only males

were regarded as ‘leaders’.⁷⁷ The interviews were conducted in Faeroese and translated into English and edited by me. Likewise have been translated all foreign texts into English.⁷⁸ When giving a presentation of this work in progress at the Brethren Conference Centre ‘Zarepta’, more than half of the participants were women and they appealed to me to emphasise two points: evangelicalism at sea and the role of women in the assemblies. Unfortunately, I was unable to meet the second requirement due to prevailing male dominance in the movement; but the men were asked about women’s participation and all agreed that ‘the sisters’ had been of huge importance right from the initiation of the assembly.⁷⁹ I suggest that further research here would be highly appropriate.

This narrative gives an insight into the developments in the archipelago, how new trends, technologies and influences came from neighbouring countries and how a new branch of Christianity subsequently developed independently, in a different way from in its country of origin. Also the enormous economic, social and cultural changes which caused this are explained. I would argue that these questions are of crucial importance for any genuine historical account of the Faeroes since 1900, but so far the presence of Brethren and their contributions to the wider society have been almost neglected. This neglect is remedied by my thesis.

⁷⁷ From the interviews in chapter 8 it emerges that many Brethren mention “Brothers and Sisters”; and women have been vital for the survival of many assemblies. However, some (older) Brethren still insist that women should play a subordinate role in the assemblies.

⁷⁸ Mainly Icelandic, Faeroese, Norwegian, Danish and German.

⁷⁹ In chapter 3 several women are mentioned, even among the earliest Brethren members.

Part One

Setting the scene

In this first part, comprising Chapters 1 and 2, I aim at giving the necessary background information which forms the basis of the work. The decision to do so was based on the recognition that for many readers outside the Faeroes, both the islands and the Brethren are topics about which they know little. In chapter 1 I am therefore providing some general information on the Faeroe Islands, in chapter 2, I explain the emergence, development, theology and practices of the Brethren movement in Britain, including some points regarding the Faeroes.

The Faeroe Islands

In this chapter I shall give an overview of the archipelago where this research has taken place as well as presenting a broad outline of the history of the people who have lived there. The latter differs slightly from standard histories of the Faeroes because I realise that most of the previous histories, until a couple of decades ago, have been too much based on myths and guesswork.⁸⁰ Here I have drawn on the most recent historical research, some of it only published last year (2010).

1.1 Geographical and economic facts

The Faeroe Islands⁸¹ consist of 18 islands, separated by narrow firths with strong and dangerous currents. The archipelago is situated northwest of Scotland, between Iceland and Norway.⁸² The total land area is 1,399 square kilometres (545.3 square miles); the sea area 274,000 square kilometres (105,791 square miles), and the distance from north to south is 113 km (70 miles) and from east to west 75 km (47 miles). The coastline is 1,100 km (687 miles). The highest point is 882 m (2,883 ft) above sea level; and the average height of the islands is 300 m (982 ft).⁸³ The climate is influenced by the Gulf Stream, preventing sea frost and particularly cold winters, so the climate is temperate coastal. However, the geographical position is notorious for repeated episodes of low pressure

⁸⁰ Exceptions include British historian Dr J. West's books on Faeroese history.

⁸¹ In Faeroese 'Føroyar', in Danish 'Færøerne', in English the 'Faeroe Islands' or 'Faroe Isles', often 'the Faeroes' or 'the Faroes', or simply 'Faeroe' or 'Faroe'.

⁸² The distances between the Faeroes and the neighbouring countries are: Faeroe-Shetland, 180 nautical miles; Faeroe-Iceland, 210; Faeroe-Mainland Scotland, 220; Faeroe-Norway, 240; and Faeroe-Denmark, 480 nautical miles.

⁸³ Hagstova Føroya, Faeroe Statistics, 2010. – www.hagstova.fo

which cause frequent stormy weather. The average temperature in summer is 11 Centigrade (52 Fahrenheit), in winter 3 Centigrade (37 Fahrenheit).⁸⁴

At present the population of the Faeroes is around 48,000 of which around 20,000 live in what could be called the central or metropolitan area in and around the capital Tórshavn, and 5,000 people live in the second largest town, Klaksvík.⁸⁵ There are around 50 towns and villages, settlements with more than 1,500 inhabitants called towns, smaller ones villages. The past century has seen a massive migration from the villages to the centres, especially to Tórshavn and Klaksvík.⁸⁶

The Faeroe Islands have been a semi-autonomous part of the Kingdom of Denmark and have been defined as “a self governing region within the Kingdom” since 1948.⁸⁷ There is a local parliament, the Løgting, a medieval term meaning Law Assembly, as well as a local government, called Landsstýri, meaning Country Committee, headed by a local Løgmaður, also an ancient term meaning Law Man. Over the years these authorities have reached agreements with governments of the Danish realm to have several areas devolved.⁸⁸

The economy is based on fishing and fish processing, but over the last couple of decades service industries, such as IT and finance, have played an increasing role. The rate of unemployment was just 1.3% in 2007;⁸⁹ but in May 2011 6.7%.⁹⁰ The dependence

⁸⁴ Hagstova Føroya, Faeroe Statistics, 2010. – www.hagstova.fo

⁸⁵ 48,778 on 1st January 2009, 48 574 on 1st January 2010 according to *Hagstovan*, Faeroe Statistics, Tórshavn 2011.

⁸⁶ This will be discussed in chapter 6.

⁸⁷ *Lovtidende for kongeriget Danmark 1949*, Afdeling A. I, Copenhagen 1949.

⁸⁸ Some of these issues, e.g. Church and education, will be discussed in more detail below.

⁸⁹ *Hagstovan*, Faeroes Statistics, Tórshavn 2009.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, July 2011.

on fishing means that the economy remains extremely vulnerable. The Faeroese hope to broaden their economic base. Oil found close to the Faroese waters seems to give hope for deposits in the immediate area, and this might lay the basis to sustained economic growth. Since the turn of last century, information technology and business projects have been fostered in the Faeroe Islands and seem to attract investments.⁹¹

The people of Faeroe are descendants of mixed Celtic and Norse (Norwegian) settlements from the 6th century AD⁹² onwards; and the national language is Faeroese, one of the five remaining Nordic languages.⁹³ It has been recognized as the main language of the islands, although Danish is still compulsory in schools as the primary second language. Religion, solely Christianity, plays an important role in the Faeroes; and around 80% of the population are members of the Lutheran State Church, until recently the Danish variant because the Church and church matters were not devolved until 2007. The second largest group of Christians is the Brethren, comprising around 15 per cent.⁹⁴ Other churches include Adventists, Roman Catholics, Pentecostals and some other smaller groups.

⁹¹ *Hagstovan*, Faeroes Statistics, Tórshavn 2009; *CIA World Fact Book*, 2009.

⁹² In April 2011 archaeological finds on Sandoy indicate human habitation already in the 4th century CE.

⁹³ Another one was the Shetland Norn which died out in the 19th century.

⁹⁴ Faeroese Brethren do not keep statistics; and some of them still pay the special Church Tax and are therefore counted as members of the Established Lutheran Church.

1.2 History up to 1800

1.2.1 Early history

The first account of the Faeroes was written by the Irish scholar Dicuil in 825; his book contains two relevant passages mentioning a group of islands initially settled by Irish hermits but then raided by Norwegian Vikings.⁹⁵ The main written source into the earliest period is *The Faroe Saga*,⁹⁶ a collection of passages from the Icelandic Sagas dealing with Faeroe written by Christian monks in Iceland two centuries after the events took place.⁹⁷ According to this, the first person to arrive in the Faeroes was a Viking chief called Grímur Kamban, slightly peculiar because while the first name is Norse, the second one, Kamban, is Celtic. Christianity was forcibly introduced around AD 1000, Faeroe became a tax-paying part of the Norwegian Kingdom in 1035,⁹⁸ and in 1380 included in the Kingdom of Denmark together with Norway. The archipelago became an independent bishopric in 1060 under the Archbishop of Nidaros (now Trondheim) in Norway with the see at Kirkjubøur; and this lasted until the Reformation in the middle of the 16th century.

Political and religious propaganda was not unknown in the early Middle Ages, and the Saga clearly reflects this. The hero is Sigmundur Brestisson, undoubtedly in the

⁹⁵ Dicuil, *Liber de mensura orbis terrarum*, from AD 825, ed. Tirney, *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae*, Vol. VI, VII, 14 and 15, Dublin 1967, pp. 75-76

⁹⁶ Poswell, F Y, *The tale of Thron of Gate*, London, 1896. – Press, M, *The Saga of the Faroe Islanders*, translation, London 1938.

⁹⁷ Mainly, almost exclusively, *Laxdøla Saga*.

⁹⁸ Indeed Tróndur's foster son, Leivur Øssursson, received the Faeroes as a fiefed province from the Norwegian King Magnus Góði (the Good) Ólavsson (1024-47), King Olav II, the Holy's, son.

service and pay of the Norwegian king, Ólavur Tryggvasson.⁹⁹ The villain is Tróndur i Gøta, strongly opposed to the politics and religion forced upon the islanders. In the Saga, Sigmundur is presented as a noble, righteous and good-looking man, the ideal of honesty, humanity and progress; but Tróndur is presented as a deceitful and sinister, an evil and ugly, crooked person. Later in medieval times, ballads, the great cultural legacy of the Faeroes,¹⁰⁰ were composed about the two opponents and the bloody events resulting in the murder of Sigmundur and the conversion of Tróndur.¹⁰¹ Obviously the *Faroe Saga* also gives interesting and probably quite reliable information about Faeroese society at that time, and together with evidence from archaeological excavations, a relatively clear picture emerges.¹⁰² The islands were divided between six to ten chieftains, each possessing an island or part of an island. They lived in farmsteads comprising Viking-style longhouses, consisting of a large rectangular room with a fireplace in the middle, and several smaller houses for storage of peat and food. The building materials were stone, turf and wood, mainly driftwood.¹⁰³

From around 930 the chieftains had regular gatherings, Løgting or Law Assemblies, to make decisions regarding legal, societal and other matters. It was at the Løgting, held in Tórshavn on 29th July each year to commemorate the Norwegian King Olav's death,¹⁰⁴ that Sigmundur proclaimed Christianity, much to the dismay of other chieftains, perhaps because the forceful introduction of Christianity was seen as the first

⁹⁹ King of Norway Olaf I Tryggvason (968-1000) was a Viking warrior, who acquired wealth and fame by his raids in Britain.

¹⁰⁰ Will be discussed later. Most Faeroese ballads are on events outside the islands, mainly in Europe.

¹⁰¹ Even a hymn in the Faeroese Church Hymnary is attributed to Tróndur.

¹⁰² Dahl, S, "Norse settlement of the Faroe Islands," *Medieval Archaeology*, Vol. 14, 1971, pp. 60-73.

¹⁰³ Arge S, Sveinbjarnardóttir G, Edwards, K J, Buckland P C, "Viking and Medieval settlement in the Faroes: People, place and environment," *Human Ecology*, Vol. 33, No. 5, October 2005.

¹⁰⁴ Olaf II (Saint Olaf), c.995-1030, king of Norway (1015-28).

step towards the islands becoming a Norwegian tax paying province. Indeed, this was exactly what happened in 1035. However, this is not how the majority of Faeroe Islanders imagine what took place, and even today the Ólavsøka, 29th July, is the main national celebration lasting up to a week.

Apart from the *Faroe Saga*, other written sources consist of *Seydabrævið*, the Sheep's Letter, laying down rules for the regulation of land, from 1298; *Hundabrævið*, the Dogs' Letter, regulating the number of dogs, from around 1350; and the *Skipan um tingfaratoll nevdarmanna*, regulating compensations to the members of the Løgting, from around 1400. Some other regulations, concerning Faeroe only and a few letters from just after 1400 have also been preserved.¹⁰⁵ With the exception of these, there are no documents or written sources until *Jarðabókin*, The Land Registry, from 1584. From the early 12th to the middle of the 16th century, the ecclesiastical and cultural centre of the Faeroes was the bishop's seat at Kirkjubøur. The most remarkable structure is the ruin of a cathedral, Saint Magnus Cathedral,¹⁰⁶ from around 1300. According to some sources it was never completed although consecrated; other sources indicate that it was actually completed but fell into disrepair after the Black Death. The parish church, Saint Olav's Church,¹⁰⁷ is even older and was taken into use in the early 12th century; and the remains of a third church or chapel can be seen Kirkjubøur; this one was called Saint Mary's Church.

¹⁰⁵ The so-called *Húsavíkarbrøv*, i.e. Letters of Husawick, concerning the property of a lady who owned land in both Faeroe and Shetland.

¹⁰⁶ The cathedral in Kirkwall, Orkney, has the same name and was built around the same time.

¹⁰⁷ After the Norwegian king, later made a saint, Olav Haraldsson, mentioned above.

The Bishop's see also had a seminary training priests, indicating that the clergy were Faeroe Islanders in Catholic times and that substantial cultural activity was centred at Kirkjubøur.¹⁰⁸ The best known bishop was Erlendur who occupied the Kirkjubøur See from 1269 to 1308. He expanded church holdings throughout the islands and was responsible for completing the cathedral. This led to increased taxation, and the Church was seen as a greedy, exploitative institution causing serious dissatisfaction in the population. The result was a conflict between the theocratic church and an impoverished population, resulting in an uprising which culminated with the Battle at Mannafelsdalur, a valley in the south of Streymoy, in 1308.¹⁰⁹

The islanders were basically self-sufficient; but they did trade with neighbouring countries, mainly Norway. Export consisted mainly of wool, knitted woollen goods, sheepskins, feather from sea-birds, oil extracted from blubber, cod liver oil and, later, some dried fish, while commodities such as barley, salt, malt, oatmeal, timber, beer and spirits were imported. Barley, a hardy local strain of poor quality, never comprising more than a quarter of the consumption, was the only grain cultivated in the Faeroes.¹¹⁰ In 1273, however, a trade monopoly was instituted by Magnus VI, King of Norway 1263-1280,¹¹¹ and the same year the Norwegian Gulating's Law was enforced in the islands, leading to the loss of the Løgting's independence to the Løgmaður (Lawman) who

¹⁰⁸ One student was Sverrir Sigurðsson, the later King Sverri of Norway, who was born in the Faeroes around 1149, educated at the Faeroese Seminary, left for Norway in 1177, became king in 1186, and died in 1202.

¹⁰⁹ Jakobsen, J, *Færøske Folkesagn og Æventyr*, Tórshavn 1898-1901; Jakobsen, J, *Sagnir og ævintýr*, Tórshavn 1925.

¹¹⁰ West, J, *Faroe – the emergence of a nation*, London 1972, p. 17.

¹¹¹ Sturla Þórðarson; translation to English by G.W. Dasent (1894). *The Saga of Hakon and a Fragment of the Saga of Magnus with Appendices*. (Rerum Britannicarum Medii Ævi Scriptores), Vol. 88.4, London, reproduced in 1964.

became a royal official, and the Løgting became merely a court of law. This finally marked the start of Faeroe Islanders losing control of their own affairs.

In 1361 the Hansa-traders received the same trading rights in the Faeroes as Norwegians, and later, in 1490, also the Dutch, English and Scots obtained the same rights. Furthermore, illicit traffic or illegal traders also frequented the Faeroes, particularly after the Black Death. From the 15th century the Faeroes were raided by French, British, Irish and Algerian pirates.¹¹² Traders and pirates brought with them rats, and in this way the bubonic plague, the Black Death, badly affected the Faeroes around 1500 and almost half the population succumbed to the epidemic.¹¹³ Some villages were wiped out and the population recovered very slowly. Estimates suggest that in 1327 the population comprised around 4,000;¹¹⁴ and a count in 1769 shows a population of 4,773.¹¹⁵ Consequently it is estimated that the figure after the epidemic had dropped to around 2,500 which would indicate a very slow growth rate of just 1.5% a decade.¹¹⁶ Of course the Church was also affected by epidemics, but in spite of this it took over more than 40% of all landed property in the islands.

1.2.2 The Post-reformation period

The Protestant Reformation was imposed around 1535-40 by the Danish King Christian III (1503-1559) in the whole realm, which then comprised Denmark, Norway, the Faeroes and Iceland, and in the Faeroe Islands the new Church replaced the Catholic

¹¹² Jackson, A, *The Faroes – the faraway islands*, London 1991, p. 30

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Degn, A, "Hvat kann rómaskatturin í Føroyum siga okkum?" *Varðin*, Vol. 12, pp. 127-133, Tórshavn 1932. - The Vatican's assessment for 'Peter's Pence'.

¹¹⁵ See. However, page 21.

¹¹⁶ West, J, *Faroe – the emergence of a nation*, London 1972, p. 8

Church in 1538/39. The first and only Lutheran bishop left in 1556, and the church came under the Bergen See and was administered by a local dean (or provost). Although the official history does not mention opposition to the change, many people seem to have been dissatisfied. One example is that decades after the Reformation, in 1584, a small farmer who would not convert to Lutheranism lost his farm and all his possessions and was later executed for heresy.¹¹⁷ There are practically no sources from the period 1540-1613 when the Reformation took place; but many Catholic traditions were preserved into modern times.¹¹⁸

The Reformation was the most serious socio-economic and cultural setback in Faeroese history.¹¹⁹ In addition to existing crown land, former Church land was acquired by the crown so that the Danish King became by far the largest landowner. Consequently around half the proceeds that had remained in the islands before the Reformation now went abroad into the King's coffers.¹²⁰ The old seminary, the cultural powerhouse, was closed down and replaced with a dysfunctional Latin School in Tórshavn which closed for good in 1796. The language of the Church became Danish, almost as incomprehensible to the islanders as Latin.¹²¹ While masses in Catholic times were conducted in Latin, sermons had been in Faeroese;¹²² but after the Reformation the only language permitted was Danish. The other Norwegian province, Iceland, bigger and more

¹¹⁷ Hansen, S., *Tey byggja land*, Vol. 2, Klaksvík 1973, p. 42f.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

¹¹⁹ Thorsteinsson, Arne, "Jarðarbøkur og jarðarognir", *Brot ur Føroya søgu*, Tórshavn 2010, pp. 11-20.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 15-16.

¹²¹ West, J, *Faroe – the emergence of a nation*, London 1972, p. 9.

¹²² Michelsen, Ó, *Kirkjusøga*, Tórshavn 1961, pp. 51-53.

populous, opposed this and had an Icelandic bishop and the whole clergy were Icelanders.¹²³

After the Reformation the official language of the islands was Danish,¹²⁴ so practically all records and other sources from then on are written in that language. However, the spoken language remained Faeroese, which by then had developed from a dialect of Old Norse into a language of its own.¹²⁵ After the Reformation seven clergymen were resident in the Faeroes, and their areas of responsibility corresponded with the law districts. There were 39 churches, so the clergymen could only conduct services on every fifth or sixth Sunday; when not present, an appointed deacon, normally a literate farmer, would read from a book of Danish homilies.¹²⁶

In 1632 the Danish-Norwegian king Christian IV (1577-1648) granted each clergyman a fairly substantial farm. Consequently, the clergy in the islands, almost exclusively Danes, were soon among the wealthiest persons in their communities.¹²⁷ Laws of 1559 and 1573 strengthened the position of Crown-farmers, and one of the results was that children of the clergy received preference if a Crown-farmer died without a male heir. Thus it became quite common that Danish clergymen's sons became Crown-farmers or married into other Crown-farmers' families, so the wealthy farmers and the clergy were closely inter-related and grew into the dominant élite in the Faeroes.¹²⁸

¹²³ Pétursson, P., *Church and social change*, Reykjavik 1990, p. 3.

¹²⁴ More on this in chapter 7.

¹²⁵ Jóansson, T., *English loanwords in Faeroese*, Tórshavn 1997, pp. 44f.

¹²⁶ West, J., *Faroe: the emergence of a nation*, London 1972, p. 32.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

¹²⁸ Jackson, A., *The Faroes – the faraway islands*, London 1991, p. 43.

One historian describes the Faeroe Islands during the period from the Reformation until well into the 19th century as a “stable peasant society”,¹²⁹ indicating the slow and few changes in political, social, economic, cultural and religious life taking place during the four centuries. Until quite recently, the standard history of the archipelago leaves us with the impression of stagnation and that the islands were almost totally isolated during the Middle Ages. However, there were developments. For instance, from 1535 to 1709 the Trade Monopoly was granted to various foreign persons or companies, most notoriously (in people’s minds) the von Gabels (1617-1708) who were feudal lords of the Faeroes from 1662-1709.¹³⁰ Furthermore, it is dubious whether Faeroe Islanders ceased sailing to neighbouring countries from the termination of the Viking Age until the 19th century,¹³¹ and even before 1600 interaction with foreigners was quite lively.¹³²

1.3 Major changes

In 1709 the Danish Crown took over the Trade Monopoly after an accurate valuation had been carried out, not only of the possessions and transactions of the Monopoly, but also of Church and Crown possessions as well as other aspects in the economic fields of the Faeroes.¹³³ New research conducted by Faeroese scholars¹³⁴ and based on tithes on

¹²⁹ West, J, *Faroe: the emergence of a nation*, London 1972, p. 11.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

¹³¹ Jóansson, T, *English loanwords in Faroese*, Tórshavn 1997, p. 90-91. Joensen, H D, “Sambandið føyroyinga og útlendinga millum”, *Fróðskaparrit*, Vol. 28-29, Tórshavn 1981. Zachariassen, L, *Føroyar sum rættarsamfelag*, Tórshavn 1961.

¹³² Zachariassen, L, *Føroyar sum rættarsamfelag*, Tórshavn 1961, p. 144

¹³³ West, J, *The history of the Faroe Islands, 1709-1806*, Vol. I, Copenhagen 1985, p. 12.

¹³⁴ Guttesen, R, “Veðurlag, framleiðsla og fólkatal í 18-talinum og fyrr”, *Brot úr Føroya søgu*, Tórshavn 2010, pp. 43-65.

butter¹³⁵ shows that in 1600 the population was 3,200 but fifty years later, in 1650, it again dropped to 2,515; but by 1720 had risen again to 4,000. – So what happened?

An ethnographer suggests that ‘hard grain’ is fundamental for survival of any society.¹³⁶ In the Faeroes, however, inhabitants had to survive on ‘processed’ grain in the form of milk. The hay that kept cows alive was vital for survival. Even in the early 19th century the calories consumed by the Faeroese population came mainly from milk which comprised 42 per cent while imported grain counted for 24 per cent, mutton 10, lamb-tallow 9, home-grown grain 8, and fish merely 7 per cent.¹³⁷ In the 17th century there were severe winters, so the making of hay failed for several consecutive years. As a result, great numbers of sheep died and cows, being kept indoors from autumn to spring, had to be slaughtered. In the Løgting’s Proceedings from 1633 it says:

“Additionally, most of our sheep died last winter as well as some hundred cows, so never has there been such a deplorable situation in this country in living memory.”¹³⁸

This is also reflected in the tithes on wool¹³⁹ and on butter.¹⁴⁰ In all parts of Faeroe there were severe drop in tithes.¹⁴¹ In the Løgting’s Proceedings for 1667 it says that

¹³⁵ Guttesen, R, “Food production, climate and population on the Faeroe Islands 1584-1652”, *Geografisk Tidsskrift. Danish Journal of Geography*, Vol. 105, Copenhagen 2004, pp. 67-76.

¹³⁶ Steensberg, A, *Hard grain, irrigation, numerals and scripts in civilisations*, The Royal Danish Academy of Science and Letters, Commission publication No. 6, Copenhagen 1989

¹³⁷ Guttesen, R, “Veðurlag, framleiðsla og fólkatal í 18-talinum og fyrr”, *Brot úr Føroya søgu*, Tórshavn 2010, pp. 43-65.

¹³⁸ Joensen, Ei, *Tingbókin 1615-1653*, Tórshavn 1953, p. 258.

¹³⁹ Zachariassen, L, *Føroyar sum rættarsamfelag*, Tórshavn 1961.

¹⁴⁰ Guttesen, R, “Food production, climate and population on the Faeroe Islands 1584-1652”, *Geografisk Tidsskrift. Danish Journal of Geography*, Vol. 105, Copenhagen 2004, p. 38.

¹⁴¹ Guttesen, R, “Veðurlag, framleiðsla og fólkatal í 18-talinum og fyrr”, *Brot úr Føroya søgu*, Tórshavn 2010, p. 52.

“...it can be feared that all over the country ruin and desolation can be expected...(and) this poverty-stricken land may be totally cleaned out.”

And some years later they seem to have lost all hope because:

“.....the misery only increases so that lately the one has not been able to help the other and therefore the desperation during the previous winter can hardly be described.”¹⁴²

However, conditions improved; and while in 1700 Faeroe could sustain a population of around 3,600, in 1769 there were 4,773 inhabitants in the islands. But not until the 19th century was there a sharp rise; in 1801 there were 5,265 inhabitants, in 1855 8,651, and forty years later, in 1911, the population stood at around 18,000.¹⁴³

In the Faeroes, human and societal life survived in spite of periods of declining population, and indeed the population increased slowly from 1720 to 1830 by 0.36 per cent per year; but then it increased significantly from 1810 to 1830, by 1.42 per cent per year over 20 years. So something unusual must have happened. During the first half of the 19th century a new social class slowly developed, and this was the growing number of people who based their livelihood on a small lot of land together with inshore fishing.¹⁴⁴ So already at this stage can we notice changes in the mode of production which eventually paved the way for monumental changes in the second half of the 19th century,¹⁴⁵ and it was exactly at this point in time that the Scottish Brethren missionary William Gibson Sloan introduced Evangelicalism in the Faeroe Islands.

¹⁴² Joensen, Ei, *Tingbókin 1615-1653*, Tórshavn 1953. (Translated by TJ)

¹⁴³ West, J, *Faroe: the emergence of a nation*, London 1972, p. 74, note 3.

¹⁴⁴ Guttesen, R, “Hugleiðingar um samfelagsbroytingar í Føroyum í 18-talinum”, *Brá*, No. 11, Copenhagen 1987, pp. 22-29.

¹⁴⁵ Collier, A, *Stratified explanations and Marx's conception of history*, London 1998, pp. 258-296.

1.3.1 Opening on the world

In 1767 a Danish merchant, Niels Ryberg (1725-1804), founded a transit depot in Tórshavn.¹⁴⁶ European countries were engaged in wars, not least in the period from 1689 to 1814, and therefore 'modern' commodities were difficult to get hold of. The trade with the East and the West Indies became increasingly profitable, and in time of war a few countries were able to make enormous profits from trading in tea, coffee, spices and luxuries from the East, sugar, tobacco and rum from the West.¹⁴⁷ High import duties led to more dubious ways of trading, attempting to evade the British taxation system; and for a long time the Isle of Man was the main base for this kind of trade. However, this ceased when the Lord of Man parted with his sovereign rights for ample payment in 1767.¹⁴⁸ Former Manx traders in tobacco and rum transferred their activities to the transit depot in the Faeroes, and in the Parish Register for Tórshavn it is possible to find several English names from 1769 onwards,¹⁴⁹ but so far this period has been ignored by Faeroese historians, even if it brought about considerable influences and changes from the outside world. Some even consider this as the starting point of a new epoch in the history of Faeroe. The depot station, Ryberg's Handel, was supplied with goods mainly from the Danish West Indies. The goods were then shipped to Scotland and Ireland, and often as many as 12-14 vessels were loading and unloading in Tórshavn at one time.¹⁵⁰ Also sloops and luggers from northern British ports came for cheap goods, consisting mainly

¹⁴⁶ Rash, Aa, *Niels Ryberg*, Århus 1964.

¹⁴⁷ West, J, *Faroe: the emergence of a nation*, London 1972, p. 45.

¹⁴⁸ Young, G V C, *A brief history of the Isle of Man*, Peel 1983.

¹⁴⁹ Rasmussen, P M, *Suðurstreymoyar kirkjubók*, Tórshavn 1988.

¹⁵⁰ Svabo, J C, *Indberetninger fra en reise udi Færøe 1781-82*, Copenhagen 1959, pp. 296-299.

of rum, tea, brandy and tobacco which passed through the warehouses in Faeroe, and in his *Inberetninger* (Reports), written in the 1780s, J. C. Svabo mentions that

“The export is mainly conducted by small luggers; and the places from which they come are especially: Lewis, Rush, Aire [sic], Portsoy, Shetland, Orkney, Galloway & Caithness, Fort Williams [sic], Greenock, Isle of Man, Limerick [sic] & Larne, etc.”¹⁵¹

This period of prosperity, however, did not last long, for in 1784 the import duty on tea to Britain was considerably reduced; and after the American war ended in 1783, Britain could exercise diplomatic pressure on Denmark to stop the trade altogether. So in 1787 Ryberg started transferring his goods to Copenhagen; and in 1788 Ryberg's Handel closed for good.¹⁵²

These twenty years were of great importance to the further development of the Faeroese community, not only in an economic sense, but in several other areas as well; and the events in the 19th century were undoubtedly partly due to the experiences gained during this period. Many Faeroe Islanders were employed together with foreigners and were eventually able to supply the services required. Several skills were learned, and many local people became quite good coopers, carpenters, clerks, shipwrights and so on. For the first time fishing on a larger scale was introduced; many people worked in fish processing, dried salt cod, and salted herring in barrels. Many Faeroe Islanders became quite confident in the English language and this was probably an asset for the emerging Brethren movement when W. G. Sloan and other British missionaries arrived in the second half of the century. Also many islanders were crew members on British fishing vessels and therefore knew English.

¹⁵¹ Svabo, J C, *Indberetninger fra en reise udi Færøe 1781-82*, Copenhagen 1959, p. 299.

¹⁵² West, J, *Faroe: the emergence of a nation*, London 1972, p. 47.

1.3.2 Political changes

The Faeroe Islands with less than 5,000 inhabitants were governed as part of the Danish-Norwegian Kingdom until after the Napoleonic War when Norway, by the peace treaty of Kiel in 1814,¹⁵³ was surrendered to Sweden; but Denmark retained the Faeroes, Iceland and Greenland. Denmark was in a poor state, politically and economically, from 1814 until 1830. Agriculture suffered because of a serious drop in prices all over Europe, and Denmark had an enormous external debt. In Faeroe there seemed to be little demand for free trade or other changes in these circumstances. A royal commission was set up in 1816 to report on the situation. One of the findings was that “the Faroe Islands are not accustomed to, and the inhabitants would not be benefited by, a free trade.”¹⁵⁴ Efforts were made to modernise the administration in the Danish Kingdom; and one step was the abolition of smaller assemblies, i.e. the district councils, including the Faeroese Løgting which was dissolved by a Royal Resolution in 1816 and its powers transferred to the judge, the ‘sorenskriver’.¹⁵⁵ It does not seem as if this upset many people and in 1821 the lögmaður was replaced by a Danish ‘Amtmand’, i.e. governor, so in the first half of the 19th century there was no elected assembly in the Faeroes. The Danish governor and other officials, often competent, enlightened and progressive, had the political power in the islands, much to the dismay of the Faeroese elite – the wealthy Crown-farmers and the clergy.

¹⁵³ “Bidrag til Danmarks og Norges historie i de første måneder af 1814,” *Historisk Tidsskrift*, Vol. 11, 4, Copenhagen 1953, p. 3.

¹⁵⁴ Mortensen, A; Joensen, J K; Petersen, P, *Føroyar undir frúum handli í 100 ár*, Tórshavn 1955, p. 70.

¹⁵⁵ Thorsteinsson, J, *Et Færø som Færø*, Tórshavn 1990, p. 41-42.

A person often mentioned in this period is Poul Poulsen (1766-1808), called ‘Nólsoyar-Páll’, i.e. Paul of Nólsoy, regarded as a national hero in the imagination of Faeroese people.¹⁵⁶ He got an opportunity as a sailor on Ryberg’s ships and left the islands as a young man, returning to Faeroe just before the turn of the century.¹⁵⁷ Nólsoyar-Páll is best known as an advocate for change and was the first person to articulate new views and visions in the Faeroes. Later he has particularly been remembered for composing satirical ballads ridiculing the Danish officials and their followers in the islands. His efforts, however, came to an abrupt end when his vessel was lost at sea during the winter of 1808/09 on its way to Faeroe with a cargo of much needed grain from Britain.¹⁵⁸ Nólsoyar-Páll’s activities showed Faeroe Islanders that initiatives from within the community could also bring about changes and progress. So although political, economic and social progress during the half century before 1814 was not impressive, the first steps for change took place in this period. The Brethren movement advocated the same attitudes – initiatives from within the community – later in the same century.

1.3.3 Socio-economic changes

The majority of islanders were still semi-serfs eking out their living at the farms. They were not allowed to marry unless they had a piece of land which could sustain a family, and they had practically no rights until the beginning of the 19th century when “útróður” (out-rowing, i.e. fishing in open boats) became profitable. The wealthy minority

¹⁵⁶ Many ‘national heroes’, in Faeroese ‘tjóðskaparhetjur’, were invented after nationalism emerged towards the end of the 19th century.

¹⁵⁷ Jakobsen, J, *Poul Nolsøe. Lívssøga og irkingar*, Tórshavn 1913.

¹⁵⁸ Jóansson, T, *English loanwords in Faroese*, Tórshavn 1997, p. 122.

consisted of Crown-farmers whose role in the economy gradually declined during the century; and around 1900 export of fish had overtaken that of agricultural products, mainly sweaters, hose and wool which the Monopoly bought in exchange for imported goods. Before the middle of the 19th century, fish and fish products had just been a supplement to agriculture and were hardly ever sold at the Monopoly. After that, however, fishing and fish processing were of increasing importance as illustrated in the following table as percentages of total annual exports:¹⁵⁹

Period	Woollen goods	Fish
1667-1676	92.5%	1.2%
1841-1850	55.1%	19.3%
1895-1899	6.3%	93.7%

The increasing population forced Faeroese with no or little land to turn to the sea for a living, and at the same time land was more intensely populated, particularly around Tórshavn which had just been a fortified trading post and administrative centre with a population of only a few hundreds officials, soldiers, warehouse labourers and paupers. From the 1830s, however, it developed into a fishing port, behind which were rented out small plots of land which provided for the new group of people: crofters/fishermen. A few decades later it was here that the Brethren movement first penetrated the community, and later in similar towns and villages.

Already in 1847 the progressive Lutheran clergyman J. C. Schrøter wrote to Sir Walter C Trevelyan who had visited the islands fifteen years previously:

“The prospect of the enclosures around Thorshavn¹⁶⁰ is now really charming if compared with its wild aspect formerly. I hope it will increase

¹⁵⁹ West, J, *Faroe: the emergence of a nation*, London 1972, pp. 74 and 97.

¹⁶⁰ Danish form of ‘Tórshavn’.

hastily. I suppose it is most of the stones cleared away, and the land well drained.”¹⁶¹

A couple of years later, 200 acres were under cultivation and the purchase of the land was already being discussed. As early as in the 1830s Schrøter, the only Faeroese clergyman at the time, expected a prosperous future for the Faeroes with free trade and a population of 20,000.¹⁶² Many circumstances contributed to such optimism. Potatoes were now grown rather than grain and this was a much more stable source of nutrition than barley, and around 1780 improvements in medical care took off.¹⁶³

1.4 Language and culture

1.4.1 Language

The main cultural heritage of the Faeroe Islands is the vernacular,¹⁶⁴ spoken by all native inhabitants, but like other languages it has developed and changed over time. For instance, long vowels became diphthongs which differ from those in other Nordic languages, and various isolative and combinative changes took place. New words were introduced, e.g. loanwords, and old words changed meaning and pronunciation in the passage of time. Studies into sound-changes, phonology and grammar indicate that it is possible to divide the developments of the language into Old Faeroese in the 16th century, Middle Faeroese in the 17th and 18th centuries, and Modern Faeroese¹⁶⁵ in the 19th and

¹⁶¹ Cited in West, J, *Faeroe: the emergence of a nation*, London 1972, p. 75.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 75.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 76..

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Sanneh, L, *Translating the message*, Orbis, New York (1989) 2005, p. 3.

¹⁶⁵ Lockwood, W. B., *An introduction to modern Faroese*, Tórshavn 1977, pp.28-101.

20th centuries.¹⁶⁶ It is, however, questionable how far the islanders were aware of a distinctive Faeroese language. Books written by Danish clergymen, notably the intellectual and progressive Lucas Debes (1623-1675), priest and later Dean as well as head of the Latin School, hardly mentions a Faeroese language in his book *Færoæ et Færoa Reserata*.¹⁶⁷ Neither does another Danish clergyman, Jørgen J. Landt (1753-1804), in his *Forsøg paa en Beskrivelse over Færøerne*, Copenhagen, 1800,¹⁶⁸ where only 3 pages out of 274 are about the language, said to seem “for a foreigner very incomprehensible in the beginning, but can be understood sooner than expected because a great deal of the words are old Danish or, more likely, Norwegian...”¹⁶⁹ Probably the author referred to the Faeroese variant of Danish with another pronunciation which natives knew from church, hymnodies and books of homilies and not the vernacular, Faeroese, which they spoke amongst themselves.¹⁷⁰ Even the Brethren evangelist Sloan did not seem to be aware of a Faeroese vernacular when he started his work in the islands in 1865.

Three Faeroe Islanders broke away from the old ways of thinking in this period: Jens Christian Svabo (1746-1824), Nicolaj Mohr (1742-1790) and Johan Henrik Schrøter (1771-1851).¹⁷¹ Having completed Latin School, they went to university in Copenhagen; and indeed the first two studied natural science and economics, very much in accordance with the trends in 18th century Europe, while Schrøter studied theology. In 1781 the Danish Exchequer asked Svabo to undertake a research and write a report on then

¹⁶⁶ Jóansson, T, *English loanwords in Faroese*, Tórshavn 1997, p. 45.

¹⁶⁷ English translation London 1676.

¹⁶⁸ English translation: Landt, G, *A description of the Faroe Islands*, London 1810.

¹⁶⁹ Landt, J. (1753-1804), in his *Forsøg paa en Beskrivelse over Færøerne*, Copenhagen 1800, p. 248.

¹⁷⁰ Probably Faeroe Islanders were bilingual shortly after the Reformation.

¹⁷¹ All three mentioned in chapter 7.

geography and economy of Faeroe. The result was a substantial work,¹⁷² a report from a visit in the Faeroes in 1781-82, certainly the most important and comprehensive source for 18th century community life, extensively used by later scholars over the years but tragically not published until 1959. However, both Svabo, Mohr and, later, Schrøter were fully aware that there was a Faeroese language. Already in 1773 Svabo, assisted by Mohr, had completed his first manuscript of *Dictionarium Færoense*, a Faeroese-Danish-Latin dictionary¹⁷³ and later he expanded his work so that there were five manuscripts, the largest comprising 7,500 entries.¹⁷⁴ Sadly this monumental work was not published until 1966; but scholars had had access to the manuscripts at the Royal Danish Library. In this way Svabo laid the foundations for what later became the struggle for the survival of the Faeroese language and culture.¹⁷⁵ The language was preserved as the most significant part of the Faeroese identity.¹⁷⁶

The state of the Faeroese language was very bad around 1800, not least in Svabo's and Schrøter's opinions. Svabo suggested that there were only two alternatives: (1) to bring the language back to its former purity, and (2) to introduce Danish in the whole community.¹⁷⁷ Svabo may have thought that his work was a last attempt at rescuing the remnants of a dying language, and Schrøter wrote that the language spoken in Tórshavn in his childhood was a mixture of Faeroese, Danish and English.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷² Svabo, J C, *Inberetninger fra en Reise udi Færøe 1781-82*, Copenhagen 1959.

¹⁷³ Djurhuus, N, "Introduction" to Svabo, *Inberetninger fra en Reise udi Færoe 1781-82*, Copenhagen 1959, XI-XII. – Peter Frederik Suhm (1728-1798), Norwegian-Danish scholar and Councillor of State.

¹⁷⁴ Djupedal, R, "Jens Christian Svabo", *Varðin*, Vols. 32 and 33, Tórshavn 1957 and 1969, p. 193.

¹⁷⁵ Jóansson, T, *English loanwords in Faroese*, Tórshavn 1997, p. 83.

¹⁷⁶ Debes, H J, *Nu er tann stundin...*, Tórshavn 1982, p. 76.

¹⁷⁷ Djurhuus, N, "Introduction" to Svabo, *Dictionarium Faeroense*, Copenhagen 1966.

¹⁷⁸ Matras Chr., "Inngangur" (Introduction), *Evangelium Sankta Matteusar*, Schrøter's 1823 translation; original documents and introduction by Prof. Dr. Chr. Matras, Tórshavn 1973, 2 Vols.

However, the language was not written down until around this time, and the first book in Faeroese was published in 1822. The following year, in 1823, a translation of the *Gospel according to Matthew* was published, translated by Johan Hendrik Schrøter.¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, the first manuscripts as well as the earliest books were written in a ‘phonetic’ way because there was no written standard until the second half of the 19th century.¹⁸⁰ Schrøter’s Bible translation got a mixed reception and was never used in churches because Danish was the only ‘church-language’ permitted and all the other clergymen were Danes. However, many elderly people were happy to hear God’s word read to them and, true to their stance, the first Brethren Sunday school used the translation already in 1880.¹⁸¹

1.4.2 Culture

One reason why the language survived may be found in the geographical position of the Faeroe Islands. Another reason is undoubtedly the wealth of oral tradition which has been passed on for centuries. First and foremost the huge amount of medieval ballads, comprising over 300 ballads of around 70,000 stanzas in total.¹⁸² In the Faeroes they still accompany the ring-dance which was popular all over Europe in the 13th-15th centuries.¹⁸³ Most of the ballads came from Europe, Scandinavia and Britain, the topics and stories being about kings, knights and heroes from early medieval times, such as *Karlamagnusar kvæði* (the Ballad of Charlemagne of France), *Sjúrðar kvæði* (Sigurd the

¹⁷⁹ More on this in chapter 7 where Bible translations will be discussed.

¹⁸⁰ Thráinsson, H, Petersen, H, Jacobsen, J í Lon, Hansen, Z S, *Faroese – an overview and reference and grammar*, Tórshavn 2004, p. 13.

¹⁸¹ See section 5.3.

¹⁸² Collected in the 19th century. Published in *Corpus Carminum Færoensium*, Vol 1-16, Copenhagen 1951-1968.

¹⁸³ Jacobsen, J-F, *Færørne – natur og folk*, Copenhagen 1936, p. 40.

Volsung's Ballad, i.e. the Scandinavian version of the German *Nibelungenlied*).¹⁸⁴ The latter was written down by the Danish clergyman Hans Chr. Lyngbye (1782-1837), assisted by J. H. Schrøter, and published in Denmark in 1822. These ballads represent views and attitudes from bygone times in foreign environments and have had a dubious impact on the mindsets and imaginations of the people well into the 20th century. A number of ballads were composed by Faeroe Islanders in the 18th and 19th centuries, based on the *Icelandic Sagas*; and around the same time local poets composed a special kind of ballad, called "táttur", which are satirical and personal, aggressive and intolerant but still popular in Faeroe, often composed to seek revenge.¹⁸⁵ The oral literature also included a number of fairy tales, folktales, proverbs or sayings, puzzles, and children's rhymes. Most of these can also be found in other cultures, especially in Scandinavia and Britain, and it is not correct to call all this literature 'oral' because it was all written down and printed decades ago. Today's participants in the 'Faeroese Dance' learn the ballads from the printed page. It is partly because the Brethren in their use of the vernacular tapped into these familiar associations which gave their message an additional emotional appeal to the people.

1.5 Ecclesiastical

Because there were still only seven clergymen to serve around 40 churches in the 18th century, sermons were mostly read by a local deacon. The Danish homilies were written

¹⁸⁴ Thurén, H, *Folkesangen på Færøerne*, Copenhagen 1901.

¹⁸⁵ Jackson, A, *The Faroes – the faraway islands*, London 1991, p. 69

by theology professor and bishop Jesper R. Brochmand (1585-1652).¹⁸⁶ The hymns were by the Danish poet, theologian, bishop and, later, professor, Thomas Kingo (1634-1703).¹⁸⁷ His hymnody, *Kingos salme-bog fra 1699* contained 300 hymns, 85 of which were composed by himself. From 1699 it was made compulsory in all Danish, Norwegian and Faeroese churches, and congregations took the melodies to their hearts but sang them in a variety of ways.¹⁸⁸ Kingo's hymns had a great impact in the Faeroes where churches developed a special tradition of singing. Only towards the middle of the 20th century were these hymns gradually replaced by more modern hymns. One small village church, Tjørnuvíkar Kirkja, got an organ as late as 1983.¹⁸⁹ Expressions like 'Kingosong' and 'Kingomelodies' refer to the traditional singing of hymns in Faeroese churches, spiritual ballad-singing during worship at home or stanzas in connection with fishing, fowling or harvest and at weddings and funerals. Although devout Christians, folk beliefs were rife in the Faeroe Islands; and long into the 20th century nature was abundant with terrible supernatural beings that people had to be aware of and careful about, such as demons, monsters, spirits, trolls and, especially, "huldufólk", invisible people living alongside humans.¹⁹⁰

1.5.1 Major historical changes

¹⁸⁶ Koch, Hal et al. (ed), *Den danske kirkes historie* (The Danish Church's History), Vol 4, Copenhagen 1959.

¹⁸⁷ Koch, Hal et al. (ed), *Den danske kirkes historie* (The Danish Church's History), Vol 4, Copenhagen 1959.

¹⁸⁸ See A. Brend's description of Kingo-song in section 7.4.4.

¹⁸⁹ Gregoriussen, J P, *Føroyskar kirkjur*, Vol. 1, Tórshavn 1996, p. 23.

¹⁹⁰ Jakobsen, J, *Færøske Folkesagn og Æventyr*, Tórshavn 1898-1901; Jakobsen, J, *Sagnir og ævintýr*, Tórshavn 1925.

The half decade before the first Evangelical missionary, William G. Sloan, arrived was a period of momentous social and economic, political and cultural changes. The reasons why Faeroe Islanders rejected Danish offers to dismantle the Royal Trade Monopoly¹⁹¹ included that this institution had social obligations towards the population. New research shows that the Monopoly had to accept all goods handed in at a comparatively high fixed price regardless of fluctuations in the European markets; furthermore, imported goods had to be sold at fixed prices, irrespective of fluctuations of prices in Denmark and Europe.¹⁹² Some small adjustments were made now and then, but every occasion of price rises caused unrest in the population. A Decree of 1790 demanded that poor people in every parish should turn to the clergyman or the local sheriff for certification that they were short of food. This certificate was then presented to the Trade Monopoly which was obliged to provide people with necessities.¹⁹³ Such a system was unsustainable, and although the Faeroese had refused to take over the trade, a growing number of individuals both in the Faeroes and in Denmark wanted free trade introduced. Eventually progress prevailed and in March 1855 an Act was passed to make trade free. So finally, in January 1856, the preconditions for further developments were a reality.¹⁹⁴ Considerable changes took place almost immediately. During the first three years, in 1856, 1857 and 1858, more than 100 trade licences were granted, and the geographical distribution was practically even in the various villages. In Tórshavn no less than 21 licences were issued

¹⁹¹ In the 1830s branches of the Monopoly were established in Tvøroyri, Klaksvík and Vestmanna.

¹⁹² Joensen, H A D, "Kongligi einahandilin – meira enn ein handil", L Nolsøe (Ed.), *Brot ur Føroya søgu*, Tórshavn 2010, pp. 85-97.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

¹⁹⁴ Trap, J P, *Danmark*, Vol. XIII: Færøerne, Copenhagen 1968, p. 211f.

over this short period.¹⁹⁵ One serious problem with free trade was that alcoholic drink was also sold in the new shops, leading to unprecedented drunkenness all over the islands.¹⁹⁶ Indeed, this was a major issue taken up by the Evangelical movements.

The decades just before Sloan came to the Faeroes also saw major political changes. The løgting (local parliament) had been abolished in 1816; and in 1821 a royal proclamation ordained that the amtmand (governor) advised by the sysselmænd (district sheriffs) and 'leading inhabitants', i.e. clergy and well-off farmers, should consider the applicability of Danish laws in the Faeroes.¹⁹⁷ More positive changes did happen. In 1828 the Faeroe Islands Provincial Library was founded by a Danish official and obtained a royal grant. The lepers' hospital, near Tórshavn, functioned as a home for the destitute, leprosy having become extinct in 1744; and in 1829 this dilapidated building was replaced by a new hospital. Another Danish official helped establish a savings bank in Tórshavn, and already in 1848 over 400 islanders had accounts there.¹⁹⁸

The spirit following the 1830-revolutions made Danes want change, and King Frederik VI announced his intention of constituting provincial assemblies, elected on a franchise based on land ownership; and these came into being in 1835.¹⁹⁹ The Faeroese representatives at the Roskilde Assembly,²⁰⁰ however, were all crown nominees and former officials in the Faeroes. Iceland's position was recognised and the old Alting revived as an advisory body; and in 1846 a Faeroese petition for a similar arrangement

¹⁹⁵ Joensen, J K, Mortensen, A, Petersen, P, *Føroyar undir fríum handli i 100 ar*, Tórshavn 1955, pp. 95-102.

¹⁹⁶ Jacobsen, E S, *Brennivínssølan i Føroyum*, Tórshavn 2004.

¹⁹⁷ West, J, *Faroe: the emergence of a nation*, London 1972, p. 77.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 79-80.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

²⁰⁰ Jensen, Hans, *De danske Stænderforsamlingers Historie 1-2*, Copenhagen 1931-34.

was presented at Roskilde. The 1848 February revolution speeded up things, and the same year absolute monarchy ceased to exist in Denmark and a constitution was adopted in 1849.²⁰¹ Danes regarded the Faeroes as just another Danish province and were unaware of the existence of a Faeroese language – something they obviously shared with many islanders. Others, such as Faeroese students in Copenhagen and Danish intellectuals, including the respected N. F. S. Grundtvig, argued that the Faeroes were a special case and the islanders had their own language. The first election in the Faeroes to the Danish Parliament was held in 1851 with 68% participation, and in March 1852 an Act was passed to re-establish the *løgting*, the first election held that autumn.²⁰²

The shift in the 1850s changed and widened the perspectives and opened up new possibilities, laying the foundations for modernisation of the Faeroese society; but so far there was no language or national movement. These only emerged thirty years later although some individuals anticipated such developments. In the middle of all these major changes, in 1865, W G Sloan arrived on the scene with something new. This time not within economy or politics, but religion: a new branch of Christianity, Evangelicalism, was introduced. The above gives some insight into the ability of the small, backward and traditional Faeroese community to be receptive to such a preacher and the new attitudes that he represented and promoted. Also the social and political changes undoubtedly made people feel frustrated and insecure, open to new spiritual impulses.

²⁰¹ West, J, *Faroe: the emergence of a nation*, London 1972, p. 86-87.

²⁰² Steining, J, “Seinna søgan”, *Føroyar I*, Copenhagen 1958, p. 208.

The processes which had started around 50 years before Sloan arrived were still in full swing, and it can be claimed that this was in the middle of the period of groundbreaking transformations. The only kind of fishing was still inshore fishing in open boats.²⁰³ Not until 1872 was the first of many seagoing fishing vessels acquired. Migration from traditional farming villages had just started, but still at a very slow pace. Large parts of the population were starting to turn their backs to the old ways, the traditional values, including the more or less stagnant and backward looking ways in which Christianity was practised. Everything was still in the melting pot: politics and socio-economics, culture and religion; so the time was ripe for new demands and ideas.

1.5.2 Churches and missions

The problem was that the whole structure and essence of the established church did not satisfy the spiritual needs of many people when society started to change radically. The Established Danish Lutheran State Church, although since 1849 called ‘The People’s Church’, was never really a church for and by the people. Paragraph 4 in the Danish Constitution says that “The evangelical-Lutheran church is the Danish people’s church and, as such, is supported by the state.”²⁰⁴ The church never received its own constitution and even “the present situation (in 2002) of the Danish church might...seem somewhat anomalous”.²⁰⁵ The monarch is the ‘executive’ authority and there is a minister of church matters in the government, but no single person, authority or body can speak on behalf of

²⁰³ Some were fishing on British vessels quite early and most of the century.

²⁰⁴ Lausten, M. S., *A church history of Denmark*, Ashgate 2002, p. 230.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 282.

the People's Church.²⁰⁶ Clergymen are divided into groups from theologically progressive liberals to conservative pietists, close to the Home Mission, and there is a constant struggle between these two main factions. In the Faeroe Islands the Home Mission is accused of trying to have 'its own' clergy installed in high positions within the church hierarchy, and the recently (2007) devolved 'Faeroese People's Church' is a copy of the Danish one. More relevant are the practices, i.e. the traditional ritualistic, impersonal and sometimes elevated form in which the established church has brought the Christian message. For most of the time islanders felt comfortable and secure with this form, but when the whole society went through unprecedented changes, a growing number of individuals found this form unsatisfactory. The old theology and practices felt dated, out of touch with life and unable to meet the demands of the new society. Instead of a communal, slightly superficial belief system shared by everybody and imposed by authorities in another country and by foreigners, many people felt the need for a more personal, intimate and direct belief system. This was what the Brethren movement had to offer.

The problem with the established church in the Faeroes as well as elsewhere was that they only transmitted the message, and scholars within Evangelicalism have pointed out that this is only a "small part of the total process that leads to understanding."²⁰⁷ Clergymen are open to criticism for not translating the message into learning which is much more demanding, involving communication and acceptance. The Evangelicals, including the Brethren, saw this and distinguished four elements in effective communication: (1) the message, (2) the audience, (3) the responses, and (4) the

²⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 283.

²⁰⁷ Drane, J., *Evangelism for a new age*, London 1994, pp. 80-81.

communicator.²⁰⁸ “Effective communication involves a lot more than merely presenting a message”,²⁰⁹ as was (and is) the practice of most established churches.

For forty years Brethren were the only evangelical movement in the Faeroes, but in 1904 the “Dansk Indremission” (Danish Inner or Home Mission)²¹⁰ was formally established in the islands, undeniably prompted by Brethren work.²¹¹ There had been Danish Pietist and Home Mission clergymen in the Faeroes before this, and in the second half of the 1890s Home Mission meetings had been arranged in Tórshavn and on Suðuroy. Many Home Mission people regarded the Brethren work as a prototype and at a meeting in Tórshavn their initiatives and practices were held up as shining examples of how modern Christianity could be introduced in the Faeroes.²¹² So with the arrival of the first Danish Home Mission worker in the early twentieth century, a second evangelical movement which paralleled that of the Brethren, and learned from it, started working in the islands.

This second renewal movement, this time within the state Lutheran Church, represented a branch of Pietism and its messages and attitudes had been presented by Danish books of sermons and homilies used by the local Faeroese lay deacons.²¹³ In 1892 a Home Mission Sunday School started in the village of Vágur on Suðuroy, the southernmost island, and one in 1894 in Tórshavn. In 1895 a young Danish Home Mission clergyman, Einer Michael Riise (1870-1898), was appointed on Suðuroy and he

²⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 82.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 83.

²¹⁰ Established in 1861 by pietistic clergy- and laymen; works within the established church.

²¹¹ Hansen, G., *Eindarmentan Føroyinga og vekingarrørslurnar*, Tórshavn 1987, p. 225.

²¹² Letter of 17th January 1907 to Chairman Zeuthen, Dean, from A. F. Moe. Cited in Hansen 1987, p. 264.

²¹³ Wolles, Ó., ‘Brødremenighederne på Færøerne 1865-1930’, MA-dissertation, Aarhus Universitet 1993, p.16.

preached energetically at revivalist meetings in various villages; but due to ill health he soon left the Faeroes. However, in 1896 a parish hall was built in Tórshavn.²¹⁴ That year another Danish clergyman, Franz Busch (1869-1959), with Home Mission leanings, was appointed in the same village on Suðuroy and on his initiative the first missionaries for the Danish Home Mission, John Rying-Jensen (1878-1948) and Axel Moe (1877-1942), were sent to the Faeroes in 1904. They were very enthusiastic in spreading the Home Mission's message in towns and villages, and gradually other Danes joined them for shorter or longer periods. Moe was regarded as the person who made the movement viable in the islands. They also tried other initiatives such as the temperance organisation Blue Cross as well as YMCA and YWCA, first in Tórshavn and in Vágur on Suðuroy. In the 1920s the Home Mission expanded its work considerably by appointing four missionaries to the four main fishing ports.

In the early years the clergy was much opposed to the Faeroese language and national movements²¹⁵ and many of the Danes actually ridiculed both the vernacular and the indigenous culture.²¹⁶ For instance, Axel Fr. Moe wrote an article in a Faeroese paper claiming that Faeroese was no language, that written Faeroese would impoverish the population, not least religiously, that the islands would be isolated from Denmark and, consequently, the rest of the world, and he also claimed that islanders only read ungodly books.²¹⁷ This was a deplorable way of approaching a population that the Home Mission wanted to win over, and both Moe and Rying-Jensen were soon accused of involving themselves, the Church and its mission in the emerging national and political struggles

²¹⁴ Parish hall for the whole congregation; not the same as a Mission Hall.

²¹⁵ Petersen, F., "Kristendom og Nationalitet", *Kirketidende* (Faeroe Church Tidings), No. 3, 1894, p. 3.

²¹⁶ Bruun, E., "Et Folk – Kristenfolket!", *Kirketidende*, No. 2, 1894, p. 1.

²¹⁷ *Dimmalaetting*, 41/1902 (11th October 1902). Cited in Hansen 1987, p. 220.

which marked the period, especially after 1906 when the Unionist Party and the Self-government Party were established.²¹⁸ Moe felt very lonely and isolated in the Faeroes, even claiming that most of all he felt like a person whom nobody wanted or needed.²¹⁹ His personal deficiencies and attitudes, sadly encouraged by some Danes, already in 1902 made the Home Mission appear as an organization which put Danish cultural and political pressure on Faeroe Islanders.²²⁰ He even accused the Danish clergymen of being spiritually dead because they did not agree with him and he made himself and the movement unpopular in the population, so not until after World War I did the mission get any real support.²²¹ By then Faeroese missionaries gradually took over and attitudes changed. The Home Mission Council, established in 1922, only had an advisory role and acted as an intermediary between the National Council for the Danish Home Mission and the work in the islands, e.g. in appointing missionaries. In 1990 Heimamissionin (The Faeroe Home Mission) was established but they cooperate closely with the Danish Home Mission.²²²

Some other churches were introduced to the Faeroes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As early as in 1857 the Roman Catholic Church started a mission in the Faeroes and built a church but in 1870 gave up. However, in 1931 they started again, built a church, a nunnery and a big school in Tórshavn; but not many conversions took place. The Seventh-day Adventists started missionary work in the Faeroes in 1910, and in

²¹⁸ Hansen, G., *Eindarmentan Føroyinga og vekingarrørslurnar*, Tórshavn 1987, pp. 221f.

²¹⁹ Moe, A., "Fra Indre Missions Første dage paa Færøerne" (From the Home Mission's earliest days in the Faeroes), *Indre Missions Tidende*, Copenhagen 1936. Cited in Hansen 1987, p. 218.

²²⁰ Hansen, G., *Eindarmentan Føroyinga og vekingarrørslurnar*, Tórshavn 1987, p. 219.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

²²² <http://www.mission.fo/index.asp?pg=41>

1919 the first congregation was established;²²³ they had some influence upon the Brethren for a while, but never had significant importance in the islands.²²⁴ They have a church in Tórshavn and also a school. The Salvation Army was introduced in 1912.

In 1990 research, based on questionnaires and interviews with 400 males and 425 females, was carried out regarding the various religious denominations and groups²²⁵ and showed that the established Lutheran church comprised 38,229 persons or 80.8 per cent of the population, its Home Mission 3,536 or 7.4 per cent, the Brethren 5,448 or 11.4 per cent, Pentecostals 717 or 1.5 percent, while the others (Adventists, the Salvation Army, Roman Catholics, Jehovah Witnesses and Baha'i) had less than 100 adherents; 1,625 or 3.4 per cent did not belong to any religion.²²⁶ The established Lutheran Church is, like the Danish one, called Fólkkakirkjan (The Peoples' Church) and today (2011) there are 60 churches in the islands; and the number of clergymen has increased to 24 from the 7 who served from the Reformation up to 1909. The bishop is stationed in Tórshavn, and the number of parishes has gradually increased from the original seven because they have been subdivided due to changes in the demography.²²⁷

1.6 Socio-political environment

Towards the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th many villages declined while other places attracted great numbers of people because workforces were demanded for the new seagoing vessels and labour, e.g. fish processing, mainly

²²³ However, already from 1910 two Danish Adventist missionaries were in the islands and had baptized a few people at Viðareiði and in Vágur. *FF-blaðið*, No. 374, 24th August 2006, p. 16.

²²⁴ Wolles, Ó., 'Brødreminighederne på Færøerne', MA dissertation, Aarhus Universitet 1993, p.18.

²²⁵ Worked out by folklorist Dr Eyðun Andreassen, professor, Faeroe University, Tórshavn 1990.

²²⁶ For instance the figures for Brethren are too low; and there are at least a dozen Baha'is.

²²⁷ Information obtained from the Bishop's Office, Tórshavn, on 25th May 2011.

performed by women, maintenance of ships and gear, businesses, workshops and so on.²²⁸ The population also increased enormously: from 1801 to 1935 the number of inhabitants increased fivefold, from 5,200 to 25,700. The workforce had been concentrated around the farms, but when new opportunities opened up, farmhands of both sexes preferred the new way of life which a more profitable and modern production had to offer.²²⁹ Politically, however, there was an obvious decline after the first lively elections to the Danish parliament in the 1850s. The spirit of Niels C. Winther²³⁰ and others had evaporated and nothing was to replace it. The majority of the lögting, local parliament, still comprised conservative wealthy farmers and, gradually, also businessmen. Later nationalists were probably right when claiming that during the period 1860 to 1900 the Faeroese electorate did not think that the lögting was able to do much anyway, and that the Danish parliament was too far away.²³¹

A change took place with the establishment of the 'Føroyingafelag' (Faeroese Association) in 1888/89 which, among other things, demanded full rights for the Faeroese language, economic progress and self-government in domestic affairs.²³² Many Faeroe Islanders of various political shades seemed to agree upon these matters, especially regarding the language question.²³³ Almost twenty years later, in 1906, the first political parties were formed on the national issues; first the Unionist party, opposed to changes in the status of the Faeroes within the Kingdom of Denmark, then the Self-governing Party,

²²⁸ West, J, *Faroe: the emergence of a nation*, London 1972, p. 127ff.

²²⁹ Jóansson, T, *English loanwords in Faroese*, Tórshavn 1997, p. 126-127.

²³⁰ N. C. Winther (1822-1892), lawyer, politician and journalist; elected Faeroese member of the Danish parliament 1851-1857, the new lögting 1852-53 and 1855. Disappointed he left the Faeroes for Denmark in 1856.

²³¹ Debes, H. J., ...*nú er tann stundin*, Tórshavn 1982, p. 142.

²³² *Ibid.*, pp. 149f.

²³³ Rasmussen, P M, *Den færøske sprogrejsning*, í Hoydølum 1987, pp. 110f.

led by the charismatic but rather controversial Jóannes Patursson (1866-1946).²³⁴ It was during this period that the foundations were laid for further developments, especially the emergence of the language and national movements which both became political issues of paramount importance. In reality these two issues divided the whole Faeroese community until economic issues were introduced into political life from the end of the 1920s.²³⁵

From the turn of the century Faeroese society was in turmoil; the traditional social pattern crumbled and a new one had not yet been established; increasing poverty and disorientation took hold in the fast growing working class. Wages were deplorably low and most work was seasonal, e.g. fishing and fish processing mainly went on from spring to autumn. Women from all over the country went to the fishing ports, such as Tvøroyri, to salt and dry fish in open air. They left home during this period and lived on the top floors of store houses.²³⁶ In such an environment it is understandable that many people felt an urge to find something to hold on to. The church was unable to adapt to new demands and stuck to the old ways; but the Evangelical movements, first the Brethren, later also the Home Mission, were considerably closer to people's wants and aspirations. The small Faeroese community can be seen like a kind of laboratory in this respect,²³⁷ and arguably the Brethren filled a kind of vacuum which the unprecedented changes had created.²³⁸

²³⁴ Patursson was King's farmer of Kirkjubøur and a brilliant poet and writer. The farm consists of the land belonging to the Catholic bishops and is by far the largest in the islands.

²³⁵ Jóansson, T, *English loanwords in Faroese*, Tórshavn 1997, pp. 127-28.

²³⁶ Jóansson, T, *Saman tí standið* (Faeroe Workers Union 1925-1975), Tórshavn 1975.

²³⁷ Jóansson, T, "The Brethren in the Faeroes", *Brethren Historical Review*, Vol. 6, 2010, p. 54.

²³⁸ Jóansson, T, "Tá ið kirkjan misti monopolið", *Krossvegir*, Tórshavn 2007, pp. 65f.

The political system was gradually forced to cope with social problems. Trade unions were established from 1911 (The Fishermen's Union), and in 1925 a countrywide organisation, comprising all existing unions and encouraging the establishment of new ones, was instigated.²³⁹ Shortly after that the Social Democratic Party was founded, and in the late 1930s the rightwing People's Party came into being. Later, after World War II, yet another left party, the Republican Party, was formed.²⁴⁰ Sadly, however, the lögting has always been a conservative institution and the main political question is still the degree of cooperation with Denmark.

During the war years 1940-45, Denmark was invaded by Nazi Germany while the Faeroes were occupied by British forces, so all connections between Denmark and its North Atlantic Provinces were severed. These years were extremely profitable for the Faeroese who mainly transported fish from Iceland to Britain, generating great profits but also suffered heavy losses of lives and ships in the process.²⁴¹ After the war it was obvious that the Faeroes could not go back to the situation before the war because they had been able to govern themselves (under British supervision), so after much discussion amongst local politicians who could not agree, the Danish government arranged a plebiscite where Faeroe Islanders could decide whether they wanted to become an autonomous area within the kingdom or wanted independence.²⁴² This took place on 14th September 1946, only two thirds of the voters went to the ballot boxes, and only a little more than half of those wanted severance from Denmark. So a kind of

²³⁹ Jóansson, T, *Saman tí standið* (Faeroe Workers Union 1925-1975), Tórshavn 1975, pp. 24ff.

²⁴⁰ Wang, Z, *Stjórn málafrøði* (Political Science), Hoyvík 1988.

²⁴¹ Muller, Ei., *Fem ár under Union Jack*, København 1945. Joensen, J, *Vikingasynir*, Tórshavn 1946. Háberg, P, *Bumbur yvir Føroyar*, Tórshavn 1946.

²⁴² Wang, Z, *Stjórn málafrøði*, Hoyvík 1988.

compromise was reached and the Danish government agreed that the Faeroes should no longer be a Danish county but 'a self-governing community within the Danish Kingdom.'²⁴³ After the war Faeroe was well off, but already around 1950 there was a serious national debt. In 1951 workers went on a general strike, and in 1953 and 1954 the Fishermen's Union²⁴⁴ went on strike to demand a minimum wage.²⁴⁵

After these tumultuous years, in 1959, the Social Democratic Party, the Unionist Party and the Self-government Party formed *landstýri*, the local government, and started negotiations with the Danish government, mainly on social policies. Also they succeeded in getting enormous loans both for improving the infrastructure in the Faeroes and in a much needed renovation of the fishing fleet as well as building modern fish processing plants. Since then the living standard in the islands has been almost on a par with that in Denmark proper although the economy was subsidised by the Danish treasury;²⁴⁶ but today (2011) this contribution only amounts to about 5-7 per cent.²⁴⁷

Economic difficulties in the 1990s, mainly caused by a drop in the vital fish catch but not least by poor management of the economy, resulted in bankruptcies and closures of industries and banks. Thousands of people lost their income and emigrated, but with massive Danish and other loans and investments the Faeroese economy recovered within a decade or so. The dependence on fishing means that the economy remains extremely vulnerable. The Faeroese hope to broaden their economic base. Oil found close to the Faroese waters seems to give hope for deposits in the immediate area, and this might lay

²⁴³ *Lovtidende* 1949, pp. 225-260.

²⁴⁴ The fisherman and Brethren member Frederik Hansen (1910-1988) was on union-committee, called 'Strike-Frederik' because of his involvement in the strike. Jf. Section 5.1.1.

²⁴⁵ Patursson, E, *Fiskiveiði – Fiskimenn*, Tórshavn 1962.

²⁴⁶ Patursson, E, *Fiskiveiði – Fiskimenn*, Tórshavn 1962.

²⁴⁷ In total around DKK800m, i.e. £94.5m.

the basis for sustained economic growth. Since the turn of the century, 2000, information technology and business projects have been fostered in the islands and seem to attract investments.²⁴⁸

1.7 Literature on the early period

Apart from Dicuili's book, *Faeroe Saga, Løgtings- og Vártingsbøkurnar* and *Seyðabrævið*, the first substantial book dealing with the Faeroe Islands was written by the progressive Danish clergyman Lucas J. Debes and published in 1673.²⁴⁹ In 1782 the Faeroese scholar Jens Christian Svabo completed his report on the Faeroes, unfortunately not published until 1959;²⁵⁰ and his huge *Dictionarium Faeroense*, Faeroese-Danish-Latin dictionary, completed shortly after 1800, but not published until 1966.²⁵¹ An interesting book was written by the Danish clergyman Jørgen Landt and published in 1800,²⁵² and in 1840 the Danish governor's book on the excursion with Faeroe Islanders to Shetland, Orkney and Scotland to learn new fishing methods, and other developments, was published.²⁵³ In 1815 the Englishman Sir George Stuart Mackenzie wrote "A short report of the Faroe Isles" for the *Edinburgh Encyclopaedia*, where he mentions the high

²⁴⁸ Hagstovan, Faeroes Statistics, Tórshavn 2009; *CIA World Fact Book*, 2009.

²⁴⁹ Debes, Lucas, *Færoe & Færoe reserata*, Copenhagen 1673; recent edition in Tórshavn and Copenhagen 1963. English translation: *A description of the Faroe Islands*, London 1676.

²⁵⁰ Svabo, J C, *Indberetninger fra en reise udi Færøe 1781-82*, Copenhagen 1959.

²⁵¹ Svabo, J C, *Dictionarium Færoense*, Copenhagen 1966.

²⁵² Landt, J, *Forsøg over en beskrivelse over Færøerne*, Copenhagen 1800; recent publication, Tórshavn 1965. – English translation: *A description of the Faroe Islands*, London 1810.

²⁵³ Pløyen, C, *Erindringer fra en reise til Shetlandsøerne, Ørkenøerne og Skotland i sommeren 1839*, Copenhagen 1840. – English translation: Lerwick 1894.

quality of home teaching and suggests that most children in Faeroe are just as good as Danish children at reading and writing (Danish, of course).²⁵⁴

There are two doctoral dissertations on Christianity in the Faeroes, one by Rev Dr Petur Martin Rasmussen, 'Den færøske sprogrejsning', í Hoydølum, 1987, mainly dealing with the struggle within the established church to have the Faeroese language accepted in the Church, and one by Rev Dr Gerhard Hansen, 'Eindarmentan føroyinga og vekingarrørslurnar', Tórshavn, 1987, dealing with the impact that revival movements had in the Faeroese society. Dr Hansen argues that these movements, in particular the Brethren, were responsible for breaking up what he sees as a 'unitary culture' in the islands. I would argue the opposite, i.e. that the community had already been broken up before the revivalist movements entered the scene. The reason for their growth can be seen exactly as a consequence of the bewilderment and frustration which the sudden and fundamental political, socio-economic and cultural changes brought about in the 19th century.²⁵⁵

*

The main findings in the survey given in this chapter summarise the distinctiveness of Faeroese culture and language, the rise of modern society, and the development of a national and political consciousness. I have also highlighted the transformations which I will argue prepared the way for the rise of the Brethren movement in the islands. The

²⁵⁴ Hansen, G, *Eindarmentan føroyinga og vekingarrørslurnar*, Tórshavn 1987, p. 46.

²⁵⁵ Jóansson, T, "Tá ið kirkjan misti monopolið", *Krossvegir*, Tórshavn 2007, pp. 154-167.

main purpose of this within the present thesis is to show what kind of society the
modernising trends replaced.

2. The Brethren Movement

This chapter gives an overview of the emergence of the Brethren movement in Britain, its founders and key figures up to the time when William Gibson Sloan went on his first missionary trip to the Faeroes in 1865. Having explained the background, I highlight those aspects in Brethren theology and practices which are still recognisable in the Faeroese movement.

2.1 Theological context

The Brethren Movement is a branch of the Evangelicalism which emerged in Britain in the first half of the 18th century, heavily influenced by 17th-century European Pietism which in turn was influenced by late 16th-century English Puritanism. Today many theologians and historians tend to use the term ‘pietism’ as a common idiom for all 17th-, 18th-, and 19th-century movements which saw the 16th-century Reformation as an unfinished enterprise and suggested that “the church is always to be reformed”.¹

Partially influenced by the Enlightenment, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries Evangelicalism, not least the Brethren movement, was also heavily affected by Romanticism. From the mid-18th century, the ideas of these movements pointed towards a ‘religion of the heart’ rather than of the intellect, not to mention habit or tradition. The historian Mark Noll suggests that this involved a transformation toward Christian faith defined as correct living, toward godly fellowship as a principal goal, toward lay and more democratic appropriation of the Bible, from obedience toward expression, toward

¹ Herzog, F, *European pietism reviewed*, San Jose 2003, pp. 3; 13-17.

music as a shared expression of ordinary people, and toward preaching as impassioned appeals for “closing with Christ”.² These ingredients were also important in the Brethren movement which emerged in the early 19th century as a further development of Evangelicalism. The foremost UK scholar in the field of Evangelicalism, David Bebbington, asserts that 18th-century Evangelicalism and the Enlightenment were not basically opposed to each other, and that Evangelicalism had close links to the Enlightenment which was indeed the main reason why the former emerged.³ Such statements may seem controversial, but Herzog suggests that at the outset Pietism expressed the “liberation of Christians from backwardness and oppression in post-Reformation Orthodoxy”.⁴

2.2 Political and cultural environment

The context in which the Brethren Movement emerged, then, was marked by turbulence in political, social, emotional and ecclesiastical life and very much influenced by trends and ideas prevalent at the time. In Britain, the initial reaction to the French Revolution had been favourable, but when the news of subsequent terror reached people, this soon gave way to alarm.⁵ Among many people of faith a keen interest in biblical prophecy took hold and contemporary events were often interpreted in eschatological terms. The upper and higher middle classes felt vulnerable at the prospect of possible uprising, and the lower classes felt insecure and fearful at the prospects of geographical and social

² Noll, M A, *The rise of Evangelicalism*, Illinois 2003, p. 52.

³ Bebbington, D, *Evangelicalism in modern Britain*, Boston 1989, p. 74.

⁴ Herzog, F, *European pietism reviewed*, San Jose 2003, p. 1.

⁵ Pugh, M, *Britain since 1789*, London 1999, p. 6.

dislocation.⁶ Many people seemed to accept the existing social order as a divinely-ordained system which was legitimated by the Established Church.⁷ However, when the Brethren Movement emerged, changes were taking place in the political sphere, in 1828 Dissenters were allowed to participate in local government,⁸ and the following year Roman Catholics were given extensive rights as citizens in the United Kingdom.⁹

The spirit and attitudes of the time also changed, and some felt that pure Enlightenment and Rationality turned out to be too restrictive and narrow. In the late 18th century a new outlook took shape which emphasised the limitations of reason and human perception. This was the Romantic movement which brought forward the notions of mystery, the past and emotion, nature and imagination.¹⁰ The Brethren movement took shape while Romantic thinkers tried to change the way in which Christianity was seen and practised, and because 18th-century Evangelicalism had been formed by the Enlightenment, the temper of Romanticism added a new dimension to Evangelicalism, particularly influencing the emerging 19th-century Brethren movement. Tim Grass suggests that the Romantic influences on religion incorporated three characteristics, one being the primitive model of the Apostolic Church as described in *Acts*, the other two: “a heightened stress on inward spiritual experience (which led to the accusation of tending to downplay the importance of right conduct), and the belief that God’s working was to

⁶ Grass, T, *Gathering in his name: The story of Open Brethren in Britain and Ireland*, Paternoster 2006, p.9.

⁷ Hempton, D N, “Evangelicalism and eschatology”, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 31, 1980, pp.179-94

⁸ The Test and Corporation Acts of 1828.

⁹ The Emancipation Act, 1829.

¹⁰ Grass, T, *Gathering to his name*, Paternoster 2006, p. 10.

be looked for in supernatural events, rather than in the regular providential ordering of things.”¹¹

2.3 Brethren emerge

There is some doubt about exactly when the Brethren emerged because what eventually formed the movement started with small groups, polygenesis, independent of each other, which gradually found common ground, made contact and co-operated.¹² In 1825, Anthony Norris Groves (1795-1853) published the pamphlet which some regard as the start of the movement¹³ and this was one reason why he came in contact with others who shared his spiritual views. Groves had suffered from several spiritual crises, caused by doubts in the way that he saw and practised his religion. Still a young man he got clarification, and influenced by Bessie Paget (1783-1863) from a Quaker background, he found peace and plunged himself into biblical studies and set up Bible groups. He was converted and joined the growing network of Protestants in Britain who wanted to follow the teaching of Christ and the example of his apostles in a more literal way than was common in the churches. He left the Anglican Church in 1828, adopted a deliberate non-denominational identity, and was soon convinced that he experienced a calling to missionary work. Groves contacted the leadership of the Church Mission Society (CMS), founded in 1799, the Anglican missionary society and was accepted to become one of

¹¹ Grass, T, *Gathering to his name*, Paternoster 2006, p. 11.

¹² Coad, F R, *A history of the Brethren movement*, Paternoster 2001 (1968), p. 29. – Neatby, W B, *A history of the Plymouth Brethren*, London 1902, p. p. 4. – Bruce, F F, *Who are the Brethren?*, p. 3.

¹³ Groves, A N, *Christian devotedness*, London 1825 (2nd ed. 1829).

their missionaries overseas, provided that he was ordained. After this he left his career as a dentist and started studying theology at Trinity College, Dublin.¹⁴

Groves paid no attention to external forms, such as services, organisation, formal training, ceremonies, buildings or finances, and he developed 'a primitive' ecclesiology, regarding the principles and practices of the early churches in the New Testament as models to be followed by every generation. Some of his closest friends became leading figures in the groups later known as Brethren, or Plymouth Brethren.¹⁵ From 1826 onwards Groves visited a Bible study group in Dublin where current ecclesiastical and biblical questions were discussed. One of the questions was the Lord's Supper in which, according to Scripture, no special class or ordination was authorised to conduct 'the breaking of the bread', as it became known.¹⁶ The practice had been entrusted to the disciples to perform, and Groves emphasised this at a meeting in Dublin in 1827.¹⁷ At this stage they also discussed whether Holy Communion should be celebrated in private. There is not total agreement as to who participated in the first private Lord's Supper or where in Dublin the ceremony took place; one source, however, gives the names of seven persons, and they are John Vesey Parnell, Lord Congleton, (1805–1883), A. N. Groves (1795-1853), J. N. Darby (1800-1882), John Gifford Bellett (1795-1864), Dr Edward Cronin (1801-1882) and William J. Stokes (1804-1878).¹⁸

¹⁴ Rowdon, H, *The origins of the Brethren*, London, 1967, pp. 38-39. – Coad, F R, *A history of the Brethren movement*, Paternoster 2001 (1968), p. 16 and 18.

¹⁵ Dann, R B, *The primitivist missiology of Anthony Norris Groves (1795-1853): A radical influence on nineteenth-century Protestant mission*, University of Liverpool 2006.

¹⁶ Grass, T, *Gathering to his name*, Paternoster 2006, p. 14.

¹⁷ Coad, F R, *A history of the Brethren Movement*, Paternoster 2001 (1968), p. 17-24.

¹⁸ Rowdon, H, *The origins of the Brethren*, London 1967, pp. 45-46.

Gradually the recognised churches were no longer the only ones which celebrated the Lord's Supper, once regarded as a sacrament taking place exclusively there. Indeed this ceremony became a hallmark of the new Brethren movement – and the beginning of their detachment from the institutional Churches. The two things hang together and the founders of the new movement were unable to recognise the New Testament regulations and practices in what went on in the established churches.¹⁹ The early Brethren aimed at establishing a fellowship of Christians which would not exclude any true believer, and they objected to all kinds of sectarianism, setting themselves the goal to work towards Christian unity. The division of Christendom was seen as a deadly sin because believers were being separated.²⁰ For A. N. Groves these new attitudes made him reconsider his situation and decide not to receive any ordination, was re-baptised and became an advocate for believer's baptism, i.e. adult baptism, a view not shared by all involved in the young movement.²¹ In 1829 Groves left the Church Mission Society but travelled with a party for Baghdad to work as a missionary among Muslims.²² Up to this stage he had been regarded as the leader of the movement; but now many outstanding, well educated and able personalities had joined the movement.²³

The most important leader became John Nelson Darby (1800-1882). He was educated in Dublin, first as a lawyer, but after religious troubles and experiences, he also graduated in classics, and in 1826 was ordained into the Anglican priesthood. However,

¹⁹ Soltau, H W, *Who are the Brethren?*, Glasgow n.d, p. 8. – Also on: <http://www.brethrenonline.org/articles/soltau.htm>

²⁰ Soltau, H W, *Who are the Brethren?*, Glasgow n.d, p. 3; 11.

²¹ Coad, F R, *A history of the Brethren Movement*, Paternoster 2001 (1968), p. 22-23; Rowdon, H, *The origins of the Brethren*, London 1967, p. 188.

²² Grass, T, *Gathering to his name*, Paternoster 2006, pp. 22-23.

²³ Rowdon, H, *The origins of the Brethren*, London 1967, p. 41.

Darby's service did not last long because he soon developed in a more radical direction;²⁴ and it is arguable that Darby translated his High Church views, as well as Calvinist ones, into his later ecclesiology.²⁵ In 1828 he published the booklet *Considerations on the Nature and Unity of the Church of Christ*, one of the first Brethren publications. The booklet offers a forceful indictment of the weaknesses within the fellowship in the established churches, and in this way he contributed significantly to the debate surrounding the state of the Church.²⁶

As in the early 18th-century emergence of Evangelicalism,²⁷ in the 1820s and 1830s, a number of individuals all over Britain had felt a need for conversion and went through a process of religious experiences involving conversion,²⁸ justification of faith and a feeling of assurance²⁹ of forgiveness of sins and of salvation.³⁰ Gradually these people came together, were joined by others and arranged informal gatherings where they broke bread and prayed; some such groups or meetings then developed into the assemblies³¹ which were established in Ireland (e.g. in Dublin) and England (e.g. Plymouth, Bristol and London) in the early 1830s,³² and in Scotland (Edinburgh) in 1838;³³ and almost at the same time assemblies were founded on the European continent.³⁴ These gatherings did not have any particular name apart from 'breaking the

²⁴ Pickering, H, *Chief man among the Brethren*, London n.d., p. 21

²⁵ Stevenson, M. R., "Early Brethren leaders and the question of Calvinism", *Brethren Historical Review*, Vol. 6, Rosyth 2010, pp. 2-30.

²⁶ Neatby, W B, *A history of the Plymouth Brethren*, London 1902, p. 18.

²⁷ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, London 1989, pp. 20f.

²⁸ Balmer, Randall, *Encyclopaedia of Evangelicalism*, John Knox Press 2002, p. 156.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

³⁰ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, London 1989, pp. 20f.

³¹ In this work the term "assembly" is used for a Brethren "meeting" or 'church'.

³² Coad, F R, *A history of the Plymouth movement*, Paternoster 1968, p. 80ff.

³³ Dickson, N T R, *Brethren in Scotland 1838-2000*, Paternoster 2002, pp. 27f.

³⁴ *The Christian Witness*, January issue, 1834. – Cited in Coad 1968, p. 84.

bread' or 'meeting', and Brethren have always rejected any denominational name because they do not regard themselves as a denomination but simply as Christians.

Darby travelled widely and visited assemblies in Ireland and in England as well as France and Switzerland and was an energetic and enthusiastic worker in the young movement. He seemed to put his whole personality into the work and sacrificed everything to the service. His preaching and expositions affected his listeners who were seriously impressed and felt almost forced to reconsider their religious attitudes; also many influential and well-known individuals were captivated by Darby and his views.³⁵ He was also well received in university circles because of his broad knowledge of philosophy, history and science, and because he knew Greek, Latin, Hebrew, French and German.³⁶ Being an extremely industrious man and prolific writer, Darby translated and wrote more than most, his collected works comprising over forty volumes, each of around 600 pages. The contents cover wide areas or topics, but mainly dogmatic and expository questions, interpretative works and bible translations (he even translated the whole Bible), apologetics, poetry, hymns and songs.³⁷

However, the place where the movement became really accepted and which gave it one of its names was Plymouth,³⁸ where work started in 1830 under the able leadership of Benjamin Wills Newton (1807-1899). While a student at Oxford, Darby visited that

³⁵ Bass, C S, *Backgrounds to Dispensationalism: its historical genesis and ecclesiastical implications*, Grand Rapids 1977, pp. 52-53.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

³⁷ <http://www.scofieldprophecystudies.org/scholars/Darby.htm>

³⁸ See previous page.

university and won Newton to his views.³⁹ He experienced a conversion and, later, began to preach in Plymouth. Soon Darby and Newton started cooperation and became good friends. Gradually Darby felt at home in Plymouth;⁴⁰ and the assembly grew considerably with many leading personalities joining. Brethren workers such as S P Tregelles (1813-1875), Henry William Soltau (1805-1875), Henry Borlase (1806-1835) and James L Harris (1793-1877) were prominent members of the Plymouth assembly.⁴¹ Many of them were distinguished scholars and writers, and in 1834 *The Christian Witness*, the first Brethren periodical, was published with Henry Borlase as editor;⁴² he left the Church of England in 1832 and explained this in the pamphlet *Reasons for Withdrawing from the Ministry of the Church of England*, published in 1833.⁴³

In 1832 Bristol became another centre for the Brethren Movement under the leadership of Georg Müller (1805-1898), a German who settled in Britain in 1829, and Henry Craik (1805-1866). Müller started studying divinity at the University of Halle, which had been the powerhouse of 18th-century Pietism;⁴⁴ and later, at a Christian Bible and prayer meeting, he became convinced of his need for salvation.⁴⁵ In 1825 Müller was converted, started a new life, and decided to become a missionary. Craik was a Scotsman who had an evangelical conversion in 1826 while a student at St Andrew's University, and in 1828 he had moved to A. N. Groves's home in Devon to become a tutor to

³⁹ Jonathan David Burnham, *The Controversial Relationship between Benjamin Wills Newton and John Nelson Darby*, (University of Oxford D.Phil. thesis, 1999) – published as a book of the same title, Paternoster 2004.

⁴⁰ Coad, , F R, *A history of the Brethren Movement*, Paternoster 2001 (1968), p. 63.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 64-66.

⁴² Rowdon, H, *The origins of the Brethren*, London 1967, p. 77.

⁴³ <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2908>

⁴⁴ Spener, P J, *Pia Desideria*, Halle 1675.

⁴⁵ Balmer, Randall, *Encyclopaedia of Evangelicalism*, John Knox Press 2002, p. 501.

Grove's family. Here he was acquainted with living by faith and practicing fellowship with all Christian believers.⁴⁶ The two came into contact while Müller was convalescing only ten miles from Groves' home, and after intense Bible study they came to believe in the doctrines, presumably already held by Craik as a Presbyterian, of election, particular redemption, i.e. that Christ died effectively for the elect only, the pre-millennial return of Christ, the ultimate authority of the Bible, the importance of the Holy Spirit in Christian life, the need for higher standards of devotedness and the perseverance of the saints.⁴⁷ Furthermore, Müller changed his views on baptism and promoted believers' baptism.⁴⁸ Such beliefs were prevalent among the early Brethren; and the views can be summarized in this way:

1. Ordained clergymen were not needed to validate the Lord's table. Brothers and sisters could meet without an ordained clergyman present.
2. The Lord's presence was guaranteed to them wherever two or three were meeting in His name. This meant that they could simply come together by twos or threes and the Lord would be in their midst.
3. The priesthood included all believers. They viewed the clerical system as totally unscriptural.
4. As members of the Body of Christ, the believers had a bond of fellowship among themselves.
5. From the beginning they studied prophecy in the Scriptures, especially the unfulfilled prophecies.

⁴⁶ Grass, T, *Gathering to his name*, Paternoster 2006, pp. 32-34.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

⁴⁸ Coad, , F R, *A history of the Brethren Movement*, Paternoster 2001 (1968), p. 38.

6. All whom the Lord received should be allowed to come and meet with them at the Lord's table. There was no doubt about this matter in the very beginning, as the following statement of 1839/40 indicates:⁴⁹

‘The terms *free* or *open* communion are adopted to indicate the right of all who are known, or supposed, on the best evidence we can command, to be *sincere believers* in the Lord Jesus, to come to the table of the Lord; however different their degrees of faith and love, *however diverse their judgments upon many points*, which, however important in themselves, are yet not such as to prevent their being recognized by the Lord as His members.’⁵⁰

In 1832 Müller and Craik started their work at a Baptist church in Bristol which eventually developed in a Brethren direction; Müller was highly respected as a man of faith and prayer. He started his first orphanage in 1836, and his immense work for orphans made him famous in many lands.⁵¹ They also established ‘The Scriptural Knowledge Institution’ which started a Christian bookshop in Bristol, publishing and distributing Christian literature and supporting missionaries as well as orphanages abroad.⁵²

At this stage in the development of the movement, between 1830 and 1840, assemblies were established in most parts of Britain. There were also several other active Evangelical bodies working in Britain at the time, some of which appeared similar to Brethren. Therefore it is wrong to view Brethren history as a well-defined movement with clear doctrinal boundaries from the start.⁵³ Rather it should be viewed as an

⁴⁹ www.johndarby.org/beginning/index.hotmail, p. 7

⁵⁰ *Collected Tracts*, quoted in Lang, G H, *Anthony Norris Grove*, Paternoster, London 1949, p. 107.

⁵¹ Lang, G H, *Anthony Norris Grove*, Paternoster, London 1949, p. 48.

⁵² Grass, T, *Gathering to his name*, Paternoster 2006, pp. 46-48.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 190f.

emerging and developing movement without organisational structures and without any denominational label. It is not known when the first assembly was established in London, but it has been suggested that it was due to George V. Wigram (1805-1879), a former soldier turned theologian and hymn-writer, in 1838, although there seem to have been Brethren-orientated groups before then. Many prominent persons joined the movement in London during this period, such as the minister W. H. Dorman (1802-1872), John Parnell (1805-1883), later Lord Congleton, and Edward Cronin (1801-1882), a pioneer of homeopathy in England and one of the earliest Brethren in Dublin.⁵⁴ In many other towns and cities assemblies linked or united with Brethren were established, for instance Barnstaple,⁵⁵ founded by London solicitor Robert Cleaver Chapman (1803-1902),⁵⁶ Liverpool and Bath in 1837,⁵⁷ Stafford in 1839,⁵⁸ Glasgow, Paisley and Kilmarnock in the early 1840s.⁵⁹

Those who joined the movement and lay behind its development had belonged to other churches previously. Some came from an Anglican background, e.g. Darby, Groves and Borlase, others had a Quaker background,⁶⁰ e.g. S P Tregelles⁶¹ and John E Howard (1807-1883);⁶² indeed a whole group of Quakers joined the Brethren in the late 1830s;⁶³ some came from the Baptists, e.g. R. C. Chapman. The diverse religious currents,

⁵⁴ Rowdon, H, *The origins of the Brethren*, London 1967, pp. 159f.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 142f.

⁵⁶ Grass, T, *Gathering to his name*, Paternoster 2006, p. 39.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 57-58.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 82 and 53. Howard initiated the Tottenham Assembly in 1838.

⁶³ Stunt, T C F, 'The origins of the Brethren', *The Witness*, 98, citing *The Inquirer*, 3, 1840, pp. 68-71; cited in Grass, T, *Gathering to his name*, Paternoster 2006, p. 21.

questioning traditional practices and comparing them with Scripture, that gradually took shape in the early 19th century led to spiritual revival for many people. Therefore it can be said that the Brethren recruited their leaders from other churches or branches of Christianity; and many of these leading individuals were very well educated and economically comfortable. In addition, this was a period of intensified missionary work abroad, particularly in Africa and Asia; and people were attracted to the Brethren because of the missionary zeal expressed by men like Groves and others.⁶⁴

2.4 Characteristics

Studying the Brethren Movement in more detail soon reveals that there were and still are ideas, attitudes, teachings and doctrines in which the various assemblies and individuals do not fully agree, but in spite of this there are some fundamental principles which unite them all.⁶⁵ There is no formal or institutional hierarchy in the movement, and each assembly is autonomous although they may work together in certain matters, such as conferences and publishing.⁶⁶ However, such attitudes were not new in Christianity; for instance the Congregationalists asserted the autonomy of each congregation already in the 16th century, the principle being that the ‘gathered church’ at any place comprised those who committed themselves to Christ and to one another.⁶⁷

The Lord’s Supper is one of the uniting principal conventions. Brethren call this commemorative act ‘the breaking of bread’; and this was central right from the beginning

⁶⁴ Soltau, H W, *Who are the Brethren?*, Glasgow n.d, p. 3; 7.

⁶⁵ Rowdon, H, *The origins of the Brethren*, London 1967, p. 227.

⁶⁶ Meaning self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating. Cf. section 4.4.

⁶⁷ Bowker, J, *The Oxford dictionary of World Religions*, OUP 1997, p. 233.

of the movement. There are no precise rituals, set conventions or formal rules, and the ceremony can be conducted by any male believer. Brethren reject the idea of specially ordained clergymen conducting the ceremony which usually takes place every Sunday morning.⁶⁸ Another important aspect of Open Brethren Christianity⁶⁹ is believers' baptism, and in the Faeroe Islands the movement is indeed called "Baptists", coined in the early 20th century by established clergymen reeling about "Re-baptisers", a derogatory term taken up at the time. There are two different schools regarding baptism, paed- and credo-baptism, i.e. infant baptism and believer's baptism, the latter already promoted by the Anabaptists in 1525;⁷⁰ and most Brethren agree on believer's baptism. Other Brethren characteristics include the central importance of the Bible, belief in the Second Coming and varying degrees of Puritanism, often living by a strict moral and religious code, not least being suspicious of pleasure in all its secular forms.

Ecclesiology. The radical Evangelical ecclesiology, including the Brethren view, was close to a Low Church outlook⁷¹ and also contained strong anti-establishment attitudes regarding the existing churches which were seen as institutions in great peril where external forms shut out spiritual life. Therefore it was seen as imperative to detach themselves from these corrupted churches, and contemporary established church life was

⁶⁸ Soltau, H W, *Who are the Brethren?*, Glasgow n.d, p. 6; 8. - "'Shut in with Thee": the morning meeting among Scottish Open Brethren, 1830s-1960s', in R. N. Swanston (ed.), *Studies in Church History*, vol. 35 (Woodbridge, 1999), pp.276-89, which is the only academic treatment of the topic. Available online at <http://brethrenhistory.org/qwicsitePro/php/docsview.php?docid=574>

⁶⁹ The Exclusive Brethren were paedobaptists as Darby remained all his life.

⁷⁰ Walker, W, *A history of the Christian church*, Edinburgh 1997, pp. 448-455.

⁷¹ However, they held a high view of the church's status and there was also a sacramentalism present in their view of the Lord's Supper.

compared with Babylon in Revelation 18: 4 which it was necessary to leave.⁷² The Brethren view was that the established church structures and their leaders had discarded the Holy Spirit as head of the congregations, and the Spirit had been replaced by rules and regulations, decisions, fixed services and rituals as means for salvation. The Brethren were convinced that such forms and methods had no foundation in Scripture and restricted the work of the Holy Spirit.⁷³ Consequently they rejected all authoritative positions and services in their assemblies; and the notion of a clergy, i.e. ministers, priests or clergymen, was dispensed with.⁷⁴ They claimed that the gifts of grace did not necessitate any human authority. If God had provided a person with a particular gift, then that person had the authority and the obligation to apply it.⁷⁵ Every male member had equal rights and responsibilities in conducting any gathering in God's name.⁷⁶ Set appointments would prevent the free guidance of the Spirit, and in some ways this may seem common to the Quaker practices, but among Brethren the word of God and its interpretation has an essential position.

The Open Brethren adopted a system with elders, all male leaders, while others, including females, assist in works of ministry. In the area of leadership and worship Brethren reformulated the Calvinist doctrine in line with Romantic emphases,⁷⁷ and in principle it was a Spirit-led assembly which recognised God-given leaders with no kind

⁷² Rowdon, H, *The origins of the Brethren*, London 1967, p. 17. - James Harding, "Come out of Her My People" (Rev. 18:4): The Use and Influence of the Whore of Babylon Motif in the Christian Brethren Movement, 1829-1900', PhD thesis, Liverpool Hope University, 2006.

⁷³ Soltau, H W, *Who are the Brethren?*, Glasgow n.d, pp. 5-6.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 5. - Dickson, Neil T, "The Church itself is God's clergy": the principles and practices of the Brethren', in Deryck W. Lovegrove (ed.), *The Rise of the Laity in Evangelical Protestantism* (London: 2002), pp. 217-235.

⁷⁵ Soltau, H W, *Who are the Brethren?*, Glasgow n.d, pp. 5-6.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 5.

⁷⁷ Grass, T, *Gathering to his name*, Paternoster 2006, p. 12.

of formal appointment.⁷⁸ At Brethren meetings for the breaking of bread spontaneity and improvisation are favoured, and the perception of God being present makes participation at meetings like an experience of closeness to God. This was based on an Evangelical critique of Quaker teachings about the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, stressing “the ‘inner light’ of God within each person as the ultimate authority in religious matters”,⁷⁹ and in 1836 Darby wrote a treatise where he developed ideas on the Spirit’s role in worship.⁸⁰

Henry William Soltau, the London barrister, who was converted in 1837 and who became a full-time and distinguished Brethren worker,⁸¹ mentions that if somebody has prepared his speech, he might possibly be able to present valuable truths; but at a Sunday morning meeting, for instance, this would not be right because a good meeting should always take its own course, guided by the Holy Spirit, and people should wait and see how it turns out. A song or hymn, a remark or utterance in a prayer could inspire others whom God would then use for His purposes, provided that hearts seek Him for guidance.⁸²

The Lord’s Supper. The most important commemoration within the Brethren movement is the weekly Lord’s Supper, known as the Breaking of Bread and as a rule taking place on Sunday mornings. The Breaking of Bread is open to any believer and even believers who do not belong to the movement are in principle welcome to participate.⁸³ Dogmatically, Brethren are quite close to Zwingli’s views regarding this

⁷⁸ Grass, T, *Gathering to his name*, Paternoster 2006, p. 70.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁸⁰ Darby, J N, “Remarks on Light and Conscience”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3, pp. 57-72.

⁸¹ Grass, T, *Gathering to his name*, Paternoster 2006, p. 38.

⁸² Soltau, H W, *Who are the Brethren?*, Glasgow n.d, p. 16.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 13-14.

sacrament, the bread and wine only symbolising the body and blood of Christ, and the Breaking of Bread is first and foremost a meal of remembrance. It is an essential part in Brethren community life and self-understanding.⁸⁴ Breaking the Bread reminds believers of three important teachings: firstly that Jesus' body is a whole which is then given in his death on the Cross; breaking the bread is a commemoration of Jesus' atoning death; secondly, breaking the bread points towards and announces Christian unity; and thirdly, it announces the imminent coming of the Lord in the air, the Rapture, gathering the believers to be with the Lord (1st Cor. 11: 26). It is emphasised that the one bread represents the one body; and Brethren regard the Breaking the Bread as the only event that really makes it possible to proclaim Christian unity.⁸⁵

Baptism. Another central aspect within the Open Brethren is believer's baptism, and this act is also regarded as symbolic. Brethren do not regard baptism as a kind of rebirth, and in the early days many even saw infant baptism as one of the cardinal sins of the Anglican Church, claiming that the State Church was founded on the terrible error of rebirth in baptism.⁸⁶ However, there were different opinions on baptism among the early Brethren, and an increasing number supported the Baptist understanding of the act, i.e. believers' baptism by immersion. J. N. Darby never opposed infant baptism nor did most of his closest followers, the later Exclusive or Closed Brethren. However, his infant baptism was towards consecration, not regeneration.⁸⁷ He wrote that he "would as much avoid being an anti-baptist as a Baptist" and that his desire was "the union of all

⁸⁴ Soltau, H W, *Who are the Brethren?*, p. 16-17.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 17. (Tom Marinello has recently written a paper arguing this very point: Thomas J. Marinello, 'The Lord's Supper in Brethren Ecclesiology: The Mark of Identity, Unity, and for some, Purity', 2010.)

⁸⁶ Soltau, H W, *Who are the Brethren?*, p. 8.

⁸⁷ Coad, F R, *A history of the Brethren Movement*, Paternoster 2001 (1968), pp. 64; 124.

Christians in the unity of the body of Christ.....we are one in Christ.”⁸⁸ Those Brethren who came from a Quaker background tended to retain the understanding that baptism in itself was not very important.⁸⁹

The Bible. All aspects of theology, ecclesiology and worship within the Brethren movement are based on the Bible, and members of the movement do not accept doctrinal or devotional confessions or creeds as authoritative. For Brethren, the Bible is the sole, authoritative and infallible guide in all matters. The Bible has a central place in both their religious and personal lives, and the movement started and gained ground as Bible study groups which in many ways shaped its profile.⁹⁰

One other distinctive assembly meeting was the Bible readings, and it was not just one person who presented his interpretations of God’s word, but normally most male participants took part in the discussions about the passage under scrutiny. The meetings were conducted as genuine debates aiming at full appreciation of the Word of God and there was also space for experiences based on the passage and thoughts which it might stimulate.⁹¹ The Bible was seen as the inspired word of God, God’s revelation to humans; and Brethren accept that “the direct appeal to the Scriptures over the head of all existing authority” is a basic element in the movement.⁹²

The Second Coming. From a strictly biblical point of view, Christianity is partly based on the belief in the second coming of Jesus Christ apparent in several places in the Bible,

⁸⁸ Darby, J N, *Letters*, Vol. 1, p. 198. – Cited in Coad, 2001 (1968), p. 124

⁸⁹ Coad, , F R, *A history of the Brethren Movement*, Paternoster 2001 (1968), p. 124. – Stunt, T C F, *Early Brethren and the Society of Friends*, CBRF Occasional Paper No.3, Pinner, 1970.

⁹⁰ Soltau, H W, *Who are the Brethren?*, Glasgow n.d, p. 19.

⁹¹ Information gained from interviews.

⁹² Coad, , F R, *A history of the Brethren Movement*, Paternoster 2001 (1968), p. 103.

such as Judges 5: 28, Jeremiah 8: 7, Malachi 3: 2, Matthew 16: 28, Mark 13: 26, Luke 12: 45, or Revelation 21: 2; and Acts 1 mentions that members of the early Church eagerly waited for Christ to appear in the sky or in the clouds. This belief was strong in the Brethren movement, not least in the 19th century when Jesus' Second Coming and the end of the world were considered imminent and therefore conversion and salvation were questions of life and death.⁹³ Reasons for such beliefs were probably linked to the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, the turbulent socio-economic circumstances and the overwhelming changes taking place in philosophy, science, politics and culture at the time.⁹⁴ Many of the founders of the Brethren movement, not least John N. Darby, were extremely preoccupied with apocalyptic questions, the destiny of Israel or the Jews and their situation at the end of time, and predictions regarding the destiny of Israel and Christian believers preoccupied many Brethren as well as other Evangelicals.⁹⁵

Everyday Life. From the beginning Brethren have regarded a puritanical or ascetic lifestyle as an important part of their religion and they promoted such a lifestyle as well as expected and required it from their adherents. This included severe restriction and even rejection of worldly enjoyment and pleasure, of taking part in sports, associations, politics, trade unions and the military. Many Brethren saw the mission of a Christian exclusively in the gatherings of believers, the conversion of others, prayer and Bible study, and not in the wider social or political life.⁹⁶

⁹³ Ibid., p. 56.

⁹⁴ Grass, T, *Gathering to his name*, Paternoster 2006, pp. 9f.

⁹⁵ Rowdon, H, *The origins of the Brethren*, London 1967, pp. 222; 275.

⁹⁶ Grass, T, *Gathering to his name*, Paternoster 2006, pp. 315-323.

However, many Brethren made contributions in intellectual, social and political life; and right from the beginning individuals such as S. P. Tregelles made contributions as scholars in Hebrew, Greek and theology. On the other hand, a certain degree of asceticism, mostly abstinence from alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, sex (apart from within marriage) and respectable behaviour, has always characterised Brethren. Prayers before meals and at other occasions are regarded as natural parts of everyday life.

The more worldly-denying forms of Brethren have been more prominent among the Exclusive or Close Brethren (to be discussed in the following section), but also, to a lesser degree, among sections of the Open Brethren. As will be seen when the movement in the Faeroes is examined in detail, the Brethren there are less restrictive than would be found, for example, in parts of Scotland, South Wales and Northern Ireland. In the Faeroe Islands, Brethren have always participated in politics and have even had ministers and a local Prime Minister in recent times;⁹⁷ indeed, one of the first Brethren in the islands was a member of the local parliament, the lögting;⁹⁸ and they have been no less engaged in sports and other activities than people in other branches of Christianity, e.g. as boy scouts and as pop/rock musicians.⁹⁹ In one area Brethren have been particularly visible, not just in the Faeroes but also in Britain and elsewhere, and that is in business, industry and finance.¹⁰⁰ When the momentous socio-economic changes took place in the Faeroes,

⁹⁷ Jógvan Sundstein (1933-), lögmaður 1989-1991.

⁹⁸ Johann Dam (1863-1925), see section 3.2

⁹⁹ See examples in chapters 5, 6 and 7.

¹⁰⁰ Grass, T, *Gathering to his name*, Paternoster 2006, pp. 252-253; 318-319.

many of the leading individuals starting up and energizing the fishing industry and other businesses were Brethren.¹⁰¹

2.5 Two branches

Right from its emergence, the Brethren movement was troubled by unrest and conflict because of its perceived extremist views on various subjects, mostly regarding eschatological questions. Disagreements about these as well as baptism and other theological matters were not only with people outside the movement but also within the movement itself. The first conference at Powerscourt, Enniskerry, County Wicklow in Ireland, was held in 1831, hosted by Lady Powerscourt, Theodosia Wingfield (1800-1836). She belonged to a strong Irish Evangelical network and had been widowed in her early twenties and experienced a conversion.¹⁰² She was one of the key figures in the early history of the Brethren movement, and the many residential conferences held at Powerscourt and other places in Ireland and England sometimes lasted up to a week. Participants were both clergymen and lay people, and the themes discussed were mainly concerned with prophecy, the Second Coming and other eschatological topics.

At one of the Powerscourt conferences, as early as 1832, the tensions within the group seemed clear. John Nelson Darby had thrown himself unequivocally into the enthusiasm of prophetic anticipation and the elucidation of present and future events based on biblical prophecy.¹⁰³ Many saw his views as mind-boggling, provocative and dangerous while others supported him, and one Brethren historian suggests that already at

¹⁰¹ Examples in chapter 5.

¹⁰² Grass, T, *Gathering to his name*, Paternoster 2006, pp. 25f.

¹⁰³ Coad, F R, *A history of the Brethren Movement*, Paternoster 2001 (1968), pp. 109f.

this stage Darby seemed to be overtaken by prophetic speculations which led him to feel like “an instrument of God, burdened with an urgent call to His people to come out of associations doomed to judgement.”¹⁰⁴

In 1848, the irreversible split happened and the Brethren divided into two branches, popularly called Close and Open Brethren, the former of which at first grew stronger but eventually split into various groups.¹⁰⁵ In 1848 the Darbyite party, the Closed branch, was variously called Darbyites, the movement Darbyism, or Exclusive or Connected Brethren. The other branch, commonly known as the Open Brethren, consisted of Groves, Müller, Craig and Lord Congleton as well as many ex-Quakers.¹⁰⁶ This branch was also known as Independent or, sometimes, Inclusive Brethren; and this was the one introduced in the Faeroes in 1865. However, none of the names are official titles, but are the ones given by use and wont.

2.6 Dispensationalism

Dispensationalism is based on the idea that God’s relations with humanity can be divided into dispensations, periods or stages, separated from each other by major changes in these relationships. Although the theory or framework has been severely criticised and misrepresented, it is still upheld and being developed by conservative, evangelical Christians and fundamentalists in North America.¹⁰⁷ Scholars distinguish between covenant theology and dispensational theology when discussing God’s relations with

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 110.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 309.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 159.

¹⁰⁷ Ryrie, C C, *Dispensationalism today*, Chicago 1965, pp. 9-10.

humans. Covenant theology is seen as some kind of settlement or pact between God and humanity, and “was a particular development of the New Testament doctrine in Calvinism in the 16th-17th centuries.” According to this theory God’s first covenant was with Adam, a covenant ‘of works’, promising eternal life in return for obedience; this was broken with the Fall and another covenant replaced the first one, the covenant ‘of grace’ which offered salvation through Jesus Christ freely. This view was criticised because opponents could not see God dealing with humanity in other ways than by grace.¹⁰⁸

The idea of dividing the Bible into stages or sections, however, is not new; already Justin Martyr (110-165) suggested that there were differing programmes of God;¹⁰⁹ Irenaeus (130-200) explained one reason for there being only four gospels from a similar angle, mentioning “four principal covenants...one, prior to the deluge, under Adam; the second, after the deluge, under Noah; the third, the giving of the Law, under Moses; the fourth, that which renovates man.”¹¹⁰ Also Clement of Alexandria (150-220) and St Augustine of Hippo (354-430) presented similar views.¹¹¹ Some more recent dispensationalists would favour five dispensations as follows, (1) the dispensation of innocence, i.e. creation to the Fall; (2) the dispensation of human government, from the Fall to the Law of Moses; (3) the dispensation of the Law, from the Law of Moses to Christ; (4) the dispensation of Grace, from Christ to the second coming; and (5) the dispensation of the fullness of times, covering the Millennium to the eternal state.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Bowker, J (Ed.), *The Oxford dictionary of world religions*, OUP 1997, 9. 242-423. – Ryrie, C C, *Dispensationalism today*, Chicago 1965, pp. 177-191.

¹⁰⁹ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 155; in Chadwick, H, *Early Christian thought*, London 1966.

¹¹⁰ Irenaeus, *Against heresies*, III, XI, 8. – Cited in Ryrie, C C, *Dispensationalism today*, Chicago 1965, p. 69.

¹¹¹ Ryrie, C C, *Dispensationalism today*, Chicago 1965, pp. 69-70.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 84.

Dispensational theology comprises a complex millennial scheme regarding biblical interpretation and has been associated with the Brethren from the foundation of the movement. Indeed J. N. Darby has been regarded as the originator or reviver of the modern system. However, it did not achieve widespread popularity until the early 20th century through *The Scofield Reference Bible*, published in 1909.¹¹³ In the New Testament a future Millennial kingdom is mentioned, which some interpreters take to be a realm in which Jesus Christ will reign on earth;¹¹⁴ and this is certainly very different from post-modern ways of thinking in the 21st century. Thus the Bible directly led to dispensational thought which is primarily the realisation that at different periods, God has dealt with humans in different ways.¹¹⁵

The foremost appeal and efficacy of the dispensationalist theory or system is undoubtedly its capacity to organise Scripture so that the Bible becomes more comprehensible.¹¹⁶ It seems easier to make sense of the Bible as a whole if it is divided into periods or stages in history. Also the dispensationalist scheme apparently presents an irrefutable plan for the future, and this made it an important component in Brethren eschatology. Dispensationalism also functioned as the solution as to how Scripture could be modified into a system to facilitate better understanding and how difficult texts could be accommodated.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Scofield, C I, *The Scofield Reference Bible*, New York, OUP, 1909.

¹¹⁴ NT doesn't actually describe it; and OT passages are taken to describe the 1000 years mentioned in Revelation.

¹¹⁵ Ryrie, C C, *Dispensationalism today*, Chicago 1965, pp. 33f.

¹¹⁶ Dickson, N T, *Brethren in Scotland 1838-2000*, Paternoster 2002, p. 265.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

2.7 Brethren Spirituality

Spirituality is the most important ingredient of any religious experience,¹¹⁸ and in the Brethren movement spirituality is perhaps more significant than in other Evangelical movements.¹¹⁹ However, the word is itself somewhat weak, but the following definition may help put it in the context of our discussion here. Spirituality is defined as “those attitudes, beliefs, practices which animate people’s lives and help them to reach out towards super-sensible realities”.¹²⁰ The fullest expression of Brethren spirituality is found during the breaking of the bread every Sunday morning.¹²¹ There is nothing extraordinary about the room in which this commemoration takes place. It can take place in a private home or, most often, in the Assembly Hall which is in general a simple but comfortable room with nothing to draw one’s attention away from the essential event taking place. In this way it is possible to contrast the ordinariness of the surroundings with the supernatural significance of the occasion.¹²²

The silence of the gathering, interrupted by hymns or songs of praise and exhortations, emphasises Jesus as the centre and the exclusion of the world. It is a simple, solemn event without ritual. The gathering acquires openness to the Spirit and an anticipation of the Second Coming of Christ. Commemorating the Lord’s Supper weekly

¹¹⁸ James, W., *Varieties of religious experience*, Edinburgh 1906.

¹¹⁹ Zachariassen, Z., “Tær triggjar síður frelsunnar: Rættvísgerðing, heilaggerðing og dýrdargerðing,” *Leirkerið*, 2010/1, pp. 3-7.

¹²⁰ Wakefield, G (Ed.), *A dictionary of Christian spirituality*, London 1983, p. 361. – Cited in Dickson, N T, *Brethren in Scotland 1838-2000*, Paternoster 2002, p. 254.

¹²¹ Dickson, N T, *Brethren in Scotland 1838-2000*, Paternoster 2002, p. 255. - Dickson, N T, ““Shut in with Thee”: the morning meeting among Scottish Open Brethren, 1830s-1960s’, in R. N. Swanston (ed.), *Studies in Church History*, 35 (Woodbridge, 1999), pp.276-89; available online at <http://brethrenhistory.org/qwicsitePro/php/docsview.php?docid=574>.

¹²² Dickson, N T, *Brethren in Scotland 1838-2000*, Paternoster 2002.

was an innovation compared with established church practices, and this was a significant feature of Brethren spirituality.¹²³ Established churches themselves revitalised liturgical worship and gave congregations a more active part in it under the influence of the 19th- and 20th-century liturgical movement which also affected the Roman Catholic Church, especially after World War II. The most noteworthy effect was in Anglican churches where morning prayers were replaced by a 'parish communion' as the main Sunday service.¹²⁴ This was promoted by the 'Parish and People movement', a group formed in 1949.¹²⁵

At the morning meeting as well as at other meetings attempts are made to avoid any single person being the centre of attention. The involvement of all and common status are regarded as essential in Brethren worship. Any male in the assembly can freely participate in prayer, choose a hymn, read from the Bible or give an extemporary sermon, because in the assembly all are priests.¹²⁶ The centre of the service is Jesus Christ, according to Matthew 18: 20. Furthermore, it is believed that the Holy Spirit directs and organises everything that goes on.

The crucial spiritual aspects in Brethren spirituality, however, surround the main themes of conversion and sanctification;¹²⁷ and many, probably most, assemblies would also include believers' baptism by immersion.¹²⁸ The initial stage leading to a broader Evangelical conversion is repentance, according to the Old Testament seen explicitly as a

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Bowker, J (Ed.), *The Oxford dictionary of world religions*, OUP 1997, p. 582.

¹²⁵ Randell, K. *Evangelicals Etcetera: Conflict & conviction in the Church of England's parties*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2005.

¹²⁶ Later also females, quite early in the 20th-century Faeroes.

¹²⁷ Balmer, Randall, *Encyclopaedia of Evangelicalism*, John Knox Press 2002, p. 504.

¹²⁸ In this work "Assembly" is used for what some would call "Brethren Churches" or "congregations".

turn or return to God, and this process begins with a profound acknowledgment and repentance of sin (Psalm 32: 3-5; Proverbs 28: 13). It is a question of the individual's relationship with her of his God.¹²⁹ However, while in the Old Testament conversion is turning away from evil and to God, the New Testament emphasises repentance and faith as the essential calls of the gospel. Conversion is seen as both God's gift and human responsibility which entails a thorough reorientation of one's life.¹³⁰

Remission of sins is regarded as a vital preparation for the reign of God (Mark 1: 4; Matthew 3: 2); but while John the Baptist issued a sharp call for repentance, Jesus Christ's call highlights the optimistic aspects of conversion where He has come to pour out bountiful goodwill upon people and give them an abundant life (Luke 4: 16-21; John 10: 10).¹³¹ In Brethren theology, as in other radical Reformed theologies,¹³² it is the Holy Spirit who regenerates sinners so that they may respond confidently to the gospel (Romans 1: 6-7; I Corinth 1: 9, 26; I Peter 2: 9). This process is seen as the Holy Spirit's work upon those who are called; and the response is regarded as a voluntary act.¹³³

The first step in the conversion process is when human sin reaches its peak and the desire for the grace of freedom is felt as an absolute necessity. This is understood to be the Spirit's work because a sinner is not free to respond to the gospel; and the conversion itself is often seen as the Spirit's work in union with Christ, resulting in

¹²⁹ Chung, M, "Conversion and sanctification," *Evangelical Theology*, Larsen Trier (Eds.), CUP 2007, p. 110

¹³⁰ Chung, M, "Conversion and sanctification," *Evangelical Theology*, Larsen Trier (Eds.), CUP 2007, p. 113.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 114

¹³² Such as the Radical Reformation or Anabaptist movements.

¹³³ Chung, M, "Conversion and sanctification," *Evangelical Theology*, Larsen Trier (Eds.), CUP 2007, p. 115

justification and acceptance (I Corinth 12: 13; Romans 8: 9-17). The second step involves God's granting of rebirth and renewal in Christ through the Spirit (Romans 8: 9; John 1: 12-13; 3, 6). The main thing is to accept the gospel by faith rather than through water baptism (I Corinth 1: 13-2, 5); and the latter is seen as a symbolic re-enactment because the decisive mediator of cleansing is not water but the Spirit.¹³⁴ The third step can be seen as the proclamation of the definitive work of the Spirit and this makes a conversion seem instant; and caused by revival movements, conversion is often experienced as a drastic, even dramatic, event for those entering the Christian life (Acts 9: 10). According to Paul Ricoeur, a phenomenological analysis of conversion unveils its theological content, and the experience is seen as an 'absolute feeling' over which an individual cannot assert any control.¹³⁵ Some people experience powerful emotions; and such strong religious feelings are sometimes seen as basic ontological longings escaping intelligibility.¹³⁶

The necessity of building up and developing the spiritual life of the converted is of crucial importance in the Brethren movement. The conversion itself is regarded as the starting point of Christian life, but sanctification is an ongoing process of an inner growing in Christian life.¹³⁷ Sanctification, meaning 'making holy', comprises three

¹³⁴ Chung, M, "Conversion and sanctification," *Evangelical Theology*, Larsen Trier (Eds.), CUP 2007, p. 117.

¹³⁵ Ibid. – From: Ricoer, P, "Naming God", *Figuring the sacred: Religion, narrative, and imagination*, ed. Mark I Wallace, Fortress 1995, pp. 217-35.

¹³⁶ James, W, *Varieties of religious experience*, Edinburgh 1906.

¹³⁷ Harold Rowdon, 'The Brethren concept of sainthood', *Vox Evangelica*, vol. 20, 1990, pp.91-102, an exposition of the especial significance the Brethren attached to 'sanctification'. – Dickson, N T, *Brethren in Scotland*, Paternoster 2002, p.268. - Grass, T, *Gathering to his name*, Paternoster 2006, pp.165-7.

intertwined components which are the Christological, ecclesial, and eschatological spheres in Christian life, powered and induced by the Holy Spirit.¹³⁸

2.8 Mid-Victorian British revivalism

However, despite the significance of much of the above for understanding the Brethren movement in the Faeroe Islands, the character of Brethrenism which William G. Sloan introduced there had its roots in the Evangelical awakening which commenced in Scotland in 1859.¹³⁹ As will be seen when Sloan's life is examined in more detail below, he was caught up in mid-Victorian revivalism¹⁴⁰ and became one of its promoters in Shetland. This started as a series of 'spontaneous' awakenings in many areas of Scotland and soon developed into a more organised movement which had great influence in most of the country. In an article in a local newspaper, printed in the autumn of 1859, this piece can be found:

“Revival in Drumclair: A Baptist Church has been formed. Mr. Dunn has baptised 55 adults out of a population of 300.”¹⁴¹

Around two weeks later the same paper reports that

“an open-air meeting in the Public Park, Airdrie, on Sabbath evening was attended by more than 4,000 people.....Afterwards, there were crowded meetings in Broomknoll Free Church and Ebenezer chapel.”¹⁴²

¹³⁸ Chung, M, “Conversion and sanctification,” *Evangelical Theology*, Larsen Trier (Eds.), CUP 2007, p. 119.

¹³⁹ Dickson, Neil T. R., *Brethren in Scotland 1838-2000*, Paternoster 2002, pp. 59-89.

¹⁴⁰ It was J Edwin Orr in his *Second Evangelical Awakening* (1949) who promoted the idea that there had been a general awakening in the mid-19th century comparable to the 18th century one, but this is not generally accepted now (and this would include David Bebbington).

¹⁴¹ *Airdrie, Coatbridge, Bathgate and Wishaw Advertiser*, 20th August 1859. – Cited in Kelling, F. *Fisherman of Faroe. William Gibson Sloan*, Leirkerið, Gøta 1993.

A fortnight later the paper this can be read:

“Prayer meetings in connection with the revivals are being held nightly in Drumpelier School Room, Coatbridge...Nearly 100 have been converted since its commencement.”¹⁴³

What this revivalism offered was individual and immediate salvation, assurance and closeness to God through Jesus Christ. Various social causes accompanied the awakenings, such as economic depression, insanitary conditions (especially in towns and cities), and more general social changes and problems,¹⁴⁴ leading to poverty, diseases, alienation and a need for something spiritual to hold on to. While the early Brethren movement was more intellectual and ‘rational’, this second awakening was clearly emotional and appealed to ‘the heart’ – it was a phenomenon influenced by Romanticism.

Brethren in Scotland participated in promoting the revivalism which in turn paved the way in the spreading the Brethren movement and in establishing several assemblies across the country,¹⁴⁵ mainly in industrial, mining and fishing communities such as Glasgow, Lanarkshire, West Lothian, the North East and even Yell in Shetland.¹⁴⁶ One catalyst in was ‘dissatisfaction with the impurities...in the established churches’;¹⁴⁷ and the characteristics of the new assemblies included lay preachers, commemorating the Lord’s supper, regeneration, testimony, conversion and believer’s baptism.

Evangelicalism was spread by undemoninational lay preachers and therefore the 1859 Revival was often referred to as ‘the Layman’s Revival’, and working-class preachers

¹⁴² *Airdrie, Coatbridge, Bathgate and Wishaw Advertiser*, 3rd September 1859.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 17th September 1859.

¹⁴⁴ Dickson, Neil T. R., *Brethren in Scotland 1838-2000*, Paternoster 2002, p. 60.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

were widely used.¹⁴⁸ The Revival brought liberty and freedom to lay people because the movement was not controlled by institutional religion; and already from the start female preachers were accepted by some assemblies, partly based on Joel 2:28-29 and Gal. 3: 28. The new attitudes led to a democratisation of Christianity, the urge to create communities of equality and attempts “to achieve a primitive, united Christian community based on the experience of a new birth and the Bible.”¹⁴⁹ It was the form of Brethrenism affected by this new wave of enthusiasm which found its way to the Faeroe Isles.

2.9 Literature on Brethren

Many books, tracts and articles were written by the early Brethren, and since the second half of the 20th century several scholarly works on the Brethren have been published, not solely by Brethren academics but also by other historians, theologians, sociologists and authors from other disciplines.

For this chapter I have utilised some of this material, mainly books by Brethren and authors favouring Evangelicalism and the Brethren movement. However, also books and articles written by people who oppose the Brethren have been read. The aim of this work is to give an insight into the Brethren movement in a rather isolated community, so to the best of my ability I have preferred to discuss the various aspects from what I have gradually learned about the Faeroese Brethren perspective from members themselves.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 71

¹⁴⁹ Dickson, Neil T. R., *Brethren in Scotland 1838-2000*, Paternoster 2002, p. 77.

Two general works which offer helpful frameworks have been carefully studied: Mark A. Noll, *The rise of Evangelicalism*, 2003, and David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in modern Britain – A history from the 1730s to the 1980s*, 1989. These two books, especially the latter one, gave a good basis for a discussion of the Brethren. More explicit information was obtained from studying books on the Brethren Movement; and the most important ones were the classic by F. Roy Coad, *A history of the Brethren Movement*, 1968; W. B. Neatby, *A history of the Plymouth Brethren*, 1901; a Norwegian book on the Brethren in the religious life of that country: Kjell Dahlene, “*Plymouth-Brethren*” *i norsk kristenliv*, 1983; the very well researched and written *Brethren in Scotland 1838-2000 – A social study of an Evangelical movement*, 2002, by Neil Dickson; and Tim Grass, *Gathering to his name – the story of Open Brethren in Britain & Ireland*, 2006, which was very helpful and contained very detailed bibliographies. A booklet frequently referred to is *They Found it Written, or Those Called by some The Brethren, Who are they, What are Their Doctrines?* or, the title used in this work, *Who are the Brethren?* by Henry William Soltau, referred to above, and contained in a reprint of the 1851 census report on *The Brethren and Their Doctrines*. A translation into Danish, *Hvem er Brødrene?*, was published in Faeroe in 1933. A book criticising the Brethren and studied in some detail is J. S. Teulon, *The history and teaching of the Plymouth Brethren*, 1883.¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ Reprint: Kessinger Publishing’s, n.d.

More special works included Gregory A. Boyd and Paul R. Eddy, *Across the spectrum – understanding issues in Evangelical theology*, 2009; Neil T. R. Dickson and Tim Grass (Eds.), *The growth of the Brethren Movement – National and international experiences*, 2006; Michael A. G. Haykin and Kenneth J. Stewart (Eds.), *The emergence of Evangelicalism – exploring historical continuities*, 2008; Frederick Herzog, *European Pietism reviewed*, 2003; Timothy Larsen and Daniel J. Trier (Eds.), *The Cambridge companion to Evangelical theology*, 2007; Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism today*, 1965; Edward Royle, *Radical politics 1790-1900: religion and unbelief*, 1971; and Max Weber, *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of Capitalism*, 1904-05 (2003). Furthermore, talks and discussions with Brethren friends and other individuals have been very helpful, informative and thought provoking.

*

In the Faeroes, the introduction of the Brethren movement had more to do with those aspects of Brethrenism which made it a missionary faith, such as its views of conversion, its eschatology, and not least its suitability for translation to the Faeroes with its incipient democracy and separation from institutional and state religion. As noted above the mid-century revivalism¹⁵¹ had given additional impetus to these emphases in the Open Brethren in particular and took it away from articulating new interpretations of the Bible to conversionism.¹⁵² Thus although dispensationalism is interesting and still relevant for many Faeroese Brethren, in the context of this thesis I would argue that conversion and evangelism are much more significant.

¹⁵¹ Discussed in section 2.8 above.

¹⁵² Dickson, N. T. R., *Brethren in Scotland 1838-2000*, Paternoster 2002, pp. 59-84.

Part Two

Narrating the introduction and establishment

This part of the thesis consists of chapters 3, 4 and 5. Firstly, in chapter 3, I give an account of how the Brethren movement established itself in the remote island community and chronicle its progress up to World War I; and in chapter 4 I give a more systematic account and analyses of the growth and establishment of the movement from then onwards. In chapter 5 I introduce some of the distinguished figures who were of vital importance for the introduction and subsequent growth of the movement. My decision to include considerable narrative detail reflects the aim of chronicling an under recorded movement as well as illustrating the argument of the thesis about its success and influence.

Brethren in the Faeroes 1865-1918

In this chapter I give an account from the beginnings of the first Evangelical movement in the Faeroes and covering the first half century of activity, relating how, within a couple of generations, the Open Brethren grew into the largest Christian movement outside the established Danish Lutheran Church in the islands.

3.1 Beginnings 1865-1879

William Gibson Sloan (1838-1914) was a young Scot who had been influenced by the revival in Scotland of 1859, was converted and started working as a preacher and, after a while, as a Christian colporteur for the Edinburgh Religious Tract and Book Society^{1,2} In this capacity Sloan went to Shetland where he was involved with revivalism and, after a while, he was baptised as a believer.³ Along with one other revivalist he started breaking bread in Lerwick in 1864 thereby founding Shetland's first Brethren assembly. Furthermore, Sloan left the established church⁴ and refused to belong to any particular denomination.⁵ Having heard about the Faeroes from Shetland fishermen who had been there, during the spring of 1865 Sloan gradually felt an urge and a calling to go to the islands and preach the Gospel, and on 28th May of that year he wrote in his diary:

“The Faroe Islands need a missionary who is prepared to declare the whole council of God and I wish to be released from all human ties and hindrances in relation to my faith in God and His truth. May the grace of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with my spirit in this glorious

¹ Since 1879 'The Religious Tract and Book Society of Scotland'.

² Kelling, F, *Fisherman of Faroe*, Gøta 1993, pp. 60-61.

³ In the Baptist Church in Lerwick, Shetland.

⁴ Church of Scotland.

⁵ Dickson, N. T. R., *Brethren in Scotland 1838-2000*, Paternoster 2002, p. 68.

undertaking. So the Lord helping me, I decide to go to Faroe to preach Jesus.”⁶

Shortly after this, Sloan went to Papa Stour and travelled to the Faeroes on a small Shetland fishing smack, and after a couple of days he arrived in Tórshavn. The precise date is not known but it was probably in June 1865 and on this first visit he had open-air meetings and visited villages on some of the islands.⁷ First Sloan stayed at the Sailors’ Home but later got lodgings at the book-binder’s Hans N. Jakobsen, father of the renowned linguist Dr. J. Jakobsen⁸, who knew English and spoke the language, and Sloan assisted the book-binder in his work.⁹

Thus started Evangelicalism in the Faeroes with the introduction of the Open Brethren movement in the Faeroes.¹⁰ William G. Sloan’s first visit in the Faeroes lasted seven weeks. Sloan had studied a little of the Danish language; but in spite of knowing neither Faeroese nor Danish, he preached his message at an open-air meeting in the centre of Tórshavn where he sang hymns and gave a short sermon in broken Danish which listeners obviously understood.¹¹ He said that one is Christian not by birth, by baptism or by belonging to a church, but only through rebirth through the Holy Spirit and by the faith that Jesus’ blood cleanses all sin. People recognised the last statement from the Church, but the claim that neither baptism nor Church was of any importance was

⁶ The Diaries of William G. Sloan – 1863-1913, Faroese National Archives 2010.

⁷ Kelling, F, *Fisherman of Faroe*, Gøta 1993, pp. 84-85.

⁸ Dr J. Jakobsen (1864-1914) compiled *An Etymological Dictionary of the Norn Language in Shetland*, published in 1907

⁹ Berghamar, Sigurd, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, pp.62-69

¹⁰ There is some doubt whether Sloan actually saw himself as belonging to the Brethren movement at this stage, probably more as an independent evangelist; but soon he became an Open Brethren worker.

¹¹ Kelling, F, *Fisherman of Faroe*, Gøta 1993, pp. 33-34.

something new because these were regarded as fundamental in the preaching of the Church.¹²

It is, of course, difficult to establish personal relationships or succeed in making people change their beliefs within a few weeks, but Sloan was actually able to form a small group of followers from a couple of families in Tórshavn. He also took the time to travel to the village of Miðvágur on Vágur to see the businessman Godtfred Heinesen (1837-1894) who had good connections with fishermen, ship-owners and businessmen in Shetland and the northeast of Scotland. Later Heinesen became an important figure in the new movement. During Sloan's short stay at Miðvágur there was a Shetland fishing smack there, and he was asked to preach to the crew who then collected money amongst themselves and handed this to him, enabling Sloan to complete his first visit in Faroe and get back to Scotland.¹³

On his return W. G. Sloan visited various places in Scotland and the Northern Isles, preaching and visiting relatives and friends. He became increasingly convinced that his future missionary work would be performed in the Faeroes, so he cancelled his arrangement with the Tract and Book Society and after encouragement, especially from the Motherwell Brethren Assembly,¹⁴ but also from fellow evangelists, relatives and others, he went back to the Faeroes in the summer of 1866, this time for four months, visiting several villages around the islands. Having experienced a service at the

¹² Wolles, Óli, 'Brødremenighederne paa Færøerne 1865-1930', MA dissertation, University of Aarhus 1993, p. 38

¹³ Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst – William Sloan og fyrstu samkomurnar*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 77

¹⁴ Kelling, F, *Fisherman of Faroe*, Gøta 1993, p. 85.

Established Lutheran Church in Tórshavn, he wrote the following on the spiritual situation amongst the Faeroese and expressed his hopes in his diary:¹⁵

“Their form of worship being ritualistic, the truth is much covered up with forms and ceremonies and traditions and commandments...I hope the Lord will open a way for His glorious Gospel to spread there in its primitive purity.”

The following years Sloan visited the Faeroes almost every summer, and gradually he stayed for longer periods, travelling to most of the islands, preaching in several villages and visiting people in their homes. When coming into people’s homes, he was kind, somewhat shy, courteous and friendly, asking in his mild manner whether he might give them a tract and be allowed to sing “a little song”, “read a short scripture” and “say a little prayer”¹⁶. Thus Sloan laid the foundations for the Open Brethren movement in Faeroe; and the rest of the year he travelled as an evangelist in Scotland and elsewhere. On his second visit he travelled mainly to three different places in Faeroe apart from Tórshavn, staying around three weeks at each place, and in his diaries we learn that while staying in the various villages, he preached about Jesus both publicly and privately and that the villagers liked his visits. The doors were open, it was easy to get lodgings and he experienced what he called “true Christian hospitality”.¹⁷

However, travelling from village to village was very difficult in those days. There were no roads and no regular means of transport, so Sloan had to walk across the mountains – often for hours on end – or ask for a place in an open boat; but in spite of this and the ever changing weather conditions in the Faeroes, he was able to get to even

¹⁵ The Diaries of William G. Sloan – 1863-1913, Faroese National Archives 2010.

¹⁶ Kelling, F, *Fisherman of Faroe*, Gøta 1993, pp. 94-97

¹⁷ Kelling, F, *Fisherman of Faroe*, Gøta 1993, pp. 70-72

almost inaccessible and isolated villages. Being very popular with children, he taught them new songs, and especially the melodies were well liked. Often he preached at open-air meetings where many people gathered and showed great interest in what he said, especially on Sunday evenings; and when he finished, many came to him and thanked for the good speech. Sloan also visited British fishing vessels, especially from Shetland and Scotland, which came to port for water or because many were ill during that summer, and he also visited crew-members at the hospital.

In those days it was absolutely unheard of that lay-people preached the word of God, and it was equally unusual to preach out of doors, so when Sloan started singing with his beautiful voice, people soon gathered around him. They also liked listening to what he had to say although they knew that Sloan did not say the same as what they were used to hearing in the church.¹⁸ People knew that he did not approve of infant baptism but insisted that it was vitally important for everybody to convert and get assurance and knowledge of salvation already in this life.¹⁹

On his return to Lerwick in Shetland, W. G. Sloan wrote a report of his first two visits to the Faeroes for the editor of a Baptist magazine,²⁰ and in this article he explains that he had made two missionary journeys to “these far north islands of the sea.” He mentions that there was at that point in time no other party involved in preaching the evangelical gospel but that this would hardly continue for long. Sloan was convinced that “the Lord will open a way for His glorious Gospel to spread there in its primitive

¹⁸ Danielsen, D. J., ‘W. G. Sloan’, obituary, *Naade og Sandhed*, No. 2, February 1915, pp. 14-16.

¹⁹ Berghamar, S., - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn, 1992, p.70-71

²⁰ *Primitive Church Magazine*, June issue, 1866.

purity.”²¹ Towards the end of the article he explains that he is labouring as an evangelist in the North and was planning another visit to the Faeroe Islands the following summer. Indeed, he had just received letters from islanders asking him to come back and continue the work that he had started.²² From his diaries we can conclude that William Gibson Sloan visited the Faeroes in the summer of 1865, 1866 and 1867; probably also in 1868 and the following years. He also made visits in 1876, 1877 and 1878, but not in 1874 and 1875. It cannot be said with certainty from perusing his diary, but in 1879 he settled down as a full time Open Brethren missionary in Tórshavn.²³

The pattern of Sloan’s life remained much the same from 1867 until he settled in the Faeroe Islands for good. He travelled widely and gained great insights and experience from his preaching, meetings, visits to people’s homes and personal encounters with a variety of individuals both in Scotland, especially the Northern Isles, England, Iceland and Norway. For instance he helped boost Brethren work in rural Scotland, notably in fishing villages,²⁴ and this made him particularly capable of introducing Evangelicalism in the Faeroes where there were common cultural and social factors. However, there were differences because none of the philosophical and religious storms which had raged in Britain and Europe had been felt in the Faeroes. All the momentous changes in attitudes, worldviews, politics and sciences, caused by the Reformation, the Enlightenment, Rationalism and the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions, had hardly had any impact in

²¹ Ibid.

²² Kelling, F, *Fisherman of Faroe*, Gøta 1993, p. 90

²³ Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, 1992, p. 80

²⁴ Dickson, N. T. R., *Brethren in Scotland 1838-2000*, Paternoster 2002, pp. 99-105.

the isolated island community in the North Atlantic. At most these storms may have been felt like light breezes – if at all.²⁵

William G. Sloan's diaries from this period reflect this state of affairs because he seems fully aware of the challenges facing him in his missionary work in the Faeroes where people were very conservative in outlook and, not least, religiously. The Reformation hardly had the impact that it did elsewhere, and well into the 20th century old Catholic traditions still prevailed in spite of four centuries of the Lutheran brand of Protestantism. The Established Church in Faeroe did not follow the Reformation principle of using the vernacular, i.e. Faeroese, until late in the 20th century, and although the Christian religion was taken extremely seriously by the population, the clergy were viewed as both mediators between God and the congregation on the one hand and as an important secular power on the other.

The new teaching introduced by Sloan rejected the role of the clergy as God's mediators, referring to Acts and Paul's letters in the Scriptures where all believers are regarded as priests;²⁶ and many of the Church's teachings, particularly those concerning infant baptism as opposed to believers' baptism, were similarly rejected by Sloan and other Brethren in the Faeroes.²⁷ Of course these views led to frustration for many people and opposition from the Church and its clergymen, most of whom had never been confronted with such 'heretical' views. During the period of Sloan's missionary work discussed in this chapter there was no other such evangelistic work in Faeroe. The Danish

²⁵ Viderø, K. O., *Saga Streymoyar og Nólsoyar*, Tórshavn 1994, pp. 193-195.

²⁶ For instance Hebrews 5: 10; 7: 15-25; Ephesians 2: 18; but mainly I Peter 2: 5-9.

²⁷ Discussed below.

Home Mission, an activist movement within the Lutheran Church itself, was not instigated in the islands until decades later²⁸.

William Gibson Sloan's enormous perseverance and humble dedication to his cause, especially during the first 15 years of his missionary work in the Faeroes is admirable, whatever views the beholder might have or have had. Tirelessly he travelled to almost all of the 17 islands several times and visited most of around 50 villages – even the most remote ones, some of which have since died out.²⁹ He hardly ever mentions the bad experiences of some visits, nor does he complain or criticise anybody in his diaries. Occasionally he lets some brief comments slip into his otherwise modest descriptions of his missionary work in Faeroe. Sometimes he reminds himself that he “must take more time to reflect on the Word of God”, a few times he mentions that “too much conversation went on before the meeting” or that he was “prevented from concentrating on the Word”. On some occasions he makes a short note of being barred from entering a village or that people had locked their doors to him or even thrown him out. At one village he had to sleep in a barn because nobody would put him up.³⁰ Such incidences did not affect Sloan, and usually he visited every house in a village, at least giving them a tract; but normally he was invited inside and was allowed to sing, read and pray. Many were particularly amazed by the tunes that they had never heard before, mainly the then modern Gospel Hymns.

Sloan's message was quite clear and unfailingly based on the theology and attitudes of contemporary revivalist Evangelicalism. He did not approve of the teaching

²⁸ Hansen, G, *Eindarmentan Føroyinga og vekingarrørslurnar*, Tórshavn 1987, pp. 208; 215

²⁹ The Diaries of William G. Sloan – 1863-1913, Faroese National Archives 2010.

³⁰ Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 95

that people were reborn by way of infant baptism; for him this was a deviation from Scripture and led people astray. Neither could he agree that saved and unsaved, believers and non-believers, pious and irreverent could be in the same spiritual fellowship or worship, emphasising that a Christian assembly is not a secular institution but a spiritual association of God's children, reborn through personal faith in God by way of Scripture.³¹ In the Faeroes these views were totally incomprehensible for most people and several of the things that Sloan said felt extremely controversial and offensive. However, as time went by, an increasing number of islanders supported the views advocated by Sloan, and in 1879, 14 years after his first visit, the time seemed ripe for new initiatives and more efficient missionary work in the islands, and this year he also settled down in the Faeroes for good.³²

3.2 Consolidation 1880-1914

In the Faeroese newspaper *Dimmalætting* of 26th October 1878 there is an interesting piece of news:

“Englishman [sic], Mr. Sloan, for the religious sect he represents which is called Christian Brethren in Scotland, has sent an application to the Town Council to buy a site in the town in order to have meetings.”

The application was granted and already the following spring the building of the first Brethren Hall in the Faeroes started, partly financed by gifts from Brethren in Scotland.³³

Soon the hall was completed because already on 28th June 1879 *Dimmalætting* announced that Mr Sloan “has already started using the Hall which he built in this

³¹ Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 71

³² *Ibid.*, p. 193.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

town”.³⁴ Sloan lived in a small flat upstairs and the hall was downstairs, accommodating around 50 people. From then onwards the movement started growing, albeit very slowly at first, but in spite of this meetings were often well attended. The first Sunday school in the Faeroes started in ‘Sloan’s Hall’, as it became known, and this proved a very successful initiative. In the newspaper mentioned above regular announcements can be found regarding meetings in the Hall, mostly Brethren meetings but also meetings arranged by the Total Abstinence Association.³⁵ Drunkenness was a serious problem in the Faeroes, especially after free trade was introduced in 1856, and Sloan wholeheartedly supported the work against alcohol abuse.

This winter, 1879/80, another Scottish Brethren missionary, A. P. MacDonald (fl. 1870-1900), visited the Faeroes and worked with Sloan. Among the first Faeroese Brethren in Tórshavn were Hans Joensen (1854-1924) who had been converted while training in Fraserburgh in Scotland, Andrias i Geil (1851-1890) and his sister Elsebeth (1857-1930) who was later to become William Sloan’s wife.³⁶ Andrias was the first to be baptised in Faeroe after conversion and testimony of salvation; this was in October 1880 and he was baptised by MacDonald in the Eastern Bay. In December the same year, Johann Dam and his wife Elsba Katrina, Kollafjørður,³⁷ were baptised in Hoydal’s River, but soon a baptismal tank³⁸ was installed in the hall and here Elsebeth Sloan and Hans Joensen were baptised.³⁹ In the early years people from other assemblies were also baptised there.

³⁴ *Dimmalætting*, 28 June 1879.

³⁵ *Dimmalætting*, 28 June and 28 September 1879.

³⁶ Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, pp. 194f.

³⁷ See three pages below.

³⁸ The place for baptism has always been called the baptismal tank, supposedly to avoid 'churchy' words.

³⁹ Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 194.

On the whole Sloan was popular and well liked in the Faeroes but after the introduction of believers' baptisms this changed for some time, things being thrown at Sloan and the others,⁴⁰ windows broken, etc.; and at one point it was so bad that the police offered to protect Sloan and the hall. Sloan rejected this offer and moved to Miðvágur and stayed with Godtfred Heinesen for a while, holding meetings and visiting homes there.⁴¹ One of the reasons for the opposition was that the Danish Lutheran clergyman N. B. C. Ewaldsen (1849-1909)⁴² had a series of public lectures in Tórshavn in which he warned against the new teachings and beliefs and seems to have caused uproar and widespread anger among the inhabitants, many of whom felt obliged to oppose and resist the new movement.⁴³ Indeed this opposition from the established Danish church against the Brethren sometimes reached quite frenzied levels. Before the baptisms, meetings in the Hall had been well attended, and especially the so-called tea meetings where people got a mug of tea and a bag of bread and cakes were popular and always ended with hymns, reading from the scripture and prayer.⁴⁴ These and other meetings were recommenced after a while and the small Tórshavn assembly gradually grew in numbers, more people were baptised and after 25 years, in 1905, a new hall had to be erected, the Ebenezer Hall.⁴⁵

The second assembly was established in Miðvágur where Godtfred Heinesen had converted in 1877 and where Sloan had been preaching and visiting homes since 1865.⁴⁶

Heinesen was baptised in 1882 and started preaching and having Brethren meetings in a

⁴⁰ Háberg, P, "William Gibson Sloan", *Fra penni Petur Hábergs*, Vol. I, Gøta 2007, pp. 50-62.

⁴¹ Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 123-125.

⁴² www.rosenkamp.dk/praester.pdf (p. 117: Niels Bahne Christian Ewaldsen)

⁴³ Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 116.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 224-225.

⁴⁶ The Diaries of William G. Sloan – 1863-1913, Faroese National Archives 2010.

hall above his bakery.⁴⁷ While Sloan stayed in Miðvágur, they were able to gather a small assembly for the whole of Vágur.⁴⁸ Among the first Brethren there were businessman and ship-owner Rasmus Niclasen (1870-1920), fisherman and skipper Jógvan Joensen (1869-1933). This assembly died out and a new one was established in Sørvágur on the same island in 1907.⁴⁹

A tiny assembly was on the small island of Hestur for a few years around 1900, and it is not unlikely that this was one of the first ones apart from the Tórshavn Assembly.⁵⁰ In an interesting local history of this island, Sloan is mentioned.⁵¹ Unfortunately no sources have been found which provide information regarding this meeting. Only two names have been found: Esmar Hansen (1873-1919), originally from Kollafjørður, and his wife Elisabeth Helena, nee Jacobsen, (1867-1916) who was among the first women to graduate from the Faeroe Teachers' Training College in 1887. Esmar was a fisherman and skipper with Napoleon Andreasen (Poli i Dali)⁵² with whom he owned at fishing smack.⁵³ Esmar was lost at sea and Elisabeth died from tuberculosis.⁵⁴ It is likely that Johannes P. Johannesen (1867-1919) was also a member of the Hest assembly because in a letter to the Dean, dated in Tórshavn on 16th September 1895, a 'Hest-Jóannes' is among the eleven people withdrawing from the Lutheran church. He was a fisherman on Shetland smacks and may have been converted then. Later he became

⁴⁷ Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 229.

⁴⁸ The island where the Faeroe Airport, 'Vagar Airport', is situated. Also called "Vágur".

⁴⁹ Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, pp. 229; 327.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 230-233.

⁵¹ Poulsen, J. C., *Hestsøga*, Tórshavn 1947, p. 137.

⁵² Presented in sections 3.2 and 7.6.

⁵³ Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 231.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 233.

a skipper and a pioneer in trying fishery south of Iceland.⁵⁵ Maybe there were three others in the assembly, which died out because of disease, emigration and untimely death.

Another early and small assembly was at Kollafjørður where the farmer Johann Dam (1863-1925) and his wife Elsba Katrina (1843-1926), nee Højgaard, from Strendur on Eysturoy, had been converted. According to the 1890 Census she is not registered as a member of the Established Church but as Brethren.⁵⁶ In 1895 they were married by the Sheriff in Tórshavn and not in a church and were the first couple in the Faeroes to be married by secular authorities. Johann Dam visited Sloan twice in 1892, and in 1902 and 1903 Sloan visited the two at Kollafjørður and they broke bread together.⁵⁷ Johan was a well-read and intelligent man and he had learned several languages; apart from Danish and Faeroese, he read, spoke and wrote Icelandic, English, German and French, and he was also a poet.⁵⁸ Because of his religious views he was not particularly popular with his fellow villagers but in spite of this they respected and trusted him so that he was elected member of the village council for several years and even elected to the local parliament, the løgting, where he sat from 1903 until 1918.⁵⁹

One of the early and most important Brethren assemblies was at Viðareiði on Viðoy in the Northern Islands. In this village it seems as if real awakening took place, and what emerged there, both the individuals and the practices, influenced several other assemblies in the Faeroes.⁶⁰ Sloan had visited Viðareiði before he settled down in Faeroe in 1879, and since 1881 these visits were more frequent. After a visit in 1883 he wrote an

⁵⁵ Ibid., 232.

⁵⁶ Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 235.

⁵⁷ The Diaries of William G. Sloan – 1863-1913, Faroese National Archives 2010.

⁵⁸ Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 235.

⁵⁹ Waag, Ei., *Val of valtøl 1906–1966*, Klaksvík 1967.

⁶⁰ Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 238f.

article for the journal *Missionary Echo*;⁶¹ this is an account of his work there which lasted around a week. Sloan had seven meetings and the Lutheran clergyman, Jørgen Chr. Fog Nielsen (1847-1923),⁶² attended six of them. The clergyman also spoke at the meetings where the main topics were the assembly and baptism. People were dissatisfied that the clergyman talked for so long (almost two hours on baptism); but otherwise the meetings were agreeable. In the article Sloan concluded that the meetings had been successful, giving people the opportunity of “finding the truth” themselves and being more tolerant towards each other’s views and, as it turned out, many conversions and baptisms took place at this village later.⁶³

In the summer of 1899 a Danish Baptist missionary, Gotfred Petersen (1872-1953),⁶⁴ joined Sloan on a visit to Viðareiði; and he later published a book about his experiences in the Faeroe Islands.⁶⁵ The two missionaries travelled on a small steamship to Klaksvík and from there in a rowing boat to Viðareiði where they visited homes and had a well attended meeting in the evening. Petersen mentions that there were quite a few believers who were not members of the established Lutheran church. According to him many could see that believers’ baptism was correct but had not reached the decisive stage yet. The following Sunday Petersen attended a church service which he describes as rather dull, conducted by a deacon⁶⁶ reading Danish homilies and attended by only ten uninterested people. Sloan and Petersen concluded the visit with two well attended

⁶¹ September 1883.

⁶² Dates kindly supplied by Ms. Elsa Funding, parish clergyman, Norðuroyar, by telephone 13 Oct. 2011.

⁶³ Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, pp. 244f.

⁶⁴ Dates kindly supplied by Ulla Holm, Secretariat of the Baptist Church in Denmark on 15 August 2011.

⁶⁵ Petersen, G, *Min rejse til Færøerne*, Copenhagen 1945.

⁶⁶ Usually a local farmer or teacher was in charge when the clergyman was in another village.

meetings and a meeting for children, and in Petersen's opinion "doors seem to be open for the Gospel".⁶⁷

Some distinguished Faeroese Brethren pioneers came from Viðareiði. The best known probably Jens Clement (Klæmint) Isaksen (1881-1964) who was brought up at Hattarvík on Fugloy, having lost his mother when a young boy. In 1890 two Brethren missionaries, Sloan and Alexander Mitchell (1864-1939),⁶⁸ had a meeting in the other village on the island, Kirkja. The 9-years-old Jens Klæmint was one of the children attending the packed meeting and he was enthused by what he heard, not least the heartening songs. After the meeting, Sloan, as was his habit, put his hand on Jens Klæmint's head and said the words "Believe in Jesus!"⁶⁹ Many people remembered this act of Sloan's for the rest of their lives, including the famous Faeroese author and poet William Heinesen who felt it like a blessing.⁷⁰ Jens Klæmint Isaksen, later a fisherman, skipper, businessman and ship-owner, is still remembered as a powerful preacher and great organiser all over the islands.⁷¹

At Viðareiði meetings were held in various houses until 1906 when a house was refurbished for the purpose, but already in 1910 a proper hall was built. Among the best known early Brethren from Viðareiði were Jens Klæmint's brother Jákup Hendrik Isaksen (1879-1952), Absalon Absalonsen (1861-1919), Jústi Justesen (1870-1955), Tróndur Fuglø (1875-1938) and Jóan Jakku Jacobsen (1872-1950). The Viðareiði assembly was probably the most efficacious, biggest and strongest one outside Tórshavn,

⁶⁷ Cited in Berghamar, S., - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 246.

⁶⁸ A short biography on A. Michell and his work in the Faeroes will be given in section 4.2.

⁶⁹ Sloan, A.ndrew, *Sunnudagsskúlin*, 5/1944, p. 1.

⁷⁰ Heinesen, William, "William G Sloan", *Liv og laera*, 19/1966, Tórshavn 1966, pp. 6-7.

⁷¹ More on J. K. Isaksen in section 4.2.

and in 1907, for instance, four of them, three women and a man, came to be baptised in Sloan's Hall in Tórshavn;⁷² others were baptised in a river but later a baptismal tank was installed in the hall.⁷³ Jens Klæmint was instrumental in establishing the 'Betesda' assembly and hall in Klaksvík and his brother Jákup Hendrik helped when the assembly at Svínoy was established.⁷⁴

In 1876 Sloan visited the villages on Sandoy and was well received in most places,⁷⁵ and one of the earliest assemblies there was at Skálavík where Sloan lodged and had meetings in Nicodemus (Demmus) á Hamri's home. Demmus was lost at sea when a boat bringing whale meat from the north capsized in 1896. His son, Melchior Nicodemussen (1872-1962), tried in vain to rescue his father whose last words were, "Save yourself and let me go; but convert!" Shortly after the turn of the century an assembly of four was thriving in Skálavík. One of them was Napoleon Jacobsen (1878-1924) who had been converted while a sailor in America, and Sloan broke bread with them twice in 1906⁷⁶ and the following year they were baptised in Sloan's Hall in Tórshavn.⁷⁷

Already in 1866 Sloan visited the village Hvalba on Suðuroy;⁷⁸ and in 1876 he was again visiting the island and held a meeting there.⁷⁹ In his diary on 28 May that year he wrote:

"Meeting about 5 p.m. A large crowd, some having to stand. Had some liberty in speaking and some were impressed; I saw some tears. I trust the

⁷² Absalonsen, M, *Leirkerið*, 1983/1. Cited in Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 241.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Jógvan við Keldu, Klaksvík, in an email to me on 30th July 2012.

⁷⁵ Kelling, F, *Fisherman of Faroe*, Gøta 1993, p, 99.

⁷⁶ Not unusual in the Faeroes that people participated in breaking of bread before baptism.

⁷⁷ Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 270-272.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Kelling, F, *Fisherman of Faroe*, Gøta 1993, p, 99.

Truth found a place in some hearts. The people here are willing to hear the word. Some are disturbed with the state of things beside them. Great indifference to spiritual things appears to prevail around. I spoke on being justified.”⁸⁰

As a young man Jóan Pauli Poulsen (1853-1944) vid Neyst at Hvalba had been touched by Evangelicalism through the Danish Home Missionary Vilhelm Rasch (1866-1939)⁸¹ and in this way he started a religious journey which eventually led him to the Brethren. The Lutheran clergyman at Hvalba, Franz M. R. Busch (1869-1959), was a humble man and they arranged meetings together in the village church and in neighbouring Tvøroyri.⁸² In the 1890s Sloan and Mitchell held meetings at Hvalba, and in 1905 true awakening took place in the village where Napoleon (Poli) Jacobsen and his brother Jákup came from Skálavík and held packed meetings in Jóan Pauli’s home, even attended by the clergyman and his wife. The mood was so arousing that many were deeply touched, acknowledged their sins, witnessed and were converted, and the following year two of the first Faeroese Brethren missionaries, Daniel Jacob (Dollin) Danielsen (1871-1916) and Napoleon Andreasen (Poli i Dali, 1868-1912),⁸³ held meetings and baptised converted local people in the lake Heygsvatn. Later Sloan visited Hvalba again and expressed deep satisfaction and gratefulness that young people had become witnesses.⁸⁴

However, these developments angered adherents of the Lutheran church, including the clergyman mentioned above, and some people returned to the church.

⁸⁰ The Diaries of William G. Sloan – 1863-1913, Faroese National Archives 2010.

⁸¹ *Dúgván*, 6/1894. Rasch established abstinence associations in some villages, e.g. Leirvík on Eysturoy, in the late 19th century. Later he was better known as a Seamen’s Missionary and Principal of the Sailors’ High School. - Obituary in *Indre Missions Tidende*, 18/1939, pp. 288-290.

⁸² Zachariassen, Z, “Hvalba”, *Sunnudagsskúlin*, 1-2/1966.

⁸³ Short biographies of Danielsen and Andreasen will be given in section 4.4.

⁸⁴ Zachariassen, Z, “Hvalba”, *Sunnudagsskúlin*, 1-2/1966.

Busch told Poulsen that because of the baptism they could not work together any more, and representatives for the Danish Home Mission came from Tórshavn to hold a meeting in the village church against the ‘re-baptisers’. An assistant clergyman at Hvalba, Axel F. Moe (1877-1942), later a leading figure in the Home Mission, even wrote and published a booklet in Danish, called *Gendøbernes Vildfarelser* (The Re-baptisers’ Deviations).⁸⁵ However, the Brethren assembly continued holding meetings and breaking bread, and in 1914 the first hall was built, in 1953 a new and larger one.⁸⁶

Sloan visited other villages on Suðuroy when he was in the Faeroes in 1866, and he also visited the town Tvøroyri which was soon to emerge as the most important fishing port and fish processing centre in the islands. Also in 1886 Sloan held meetings there;⁸⁷ and in 1906 the brothers Napoleon and Jákup Jacobsen and Napoleon Andreassen rented a dancing hall in Tvøroyri and held a meeting there. Many attended and some were converted.⁸⁸ Dánjal J. Magnussen (1880-1947) of Porkeri on Suðuroy had been trained as a bookbinder in Copenhagen and started his business in Tvøroyri in 1905.⁸⁹ Soon after that he was converted and was baptised in the new hall in Tórshavn, Ebenezer, in 1907; but only years later was an assembly established in the town, so he was often seen walking all the way to Porkeri on Sunday mornings when meetings (i.e. the breaking of bread) were held there.⁹⁰ Not until 1921 was an assembly formed⁹¹ and a hall built in Tvøroyri.⁹²

⁸⁵ Moe, A. F, *Gendøbernes vildfarelser*, Tórshavn 1906.

⁸⁶ Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 283.

⁸⁷ The Diaries of William G. Sloan – 1863-1913, Faroese National Archives 2010.

⁸⁸ Zachariassen, Z, “Tvøroyri”, *Sunnudagsskúlin*, 1-2/1966.

⁸⁹ Joensen, M, in *Sunnudagsskúlin*, 42-43/1950.

⁹⁰ Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 286.

⁹¹ Nolsøe, Hans P., ‘Hvønn vilt tú velja?’, *Naade og Sandhed*, No. 3, April/May 1921, 7th year, p. 1.

⁹² *Ibid.*

At Porkeri on Suðuroy a Brethren Hall was built in 1907; but Sloan had visited the village already around 1878-1880 and was quite well received although many had heard rumours that he was a dangerous re-baptiser who might take people by force and baptise them. However, those who became acquainted with Sloan experienced that he was a meek, peaceful and kind man.⁹³ The only person who would give Sloan lodgings was farmer Peter Larsen (1827-1910) who was a staunch churchman, deacon and responsible for the local church. Sloan was even allowed to hold meetings in his house. His son Kristoffer Larsen (1867-1960) took over as deacon early in the 1900s, but he was also attracted to the new belief. Sloan visited Suðuroy again in October 1882 and stayed at Porkeri for four days and had open air and indoor meetings as well as visited homes.⁹⁴

The Lutheran clergyman, Franz M. R. Busch,⁹⁵ wrote a letter to the Dean in Tórshavn explaining what went on in Suðuroy. About Porkeri he says that around a dozen people have “got spiritual help through the work of the Brethren...but they said that they had no plans to join the Brethren. They also took communion at the church.”⁹⁶ Furthermore Busch mentions that rumour had it that Kristoffer Larsen, now deacon for his father, did not say the Lord’s Prayer but adds that this was untrue. The clergyman concluded that had the church been more open for change, dissent might never have happened.⁹⁷ It seems as if the people converted in 1906 still went to church, had their children baptised there and even the deacon continued in his position for some time. Such

⁹³ Skemmuni, J í, “Porkeri”, *Leirkerið*, 3-4/1989/90.

⁹⁴ *The Diaries of William G. Sloan – 1863-1913*, Faroese National Archives 2010.

⁹⁵ Hansen, G, *Eindarmentan Føroyinga og vekingarrørslurnar*, Tórshavn 1987.

⁹⁶ Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 291.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 292.

parallel allegiances were obviously possible in a couple of villages, particularly where the clergyman was more liberal and, quite likely, for social reasons.⁹⁸

In 1907, however, things changed considerably. In an article in *Echoes of Service*, the British Brethren missionary journal, the Faeroese Brethren missionary D. J. Danielsen wrote that the Porkeri assembly comprised 12 individuals, all workers and fishermen, but seemingly they had not yet entirely abandoned their old religion.⁹⁹ Danielsen probably stayed there for quite a while, visiting homes and holding meetings in a large storehouse; also it is likely that the first people were baptised in the old swimming pool in the valley. Probably Kristoffer Larsen and his wife Anna Sofía had left the church by then and were the first to be baptised by Danielsen.¹⁰⁰ The English Brethren missionary Arthur Brend (1880-1959)¹⁰¹ had also visited Suðuroy, including Porkeri, in December 1906,¹⁰² and he visited the village again from October 1907, writing an article in *Echoes of Service* where he tells about the new hall, the assembly and has a photo.¹⁰³ Around this time there were 30-40 confessed believers in the whole of Suðuroy, 15-20 of them at Porkeri¹⁰⁴ where regular meetings were held every Sunday at 12 noon (Breaking the Bread) and at 6 pm also there was a Sunday school and a midweek meeting.¹⁰⁵ Among the first members of the Porkeri assembly were fisherman and skipper Johan Andrias Godtfred (1879-1968), Mikkjal Poulsen (1861-1946) and his wife Anna (their first child, born in 1906, was

⁹⁸ Guttesen, P., "Dópur, samfelag og samleiki" (Baptism, society and identity), *Frændafundur 5*, eds. M. Bnædal and Johannesen, Háskólaútgávan (University Publication), Reykjavík 2005.

⁹⁹ Danielsen, D. J., *Echoes of Service*, June 1907.

¹⁰⁰ Berghamar, S., - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, pp. 293f.

¹⁰¹ A short biography on Brend in section 4.4.

¹⁰² *Arthur Brend's Diary 1907*. Cited in Berghamar, S., - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 292.

¹⁰³ *Echoes of Service*, December 1907.

¹⁰⁴ Kelling, F., *Fisherman of Faroe*, Gøta 1993, p. 177. Berghamar, S., - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 307.

¹⁰⁵ Berghamar, S., - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, pp. 307-308.

baptised in the church but not the younger ones), carpenter Johan Thomsen and his wife Anna; the shoemaker Hans Djurhuus and his wife Sigrid; and Johan Djurhuus, former church warden and bell ringer, and his wife Petra.¹⁰⁶ A new hall was built in 1921 and the present one, Betania, in 1975.

Apart from Tvøroyri there is another town on Suðuroy, Vágur, not far from Porkeri. After the meetings there, around New Year in 1906, the two organisers, Napoleon Andreasen of Tórshavn and Jóan Pauli Poulsen of Hvalba, went to Vágur where they rented the dance hall and held meetings there. “Also here many were converted – but opposition was strong.”¹⁰⁷ J. A. Godtfred moved from Porkeri and settled in Vágur on 9th December 1909 and the following Sunday, 12th December, five people broke bread in his sitting room.¹⁰⁸ Meetings were held in Godtfred’s home where one room was used for meetings until a hall was built in 1920, extended considerably in 1950.¹⁰⁹ Johan Andreas Godtfred (1879-1968) was a renowned skipper and the principal supporter of the assembly in Vágur; he preached and witnessed not only there but all around the Faeroes. Petur Háberg wrote about him: “He has been one of our most spellbinding and moving evangelists.”¹¹⁰ Among the first members of the Vágur assembly were fisherman Johan Nicolai Smith (1882-1921) who had struggled with alcoholism for a long time until he came drunk and visited Sigrid, who read the passion story of Christ to him. Shortly after this he converted and announced this in every house in the town, and Smith was a keen and enthusiastic organiser of open-air meetings. Sadly

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 290-305.

¹⁰⁷ Zachariassen, Z, “Vágur”, *Sunnudagsskúlin*, 1-2/1966. Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 314.

¹⁰⁸ Vágfjall, K, “Vágur”, *Røddin*, 1/1980.

¹⁰⁹ Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 321.

¹¹⁰ Háberg, P, “Gamli Godtfred”, *Liv og læra*, 18/1965.

he died at the tuberculosis sanatorium in Tórshavn, aged only 38.¹¹¹ His wife Elin, nee Djurhuus, had been a housemaid at Napoleon Andreasen's in Tórshavn and was converted there.¹¹² Fisherman Poul Leo (1889-1973) had also had a turbulent life with drink as a young man, but at an open-air Brethren meeting in Tórshavn he was greatly affected. He and Smith were shipmates and friends, and after they had both attended a meeting at Godtfred's, he converted the following night, towards the end of 1914, praying in Smith's home.¹¹³ Another early assembly member was fisherman and skipper Jóan Petur Joensen (1894-1963) who, at the age of 12, heard Old Sloan, as W. G. Sloan was known by this time to distinguish him from his son, during a visit in the north.¹¹⁴ At 13 he went to sea on a fishing smack, but on this his first experience as a fisherman south of Iceland they encountered a terrible storm and were almost lost.¹¹⁵ This made him trust in God and he was converted. Back home in Vágur, he joined the meetings at Godtfred's, was baptised at Porkeri, was a trusted and joyful Brethren worker and always held meetings on the vessels where he was skipper. Later they started baptising in the lake in Vágur and there has always been considerable cooperation between Porkeri and Vágur.¹¹⁶

Sloan visited the island of Vágur on many occasions before the turn of the century, and one of the bigger villages is Sørvágur where he was in 1876 and again in 1878 with his fellow Brethren worker A. H. Darling. It seems that an assembly was consolidated at Sørvágur in 1905, and among the first members were Thomas Djonesen

¹¹¹ Some of his children, William Smith and Ruth Smith, and grandchildren, e.g. John Smith (1934-2000), Thomas M. Smith (b.1937), Heri Smith (1939-2006), Elin J. Smith (b.1963), Eli Smith (b. 1955) and Hansina Iversen (b. 1966) became wellknown artists and musicians. William and Ruth are mentioned in chapter 7.

¹¹² Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 316-317.

¹¹³ Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 318.

¹¹⁴ Absalonsen, M, *Teir bóru boð í bý*, Tórshavn 1991.

¹¹⁵ Nolsøe, P, *Føroya siglingarsøga*, Tórshavn 1965, Vol. 2, p. 213.

¹¹⁶ Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 321.

(1857-1926) who was the first one in the village converted by Sloan. He held meetings in the school, but when people understood that this was a different teaching, the meetings in the school were discontinued.¹¹⁷ The skipper Óli Niclasen (1874-1955), probably influenced by his brother Hans David, already converted in Tórshavn, and Djonesen sent a letter to the clergyman Emil Bruun (1864-1914) on 3rd April 1897 withdrawing from the Lutheran church. He married Elisabeth (1878-1951) and their first three children were baptised as infants but not a son born in 1905 and their other five children.¹¹⁸ Other early Brethren were the well-known baker Martin Nielsen (1878-1951) and his wife Jacobina from Klaksvík. They were the first people to move to the new settlement at Vatnsoyrar. Skipper Martin Jacobsen (1881-1954), a popular preacher, and his wife Mourentza moved to Vatnsoyrar as well. Carpenter Dánjal Poulsen (1885-1986) was active in the assembly as well as his wife Jacobina (1887-1971). They later moved to Vatnsoyrar.¹¹⁹ Also businessman Niclas Niclasen (1873-1961), member of the lögting for a time, and his wife Frederika (1876-1962) joined the assembly. In 1907 they started breaking bread at Martin Nielsen's, and two of them were baptised at Ebenezer, Tórshavn, in December that year. A hall was built at Sørvágur in 1907/08 and the assembly functioned well for some year until 1922 when charismatic influences by way of Norwegian Pentecostal tracts and other printed materials upset and confused the newly converted and hindered further progress.¹²⁰ However, after a few years the assembly regained its vigour; and a new hall was built in 1938.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. p. 322.

¹¹⁸ Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 324.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Rumours had it that they even tried to walk on water to a neighbouring island.

Sloan even visited two of the smallest villages or hamlets on Vágur, each consisting of less than 3-4 houses and one of which has died out long ago. In 1877 he was at Gásadalur and in the summer of 1878 A. H. Darling joined him on another visit there. In 1909 Johan Henrik Henriksen (1885-1924) started studying at the Navigation College in Tórshavn, becoming a skipper in 1910; and together with two other men from Gásadalur, Benedikt Petersen (1879-1957) and Gudmund Hansen (1887-1970), he was converted while on the fishing smack 'Little Emma' in south Icelandic waters during the summer. Back home at Gásadalur in the autumn they held meetings and broke bread; and gradually others joined them. Around 8-10 men and women formed the small assembly for some years. Both Sloan and Brend visited them, and the latter baptised some.¹²¹ One of the smallest settlements in the Faeroes was á Víkum, and even here Sloan paid visits in 1902 and 1905. But it is unlikely that there was an assembly there; they might have joined the one at Gásadalur which also lasted for only a few years, mainly because of emigration around the start of World War I.¹²²

Around this time three of the most distinguished Brethren workers in the Faeroes passed away: Napoleon Andreasen was lost at sea in 1912, William G. Sloan died in 1914,¹²³ and Daniel Jacob Danielsen in 1916. However, over these thirty-odd years there was hardly any town or village in the Faeroe Islands which had not been visited by Brethren, and over this comparatively short period twelve assemblies had been established and some halls built. On the other hand, the new movement had been met with considerable opposition and sometimes aggression, often inflamed by Lutheran

¹²¹ Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 336-340.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 341.

¹²³ 'William G. Sloan', *Naade og Sandhed*, No. 11, December 1918, 4th year, pp. 81.

clergymen, mainly caused by withdrawal from the Danish State Church and believers' baptism.¹²⁴

Brethren were set apart from the rest of society and, of course, also set themselves apart. They were ridiculed, held in low esteem, attacked from pulpits, barred from civil positions, such as teachers,¹²⁵ and warned against. Some suffered considerably from this persecution, bullying and discrimination; but as time passed by and people noticed that many very able, even eminent skippers and businessmen individuals were Brethren, things calmed down. Nevertheless, even in my childhood and youth in the 1950s Tórshavn, Brethren were still regarded as weird and peculiar; and this attitude was more pronounced in the villages.¹²⁶ Even today, many individuals see Brethren as a slightly weird section of society, not genuinely accepted by the mainstream. Nevertheless, it was in the later nineteenth century and, especially, in the early 20th century, that the movement had established itself, and during the following century it would gradually become an accepted part of Faeroese national life.

¹²⁴ Documented examples will be given in chapter 5 (Field Work I).

¹²⁵ Neither local nor central authorities accepted non-Lutheran teachers until the 1960s.

¹²⁶ The contemporary situation will be discussed in chapter 6 (Field Work II).



Small Brethren Hall, Kirkja on Fugloy, from 1924. Drawing by Eli Smith.

4. Activism and Expansion 1919-1965

In this chapter I will first examine the external economic context which proved favourable for Brethren growth in the early 20th century (4.1), and then will present and discuss Brethren growth, innovations and new initiatives (4.2). I will then turn in a concluding section (4.3) to reflect on theories regarding Missiology, Church or Assembly Building, Missionary Work and Mission Strategy in general, because in order to evaluate the pioneering work in the Faeroes, these matters are of great importance in understanding the remarkable growth of the Brethren movement in the first half of the 20th century.

4.1. Growth

The growth of the Faeroese Brethren can be illustrated in the increasing number of halls in villages on the various islands. In 1920 there were 10 halls, in 1930 this had increased to 15; in 1940 there were already 21 halls, and in 1950 there were 26 halls. Today, in 2012, there are 32 Brethren halls and assemblies in the Faeroes. This means that over the 30-years-period from the end of World War I until after the Second World War the number of halls had doubled; and from 1918 to 2011 it had increased three-fold. In the same period the number of Brethren in the islands increased from 550 in 1921 (total population 22,000)¹²⁷ to more than 3,000 in 1950 (population 32,000);¹²⁸ and this means that the membership of the Brethren movement in the islands had increased more than five-fold while the population increased by less than a third.

¹²⁷ 'Hagstova Føroya,' Faeroe Statistics, Tórshavn 2011.

¹²⁸ Sølvará, H. A., "Gudfrøðilig rák og vekingarrørslur í Føroyum og í Íslandi", *Vísindavøka*, Tórshavn 23th September 2010.

When the number of Brethren started growing markedly in the 1920s and 1930s, the Faeroes had already become a fishing and fish-processing community; and there is no doubt that the Brethren movement was primarily a fishermen's movement. Until World War II the year for fishermen was divided as follows: from February/March to late May they were fishing in waters south of Iceland, from then until the middle of June they were at home; from the middle of June until September/October they were fishing in waters east and north of Iceland, and from early autumn until the next March they were at home.¹²⁹ Fishing also went on in Faeroese waters and, later, in Greenland waters.

Wages were poor and varied according to market-prices but improved slightly after the Fishermen's Union was established in 1911. From 1914 to 1938 relative wages were as given in Table 4.1:

Year	DKK	Index: Money earned	Real income
1914	343	100	100
1920	1,043	303	116
1925	772	225	107
1930	797	232	141
1935	470	166	98
1938	640	187	102

Table 4.1. The relative wages of Faeroese Fishermen 1914-38 (index: 1914=100)

Source: Patursson, E., *Fiskiveiði – Fiskimenn*, Tórshavn 1961, p. 401.

The best year during the period was 1919 with DKK1,810 and real income 246, the worst was 1936 with DDK475 and real income at 79.¹³⁰ From autumn to spring not much paid work was on offer for fishermen other than improvement work at home, occasional roadwork and the like; but gradually work patterns evolved so that increasing numbers of

¹²⁹ Joensen, J. P., *Færøske sluppfiskere*, Tórshavn 1975, p. 27.

¹³⁰ Patursson, E., *Fiskiveiði – Fiskimenn*, Tórshavn 1961, p. 401.

men had some work during this period. Those who had a small plot of land and maybe sheep or part of a cow were never totally unemployed; but few earned money in the early 20th century. However, men in Hvalba and Tvøroyri worked in the coal-mines there and from the 1920s new harbours and buildings were built. It was not without reason that workers' unions were established much later than the Fishermen's Union. In the Faeroes the same men were usually fishermen part of the year, workers part of the year and therefore many were members of both the Fishermen's Union and a workers' union almost simultaneously. Most Brethren belonged to this social group and not a few of them had leading posts in both unions; women were organised in unions such as 'Fiskepigernes Fagforening' (the fish-maids' union) in Tvøroyri.

The main fishing port towards the end of the 19th century until the 1930s was Tvøroyri on Suðuroy, the first 'modern' town in the Faeroes with great class-divisions, a poverty-ridden working-class neighbourhood and another neighbourhood with grand houses for the shipowners, merchants and officials. Tvøroyri soon became the stronghold of the Social Democrats. From around 1930 Klaksvík in the Northern Isles developed into the most important fishing port and fish-processing centre; here the population growth was explosive: in 1901 the population was 443, in 1921 it was 915, in 1935 almost twice that at 1,709, in 1950 it was 2,731, and in 1960 a staggering 3,735.¹³¹ Klaksvík is also the Brethren stronghold in the islands with almost half the population belonging to the 'Betesda' assembly. The Faeroese fishing fleet grew both in numbers of

¹³¹ 'Hagstova Føroya', Faeroe Statistics, Tórshavn 2010.

smacks and schooners as well as in tonnage from 1910 to the Second World War as Table 4.2 illustrates.¹³²

Year	Ships	Total tonnage	Average tonnage
1910	137	10,546	77.0
1920	144	10,369	72.5
1930	165	15,917	96.5
1939	162	16,843	104.0

Table 4.2. The size and tonnage of the Faeroese fleet 1910-39

Source: West, J., *Faroe: The emergence of a nation*, London 1972, p. 151.

The ownership of these vessels were quite diversified, e.g. Kjølbro usually owned ships together with good skippers while his predecessors on Suðuroy, in Tvøroyri (Mortensen) and Vágur (Dahl) merchants were often sole owners. Table 4.3 illustrates the number of ships owned by undertakings of different sizes in 1937.¹³³

Ship-owning concerns	No. of ships	Total of ships	Percentage of total fleet
1	14	14	8.3
2	9	18	10.7
1	7	7	4.2
1	6	6	3.6
4	5	20	11.9
4	4	16	9.5
5	3	15	8.9
6	2	12	7.2
60	1	60	35.7

Table 4.3. The number of ships owned by undertakings of different sizes in 1937.

Source: West, J., *Faroe: the emergence of a nation*, London 1972, p. 152.

¹³² West, J., *Faroe: The emergence of a nation*, London 1972, p. 151.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

So the a total number of 84 shipowners had 168 ships, over a third of the whole fleet consisted of a single vessel owned by one person or business and only one concern owned 14 ships and two had 9 ships each. This indicates that the industry was undercapitalised and not well adapted to meet crises arising from sudden falls in fish prices.¹³⁴

In the late 19th and the early 20th centuries Suðuroy was the economic centre of the Faeroes; in 1929 Tvøroyri had 39 smacks and Vágur 22, in both towns klippfish was produced and people came from all the islands to work there from early spring until autumn. Men as fishermen on the smacks, women in the fish processing work ashore.¹³⁵ However, from 1930 onwards the industrial centre of the Faeroes became Klaksvík while the progress on Suðuroy halted and declined, especially after World War II. On Suðuroy Brethren strength was negligible in Tvøroyri, but in Vágur they were stronger, e.g. the Brethren shipowner and industrialist Johan Andreas Godtfred.¹³⁶ When Klaksvík in the Northern Isles took over, years of increase correlated to Brethren growth and it would seem that Brethren growth there came simultaneously with the economic changes, because it seems as if a new economic order and new social relations went hand in hand with spiritual needs in Klaksvík. In class-ridden Tvøroyri the elite met in the club, in Klaksvík there was more equality and all met in the Brethren assembly hall, 'Betesda'.

4.2.1 Innovations

In the almost 150 years since the Faeroese Brethren established themselves, they have been marked by constant growth, enormous activity and successful attempts at meeting

¹³⁴ West, J, *Faroe: the emergence of a nation*, London 1972, p. 152.

¹³⁵ Mortensen, A., *Úr farnum tíðum*, Vol. 2, Tórshavn 1992, p. 145.

¹³⁶ Presented in 6.4.4.

new needs and demanding challenges. It was the second generation of Faeroese Brethren who paved the way for modernisation and it was this generation who laid the solid foundations for the movement as we know it today.¹³⁷ In addition to the changing economic environment which proved favourable for Brethren growth, surveyed in the previous section, and these indigenous initiatives within the Brethren also aided growth considerably.

An increasing number of men became fishermen on smacks, mainly bought from Britain when its fishing fleet replaced its traditional vessels with steam powered trawlers; and although these vessels were ‘new’ in the Faeroes, many of them were in fact quite old and had no engines or modern equipment. They relied on sails only well into the 20th century when they gradually had pitiable motors installed.¹³⁸ Tours were long, life was hard, the food was poor, wages were low, and there were always dangers, especially dreadful storms. Many smacks were lost, and relatives only realised later that their men folk had been lost at sea.¹³⁹ A Brethren member, Fredag Petersen (1883-1922), Fuglafjørður, whose wife was pregnant with their 10th child, was lost in 1922 with six other fishermen. The smack, ‘Nordlyset’, went aground near the English fishing port of Grimsby, where many Faeroese vessels sold their catches, in tempestuous weather.¹⁴⁰ Such tragic accidents gave rise to evangelisation on board the miserable vessels; and so effective were these meetings at sea that smacks have later been called the ‘Cathedrals at Sea’. When the men were away fishing, women were in charge of the assemblies in the

¹³⁷ ‘Herrens Gerning paa Færøerne gennem ¾ Aarhundrede,’ *Vejen*, no. 5-6, Tórshavn 1941, pp. 3-29.

¹³⁸ West, J, *Faroe: the emergence of a nation*, London 1972, p. 129f.

¹³⁹ Hovgaard, Anna, ‘Kutter “Karens” Forlis Vaaren 1920’, (poem on the loss of the smack ‘Karen’), *Naade og Sandhed*, no. 3, April/May 1921, p.3.

¹⁴⁰ Obituary for Fredag Petersen (1883-1922), Fuglafjørður, *Vidnesbyrdet*, 7-8/1922, pp. 73-77.

villages and held regular meetings. The period from the 1880s until the 1950s, often called ‘the smack period’,¹⁴¹ was characterised by poverty, alienation and fear; and here the Brethren movement played an important role in encouraging people by stimulating their spiritual lives.¹⁴² Similar points have been made in the wider literature about evangelicalism in fishing communities.¹⁴³

The widening and growth of Brethren work in the Faeroes included promoting the vernacular which had always been used at meetings and was considered of the utmost importance. As early as 1879 Elsba, later Sloan’s wife, read from Schrøter’s translation of the Matthew’s Gospel while assisting her brother Andrias at the Tórshavn Sunday school;¹⁴⁴ and Faeroe Islanders always used their own language at meetings. However, so few people could read or write¹⁴⁵ their own language in the early years that even the first Brethren publications were in Danish and not until after the First World War did they think it appropriate and beneficial to publish hymns and short articles in the newly constructed Faeroese written language.¹⁴⁶

In order to illustrate the growth and development of a Brethren assembly in a typical small village,¹⁴⁷ I have chosen Kaldbak, north of Tórshavn.¹⁴⁸ Already in 1917 there are two letters to the Brethren journal, *Naade og Sandhed* (Grace and Truth), from

¹⁴¹ In Faeroese ‘Slupptíðin’, meaning the same.

¹⁴² Details on this in chapter 8 below.

¹⁴³ Dickson, N T R, *Brethren in Scotland*, Paternoster 2002, pp. 306-309.

¹⁴⁴ Zachariassen, Z, *Bíblían á føroyskum í hálva øld*, Gøta 2000, p. 326.

¹⁴⁵ Only Danish was taught in schools and was the compulsory language of instruction; so Faeroese teachers had to speak Danish to their pupils. Those who did not comply were dismissed.

¹⁴⁶ Not until around 1905 was there a written norm, accepted by most people.

¹⁴⁷ *Vejen*, Nos. 5-6, 1941, p. 28.

¹⁴⁸ My mother, Lovisa Mohr (nee Vang) (1911-1984) was born there and I spent a good deal of the late 1940s and 1950s with my grandmother’s and uncle’s at Kaldbak. My grandfather’s brother, Jóan Petur Vang, was one of the first Brethren in Kaldbak.

small villages; one from a Brethren member on Svínø, and one from a newly converted Brethren member in Kaldbak.¹⁴⁹ August Vang (1872-1933) was converted in 1910 through influences from a childhood friend in Tórshavn, who had grown up in Kaldbak, and his neighbour Napoleon Andreassen¹⁵⁰ both of whom were members of the 'Ebenezer' assembly. After this August went all the way to Tórshavn on Sunday mornings to break bread there. His brother Hans Vang (1885-1976) was a fisherman and went to the Navigation College in 1906-07, and in this period he went to Home Mission meetings and felt spiritually troubled. Then Hans went fishing again, read the Bible and at the age of 31 he was converted and joined the Brethren, giving testimony all over the village, tried to organise meetings, and he wrote one of the letters of 1917 (see note 147). The third Brethren member was Jóan Petur Vang (1879-1933) who converted when a fisherman on the smack 'Suðuroy'. Shortly after their conversions, in 1918, the three men went by boat to a meeting at Søldarfjørður where the Brethren missionary Victor Danielsen baptised them in the sea.¹⁵¹ Then Jóan Petur's wife, Maria, converted and was baptised in a creek, Oyndavík, in Kaldbak; some were baptised in a lake above the village. Gradually they had regular meetings in each others' homes, and other villagers came to the evangelical meetings on Sunday evenings.¹⁵²

Some of the small assemblies did not have halls during the first years, and at Kaldbak the house-meetings continued and increasing numbers of men and women joined the Brethren, first the first members' wives and children, later other individuals

¹⁴⁹ 'Fra læserne', Hans Wang, *Naade og Sandhed*, No. 7, September 1917, pp. 86-87.

¹⁵⁰ Short biography in section 5.2. His last letter before lost at sea was for August Vang.

¹⁵¹ On 20th January 1919 Victor Danielsen sent a letter to Jóan Petur wishing them well.

¹⁵² Vang, H. and Skorá, S., 'Samkoman í Kaldbak 70 ár,' *Leirkerið*, 5-6/1986, pp. 177-182.

and occasionally whole families.¹⁵³ Hans Vang's eldest daughter, Herborg, married above mentioned Fredag Petersen's son Ingvard from Fuglafjørður and they settled at Kaldbak.¹⁵⁴ Two outstanding Brethren workers in Kaldbak were Aksel (1899-1973), August Vang's son, and his wife Olivia Bøgarð (1903-1985) from Gøta, he as a popular speaker, she as a Sunday school teacher. Other distinguished Brethren in Kaldbak were Niels Vang¹⁵⁵ and Petur Arne Skorá (1911-1989) and his wife Olina (1916-2006). Already in 1922 they were planning to build a hall and sent a letter for support to other assemblies in the islands, but not until 1935 was the small concrete building, 'Nazareth,' completed, seating around 50 people (population: 150). It was a great day in Kaldbak when the hall was first used in October and Brethren from many towns and villages came to participate, among them Jens Cl. Isaksen, J. F. Kjølbroy, Malvinus Joensen, Páll Jensen (á Dul), Niels Vang and Palli Marstein from Klaksvík and several Brethren from Tórshavn.¹⁵⁶ This was a considerable improvement for the assembly's work, and in 1978 the hall was renovated, a new roof and central heating installed, accommodating 75 persons. After this Kaldbak got road connection to the northbound main road from Tórshavn and then meetings became more regular and villagers who had moved to the capital came back. In 1989 the hall was significantly extended and modernised, so today (2009) 200-250 can be seated in 'Nazareth' (population 235).

The first three Brethren in Kaldbak, August, Hans and Jóan Petur preached salvation and forgiveness of sins to everybody they got in contact with, also in

¹⁵³ Vang, H. and Skorá, S., 'Samkoman í Kaldbak 70 ár,' *Leirkerið*, 5-6/1986, pp. 185-193.

¹⁵⁴ They had many children; and their grandson, Ingvard Petersen (b.1968), was a trained carpenter when he went to a Bible school in Britain in 1993, worked with his wife in Venezuela as a missionary; then they stayed in the Faeroes from 1994-1998 and since then he has been a Bible school teacher in Grimsby, England.

¹⁵⁵ Short biography in section 5.4.

¹⁵⁶ Niels Vang's meeting diary, 6th October 1935.

neighbouring villages such as Norðadalur (walking over mountains). Sometimes others joined them, even Brethren from Tórshavn, and then they had meetings in people's homes; occasionally Victor Danielsen came from Eysturoy to participate in these meetings. It was common that Brethren from various assemblies visited each others' meetings; for instance, once Hans and August Vang from Kaldbak, A. W. Sloan, Herluf Arnason and others from Tórshavn and Niels Vang with around 50 Brethren from Klaksvík came on the smack 'Kvikk' for meetings in Fuglafjørður in 1934; there was breaking of bread at 11 am, meeting at 3 pm, and evangelical meetings at 6 and 9 pm.¹⁵⁷ Undoubtedly this was a contributing factor in the growth of the Brethren movement.

4.2.2 Brethren publications

In the 1948 Brethren in various assemblies founded the 'Hin føroyski bíbliugrunnurin' (The Faeroese Bible Fund); but before this there was 'Føroya traktatfelag' (Faeroe Tract Society).¹⁵⁸ The aims of these initiatives were to publish tracts, religious books and Bibles in the Faeroese language. Earlier such publications were arranged by individuals or groups of individuals; and as early as 1920 a collection of hymns, 85 in all, in the vernacular was published by Brethren. 1000 copies were printed and already in 1922 a second edition with 121 hymns had to be published; and the present Brethren hymn- and songbook consists of 1125 numbers and has been reprinted once. A new edition, comprising around 1500 hymns and songs, will be published this autumn (2012).¹⁵⁹ Many translations of devotional books have been published as well as original Faeroese

¹⁵⁷ Niels Vang's meeting diary, 18th November 1934..

¹⁵⁸ See next section, 4.2.3.

¹⁵⁹ Zachariassen, Z, *Bíblíana føroyskum í hálva øld*, Gøta 2000, p. 28.

compositions, e.g. novels, history and theology. In subsequent chapters some of these works will be discussed.

However, two major literary accomplishments must be included here. These are the Brethren Bible translation, both thanks to Victor Danielsen's energy, linguistic skills and determination. His translation of the New Testament was published in 1937, the whole Bible in 1949. At last the Bible was translated into the people's language, 400 years after the Reformation and centuries after other Nordic peoples had had the Bible in their own languages. The Bible was reprinted several times; and in 1974 a revised edition was published, later often reprinted, so that today (2011) almost 50,000 copies of the translation have been sold.¹⁶⁰

Apart from tracts the Brethren also published journals and periodicals, most of which have been referred to in this work. These publications are listed in Table 4.4:¹⁶¹

Naade og Sandhed (Grace and truth), 1915 – 1924.
Vidnesbyrdet, later the Faeroese title *Vitnið* (The Witness), 1922 – 1948.
Naadens Budskab (Message of grace), 1927 – 1943, later *Náðiðboðið* in a few issues.
Søndagsskolen, later *Sunnudagsskúlin* (The Sunday school), 1932- (still published).
Ljós á leiðini (Light on the way), 1944 – 1947.
Góð tíðindi (Good tidings), 1952 – 1972.
Lív og læra (Life and teaching), 1960 – 1974 (1960 – 1967, one issue in 1974).
Hin tigandi boðberin (The silent messenger), 1962 – 1970.
Røddin (The voice), 1970 – 1982.
Barnarøddin (The children's voice), 1970 – 1982.
Leirkerið (The clay-cup), 1983 (still published).
Stavnhaldið (The purpose), 1971 – 1983.
Boðberin (The messenger), 1975 – 2002.
Sendiboðið (The campaigner), 1983- (still published).
Ráðgevari mín (My guide), almanac with Bible-verses, since 1936.
Vidnesbyrdet, later *Vitnið*, Brethren periodical or booklet, 1922 – 1948.

¹⁶⁰ Information kindly provided by Z. Zachariassen and Rodmundur í Liða, April 2010.

¹⁶¹ List kindly produced by Árni av Reyni and received on 25th July 2012.

Table 4.4. Brethren journals and periodicals in the Faeroes.

The journals, i.e. the first 14 titles in Table 4.4, were usually published monthly; and the last two, the almanac and the periodical, once a year. The publication of *Góð tíðindi*, started by Andrew Sloan, was resumed in 1986, edited by Brethren worker Poul Færø (b. 1938-), Klaksvík, until 1995 and delivered to every household in the islands free of charge. Furthermore, three or four journals have been published by local assemblies but are not included here. The periodical *Vejen* consisted of the following: No. 1 ‘Daaben’ (the Baptism), 1929; No. 2 ‘Er du medlem’ (Are you a member), 1930; No. 3 ‘Brødrene – hvem er de?’ (H. W. Soltau’s booklet translated into Danish), 1933; No. 4. ‘Bibelens Inspiration’ (The inspiration of the Bible), 1935; Nos. 5 and 6: ‘Herrens Gerning paa Færøerne gennem ¾ Aarhundrede’ (The Lord’s work in the Faeroes over ¾ century). Jens av Reyni wrote issues no. 1, 5 and 6, nos. 2, 3 and 4 were translated from English, probably by Jens av Reyni himself. The publication was resumed by bookbinder Herluf Arnason (1902-1975) with the Faeroese title *Vegurin*, meaning the same as the Danish *Vejen* (The way), and no. 7 was called ‘Eri eg ein hjálp ella ein meinbogi í samkomuni?’ (Am I a help or a hindrance in the assembly) by C. H. M. and translated into Faeroese. This was the last issue of the periodical, no date but probably in 1949.

1894 – 1949

GENRE	Nos. published
Evangelistic:	10
Devotional:	5
Doctrinal:	8
History:	1
Hymnology:	1
Fiction/novels:	3

Periodicals/journals:	6
Calendar):	76 (1936 – 2012)
Song- and hymnbooks:	27
Bible parts,	
1: The Letter to the Galatians (1931),	
1: The New Testament (1937), 1	
1: “Søgan um ein undurfullan faðir” (Luke 15)	
The Bible, O.T. and N.T. (1948)	

1950 – 2012

Evangelistic:	50
Missions:	11
Devotional:	30
Doctrinal:	46
Eschatological:	7
Ecclesiastical:	1
History:	6
Biographies:	17
Hymnology:	4
Fiction/novels:	4
Children’s books:	22
Journals, magazines, periodicals:	7
Calendar:	76 years (1936 – 2012)
Hymnbooks:	
1: <i>Songbók Guds Fólks</i> (God’s people’s songbook) 1952 (1125 hymns)	
1: <i>Songbók Guds Fólks</i> 1976 (1192 hymns), + 10,	
New <i>Songbók Guds Fólks</i> , forthcoming (1540 hymns)	
Complete Bible: 1 (+ reprints, revised in 1974); around 50,000 copies sold.	

Table 4.5. **Books and booklets published by Brethren assemblies in the Faeroes**

Source: Zacharias Zachariasen and Óla Hendrik av Fløtum

Table 4.5 demonstrates the extent of accomplishment in publishing for a minority Christian movement and shows the zeal and energy of Brethren workers in the Faeroes. As the Table makes clear, since the Second World War there has been a substantial increase in the publishing programme, and they have published almost 300 books on various subject matters, mostly theological but also fiction and children’s books, almanacs, journals and magazines. Some of the published books are translations from

English into Faeroese, others are original Faeroese literature. I would like to add that the books have been published in various ways, some by individuals, others by assemblies and a few by the ‘Tract Fund’, later by the ‘Faeroese Bible Society’. Therefore it has been difficult to make a complete count and it is most likely that a number of publications have not been included and the tables above should be seen as preliminary although fairly reliable. Two of my Brethren friends in the Faeroes, Zacharias Zachariassen and Óla Hendrik av Fløtum, kindly compiled and sorted this list in July 2012; and we are planning to produce a complete bibliography of published Faeroese Brethren literature with comments and analysis in 2014. The publishing programme ensured that Brethren members were educated in their faith and therefore less likely to lessen in their enthusiasm, but it also provided a vibrant culture in the vernacular.

4.2.3 Inter assembly work

Already in 1923¹⁶² Brethren announced an inter-assembly gathering or conference¹⁶³ in Klaksvík where Brethren from all islands were invited;¹⁶⁴ and later the initiative was described as very successful;¹⁶⁵ and Andrew McKinnon, the Scottish Brethren missionary working in the Faeroes, called it a ‘milestone’.¹⁶⁶ Since then such initiatives have been organised in various parts of the islands once a year, normally based in Klaksvík, Tórshavn and Vágur. These are still very popular events lasting a weekend or more, and Brethren from neighbouring assemblies – or those in the area – have a series of meetings,

¹⁶² ‘Samfundsmøde i Klaksvig’, *Vidnesbyrdet*, no. 11-12, November/December 1923, pp. 81-82.

¹⁶³ In Faeroese ‘samfelagsmøti’, meaning ‘community meeting’.

¹⁶⁴ They also gave information about accommodation in the town.

¹⁶⁵ ‘Samfundsmøde i Klaksvig’, *Vidnesbyrdet*, no. 1-2, January-February 1924, pp. 11-12.

¹⁶⁶ McKinnon, A, ‘Milepæl 1923’, *Vidnesbyrdet*, no. 1-2, January-February 1924, p. 13.

lectures, presentations, exhibitions, etc., where also Brethren from other parts of the country are welcome and often invited. At one such gathering up to 2,000 people attended.¹⁶⁷

In the 1950s “Traktatgrunnurin” (The tract fund) was established in order to coordinate the publication of tracts; and in 2007 it was estimated that Faeroese Brethren had published around 200,000 tracts in various languages since the establishment of the fund.¹⁶⁸ The tracts are distributed free of charge by volunteers and are meant primarily for tourists visiting the islands. The expenses are covered solely by gifts. Such inter-assembly links help strengthen the sense of community with the Brethren.

4.2.4 Zarepta

Travel between towns and villages was difficult until 1970s, and therefore young people in the various Brethren assemblies hardly knew one another. Neither were there big arrangements or activities where people from assemblies came together apart from the yearly conferences. So in June 1962 Zacharias Zachariassen and others arranged a Bible course at Hotel Hafnia in Tórshavn with around 50 participants from all over the country. Brethren workers had evangelical meetings and gave lectures, there were discussions, testimonies and singing; and at the end of the course participants were very satisfied and said how important the experience had been for them.¹⁶⁹ Every year since then, similar Bible courses were held around the country, for instance at ‘Betesda’ in Klaksvík, ‘Salem’ in Tvøroyri and ‘Bethel’ in Vágur.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ Information kindly provided by Dr. Rodmundur í Liða, June 2007.

¹⁶⁸ *Leirkerið*, 2007/1, pp. 16-17.

¹⁶⁹ “Bíbliuskeið a ‘Hotel Hafnia’ fyri 25 árum síðani”, *Leirkerið*, 1987/4-6, pp. 147-156.

¹⁷⁰ Almost all Brethren halls in the Faeroes have biblical names.

However, already in 1965 Faeroese Brethren realised the need for a multiple-purpose leisure and course centre where activities serving all assemblies could be arranged. Brynleif Hansen (1937-1970) of Fuglafjørður and his wife Elsa had been working at a Danish Children Mission which organised camps for children in deprived areas of Copenhagen. Along with other brethren and sisters, they rented a residential school at Áir and 50 children a week aged 10-14 came to this holiday camp for four weeks, and the following year there were twice as many.¹⁷¹ In 1965 there had already been plans to build a centre at Vatnsøyrrar on Vágar. Two years later the activities moved to the new location, called 'Zarepta'. On 2nd July 1967 the new centre received 70 children; but soon Brethren workers realised that the building was too small. It was actually 30x10 metres in three floors and all work was voluntary, both the initial building of the house and subsequent extensions as well as the running of the centre.¹⁷² The work has expanded as well as the building; the first year over 500 children came for a week's holiday camp; there was one youth camp during the summer break, after that Bible courses for younger people and for older people, and later an autumn camp.¹⁷³

Today (2011) the house is much bigger with all modern conveniences, a brand-new kitchen, a wonderful refectory, a big hall and some smaller ones and several sleeping rooms, some with bunk beds, others single or double rooms. In 2007 the programme for the camps was as follows. In May there was a camp for the handicapped or disabled, and then there was a camp for individuals;¹⁷⁴ this was followed by five family camps; a camp for parents with children suffering from a handicap; a camp for over 18s; a Bible course;

¹⁷¹ "Summarlegurnar við Áir 1965-66", *Leirkerið*, 2004-5/3-4, pp. 22-26.

¹⁷² Zachariassen, Z., "Zarepta" 40 ar", *Leirkerið*, 2007/2, pp. 3-7.

¹⁷³ John i Skemmuni, speech at 40th anniversary, "Zarepta", *Leirkerið*, 2007/3-4, p. 8.

¹⁷⁴ "Zarepta", *Leirkerið*, 2007/3-4, pp. 8-12.

a camp for men (where women served); a camp for women (where men served); a camp for couples and then an autumn camp. All these arrangements take place outwith the summer holidays during which there are camps for 16-17 year olds and 14-15 year olds; and then the children camps for 9-13 year olds take place.¹⁷⁵ In total almost 1500 children and young people and 2000-3000 adults, including participants at various arrangements by different assemblies and volunteers, visited Zarepta that year.¹⁷⁶

So what William Gibson Sloan started sowing in 1865 has certainly grown into a major mission in the Faeroes at the beginning of the 21st century.

4.2.5 Other 20th century initiators and initiatives

Among the most influential Brethren during the decades after World War I were Victor Danielsen (1894-1961) and Old Sloan's youngest son, Andrew Sloan (1896-1973).¹⁷⁷ Both were popular and excellent preachers and organisers, energetic visionaries and very well-informed men. Many thought that Danielsen was fiery while Andrew Sloan was more analytical; and if this was so, they supplemented each other excellently. However, there were many other Brethren workers, some of whom also travelled a lot and visited different villages.

In 1923 a Brethren journal reports on their programme at 'Ólavsøka', the national festival, as follows: Friday 27th July at 8 pm, prayer-meeting; Saturday 28th, open-air meeting at 4 pm, and rebuilding meeting at 9 pm; Sunday 29th, short meeting for believers at 10 am, breaking the bread at 11 am, evangelical meeting at 6 pm, open-air

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 8-12.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁷⁷ Kelling, F, *Fisherman of Faroe*, Gøta 1993, p. 242. Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 342.

meeting at 9 pm; Monday 30th, open-air meeting at 9 pm.¹⁷⁸ This is an example of the energy, zeal and devotion of the ‘Ebenezer’ assembly at the time.

New ways to make it easier to hold meetings in various villages were employed, and the assemblies in Klaksvík and Tórshavn acquired boats for this purpose. Already quite early D. J. Danielsen (Dollin) had come up with the idea;¹⁷⁹ but not until the 1940s did the Klaksvík Assembly have the boat ‘Sendiboðið’ (*The Messenger*) built, probably in 1940 or 1941.¹⁸⁰ The log for August and September 1945 has been published,¹⁸¹; and it shows that they visited most villages in the Northern Islands and the eastern villages of Eysturoy. Sometimes they had several meetings on the same day, for instance on Sunday 19th August 1945 they had a meeting at Fuglafjørður in the morning, at Oyndarfjørður in the early afternoon, at Hellurnar later, then at Elduvík early evening and Funningsfjørður later. The numbers of attendants were 15, 40, 45, 30 and 15 respectively.

After World War II the Tórshavn Assembly ‘Ebenezer’ also acquired a boat which took Brethren preachers and missionaries to the villages around Skálafjørður, west Eysturoy and east Streymoy as well as the small islands near Tórshavn, Nólsoy, Hest and Koltur. But sometimes they went even further. After the improvement of the islands’ infrastructure, connecting the town and villages with roads, tunnels and modern passenger and car ferries from the 1960s onwards, buses or cars are used instead of boats for transport. Activism such as that surveyed in the present section led, after World War I to many new halls being built, especially in the 1930s when several new assemblies were founded. In total there are 30 Brethren halls spread all over the country and built from the

¹⁷⁸ ‘Olajmøder’, *Vidnesbyrdet*, no. 7, July 1923, p. 56.

¹⁷⁹ *Leirkerið*, 1984/4, p. 157: *Echoes of Service* cited in letter by D. J. Danielsen, 15th February 1905.

¹⁸⁰ Jógvan Gerðalíð (1916-2012) in *Leirkerið*, 1995/2, p. 6.

¹⁸¹ *Leirkerið*, 1995/2, pp. 8-11.

late 19th century to the present day; the latest new ones taken into use in 2008 (Toftir) and 2009 (Sandur).¹⁸²

4.2.5 Missionary work abroad

The Brethren journals regularly printed articles on missionary work abroad even before Faeroe Islanders were directly involved in such work after D. J. Daniensen had been in the Congo.¹⁸³ Two articles in 1923 told about missionary work in Mexico,¹⁸⁴ and on missionary work in Britain.¹⁸⁵ During and after World War II Faeroese Brethren held meetings at Thorsgade 42 in Copenhagen¹⁸⁶ as well as in Reykjavík, Iceland. In Iceland Open Brethren were introduced in 1905 by the British worker Arthur Gook in 1905 and they have had assemblies in towns such as Akureyri and Húsavík; and for some time Faeroes Brethren in Iceland, especially fishermen, attended Icelandic Brethren meetings. In the 1950s when Faeroese were forced to leave the islands, many settled in Iceland for some years or for good; and then Faeroese assemblies were established there, notably first ‘Elim’ and then ‘Akurin’ in Reykjavík. Victor Danielsen was on a preaching tour in Iceland in 1955; and the assembly has also run an open holiday camp for children, ‘Ástjörn’ in North Iceland since the summer of 1946.¹⁸⁷

So since the middle and late 20th century, Brethren have had their own missions in Iceland, Denmark and Greenland. The main hall in Denmark, ‘Kristnastova’, is in Copenhagen where most Faeroese students attend university and other places of higher education; and in Greenland the main hall is in Nuuk. In order to reach other places in

¹⁸² Information kindly provided by Zacharias Zachariassen in April 2010.

¹⁸³ Short biography in section 5.2.

¹⁸⁴ ‘Fra Missionsmarken i Mexico’, *Vidnesbyrdet*, no. 1, January 1923, 2nd year, pp. 6-8.

¹⁸⁵ ‘Fra Missionsmarken i England og Skotland’, *Vidnesbyrdet*, no. 3, March 1923, pp. 21-23.

¹⁸⁶ Also the few Danish Brethren assembly which W.G. Sloan had helped establish had premises there.

¹⁸⁷ Information from Faeroese Brethren missionary in Iceland, Jógvan Purkhús (b. 1943), in June 2007.

Greenland, Brethren have had boats for many years; and the first one, 'Juvel', was rather small, so in order to reach places like Thule and Scorsbysund they bought and refurbished the former maritime inspection vessel 'Agdlek'.¹⁸⁸ Faeroese Brethren also work with other interdenominational missions, e.g. New Tribes Mission, all around the world, from Latin America to New Guinea.¹⁸⁹ Of course, the work of Faeroese Brethren around the world had a recoil effect because their work was closely followed by their home assemblies as well as the whole movement; and Brethren journals keep readers informed. In most assemblies missionary work is mentioned and discussed at meetings and obviously this promotes internationalism in general, missionary work in particular; and many young Brethren members have plans to go abroad for a period and participate in this or related work, e.g. manual work. This in turn leads to more cosmopolitan attitudes among the Brethren movement as a whole, and the respective assemblies send missionaries out.¹⁹⁰ For instance in July 2012 the 'Betesda' assembly in Klaksvík had 15 missionaries abroad.

4.2.6 Broadcasting

New initiatives are embarked upon all the time; for instance in 1966 a couple of young Faeroese Brethren came up with the idea of contacting 'Trans World Radio', transmitting from Monte Carlo, and arrange a weekly programme in Faeroese. They considered it a

¹⁸⁸ *Leirkerið*, 2008/2, pp. 3-5.

¹⁸⁹ "New Tribes Mission (NTM) is a Christian organisation whose aim is to take the message of the Bible to remote people groups of the world. To do this it is necessary to learn (mostly unwritten) languages, produce an alphabet and translate the Bible with the end goal of teaching the people and seeing independent churches established within these groups. The name, New Tribes Mission, is used because the work is mainly among 'tribal' people groups. The focus therefore is on 'new tribes', who do not have the Bible in their language and haven't had the opportunity to hear the Christian message presented clearly." (From the NTM website 28th August 2012).

¹⁹⁰ Zachariasen, Z., 'Missiónsarbeiði', lecture held at a Brethren conference in 2007. Manuscript sent to me in April 2010. Not published.

shame that the hundreds of Faeroe Islanders sailing all over the world were unable to hear the Christian message in their own language.¹⁹¹ After some correspondence with the station they established 'Evangeliska Røddin' (The Evangelical Voice), gathered a few qualified Brethren to meet the technical requirements as well as Brethren evangelists and missionaries to make the programmes; others started collecting money for the initiative.

Already in November the same year the first broadcast was on the air; it was on Medium Wave and lasted 15 minutes. In 1990 they decided to stop broadcasting from Monte Carlo, partly because of new forms of electronic communication. A few years later the Faeroese legislation on broadcasting was changed and since then, around 2000, 'Evangeliska Røddin' has resumed making programmes which are transmitted on 'Lindin' (Channel2) in Tórshavn.¹⁹²

4.2.5 Relations with charismatic movements

However, Brethren growth has not been unchallenged from fellow Evangelicals, and one of the chief rivals has been denominations and movements adopting charismatic phenomena. In chapter one the Danish Home Mission was mentioned and they were conscientiously introduced because clergymen feared that the Brethren might draw too many Faeroe Islanders away from the Lutheran State Church if its subsidiary evangelical branch, the Home Mission, did not gain ground. However, not so few Brethren members started their spiritual journey in the Home Mission but after a while joined the Brethren; and on the whole Brethren and Home Mission people went on with each other – they agreed on conversion and salvation but certainly not on baptism. More serious were charismatic movements such as the Pentacostalists who caused minor problems in

¹⁹¹ A considerable number of islanders were officers on the Danish Merchant Navy.

¹⁹² Lofti, Svenning av, "Søgan um Evangelisku Røddina", *Leirkerið*, 2007/1, pp. 3-13.

Tórshavn and elsewhere; in *Naade og Sandhed* an article attacking the 7th Days Adventists was published in 1924;¹⁹³ but before that, in 1922, Pentecostal influences damaged the Sørvágur assembly for some years.¹⁹⁴ A non-Brethren source¹⁹⁵ describes meetings in the old Brethren hall as bordering on hysteria with shouting and crying, unsuccessful attempts at healing and walking on water. A man with a crippled foot was required to give himself up to a healing process which ultimately failed; this affected him and his family so badly that they had to leave the village and settle elsewhere. This, of course, is not Brethrenism; and the men responsible for the assembly were not in the village at the time, so a charismatic woman from another island, regarding herself as a prophetess, had taken over for that period.¹⁹⁶ However, questions relating to ecstatic phenomena were discussed, e.g. in *Vitnið* in 1932,¹⁹⁷ indicating that Brethren leaders saw digressions from the dispensational system as a threat. Since the last quarter of the 20th century charismatic groups have come and gone, some of them attracting a few Brethren, and the Pentecostals still have some influences locally. On the other hand, today (2010) some small groups from different movements work together, e.g. at Sandur where the new hall was bought from the declining Pentecostal assembly.¹⁹⁸ Now people from the Home Mission, the Pentecostals and other small group from all villages on Sandoy have meetings together in the Brethren hall.¹⁹⁹ Another, but broader, charismatic movement started with an awakening in the 1970s and 1980s with tent-meetings and in 2004 built an

¹⁹³ ‘Vranglære’ (Wrong teaching), *Naade og Sandhed*, no. 5, July-August 1924, pp. 34-37.

¹⁹⁴ Mentioned in section 3.2.

¹⁹⁵ Tape recording for the Faeroe Broadcasting System by Marianna Debes Dahl in 2001 with a woman who remembered the events in her way.

¹⁹⁶ I avoid details and names to protect the identities of families in the villages concerned.

¹⁹⁷ Sloan, A. W., ‘Aandsdåb og tungetale’ (Spiritual baptism and glossolalia), *Vitnið*, no. 8, December 1932, pp. 1-3.

¹⁹⁸ Jf. Section 8.3.1.

¹⁹⁹ Jf. Section 8.3.7.

enormous hall, 'Keldan' (the Spring) at Skálabotnur on Eysturoy.²⁰⁰ This movement was initiated by Home Mission, Pentecostals and other individuals but attracts mainly young people from the whole country, including Brethren.

4.3 Missiological reflections

Already before settling in the Faeroes in 1879, Sloan had succeeded in helping to establish a couple of assemblies in the islands. Theoretically scholars often distinguish between two processes when indigenous churches or assemblies are appropriated to local culture and run by local Christians.²⁰¹ There have been two focal Protestant strategies proposed for the formation of indigenous churches brought forward by the German theory of mission, instigated by the Moravian von Zinzendorf (1700-1760),²⁰² who regarded conversions as “trophy for the Lamb” and mission as “always an enterprise of the community.”²⁰³ The theories were developed by Gustav Warneck (1834-1910) and Karl Graul (1814–1864) who both agreed that every “natural social institution and especially...the national community should be regulated and taken into Christian care.”²⁰⁴ Later also British, American and other theorists advanced the discipline of missiology, e.g. Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson. In modern times the two strategies have been defined along the following lines.²⁰⁵

First, there is indigenisation where foreign missionaries create well-organised churches and then hand them over to local converts; the mission is seen as a frame which

²⁰⁰ www.keldan.fo (also in English).

²⁰¹ Sanneh, L., *Translating the message – The missionary impact on culture*, New York 1989, pp. 112; 116-117.

²⁰² Warneck, G., *Outline of a history of Protestant missions*, London 1806, p. 51.

²⁰³ Yates, T., *Christian mission in the twentieth century*, CUP 1994, p. 35.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

²⁰⁵ Neill, Stephen, *A history of Christian missions*, Penguin Books 1964, pp. 527-547.

is removed once the fellowship of believers functions appropriately and missionaries provide teaching, pastoral care, sacraments, buildings, finance and authority, and train local converts to take over these responsibilities.²⁰⁶ Second, indigeneity²⁰⁷ is when foreign missionaries help local converts develop their own spiritual gifts and leadership abilities and then gradually develop their own churches. Missionaries provide teaching and pastoral care alone. As a result the church is indigenous from the start. It has always been self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing.²⁰⁸

It is reasonable to argue that Sloan, like Anthony Norris Groves²⁰⁹ before him and Roland Allen (1868-1947) after him,²¹⁰ employed the second strategy, that is to say: the assemblies that he and his fellow British and, later, Faeroese missionaries helped establish did not become indigenous, for they were always indigenous. The 5 or 6 assemblies which had been formed before Sloan died in 1914 were all run by local people; and especially the 1920s and 1930s saw an amazing growth in the number of assemblies, and many halls were built.

If we turn to the so-called Three-Self Formula, mentioned by Henry Venn (1796-1873) of the English CMS already in 1854,²¹¹ it also becomes clear that Brethren

²⁰⁶ The Home Mission in the Faeroes is an example of this kind of missionary work.

²⁰⁷ Sometimes the term "indigenouslyness" is used.

²⁰⁸ The Brethren movement in the Faeroes is an example of this approach.

²⁰⁹ Dann, R B, *The primitivist missiology of Anthony Norris Groves (1795-1853): A radical influence on nineteenth-century Protestant mission*, University of Liverpool 2006.

²¹⁰ Anthony Norris Groves (1795-1853) attempted to avoid this problem in pioneer areas by guarding against any form of dependency from the start. He chose to represent no foreign denomination or missionary society, and he encouraged full co-operation between all Protestant missionaries for the encouragement of indigenous initiatives. He predated Roland Allen by eighty years as an advocate of Indigeneity rather than Indigenisation. Looking directly to God for guidance and provision, he was a formative influence on the "faith mission" movement, but the direct influence of his indigenous strategy is more evident in the remarkable movements associated with Bakht Singh in India and Watchman Nee in China. - (Dann, Robert Bernard, 'The Legacy of Anthony Norris Groves,' *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol.29, No.4, Oct. 2005.)

²¹¹ Neill, Stephen, *A history of Christian missions*, Penguin Books, 1964, pp. 259-260.

Assemblies in the Faeroes were indigenous from 1880. The theory of church maturation was promoted by Rufus Anderson (1796–1880) and Henry Venn during the last half of the nineteenth century advocating that “young churches on the mission field would gain their independence on the basis of the principles of self-propagation, self-support, and self-government.”²¹²

This is exactly what happened in the Faeroes from the start of assembly planting which actually was a local, voluntary and spontaneous establishment of new assemblies. Although many Brethren in the islands may have felt quite dependent on the British, mainly Scottish, missionaries, they were financially self-sufficient, autonomous and paved the way for growth themselves, i.e. new converts were attracted and many were baptized – to the consternation of clergymen and church-people. This was the first break with foreign authority in the Faeroes because the State Church was the main pillar of Danish oppression. From Sloan’s and others’ diaries as well as from news and articles which they wrote in *Echoes of Service* and elsewhere, it is quite clear that William Sloan, A. H. Darling, Thomas McLaren, A. P. MacDonald, Alexander Mitchell and several others saw themselves as Brethren workers, assistants and instigators, not as founders or leaders of the assemblies that they helped establish. W. G. Sloan was undoubtedly aware of the challenges that he faced because he spent years travelling around the islands, visiting not only the main towns but also spending time in small villages where life was totally different from what he was used to in Scotland. So gradually he got broad

²¹² Shenk, Wilbert R., “Rufus Anderson and Henry Venn: A Special Relationship?” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 5 (4), 1981), pp. 168–172. - Terry, John Mark “Indigenous Churches”. In Moreau, A. Scott. *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books 2000, pp. 483–485.

knowledge and intimate insight into the social life, the language and the culture in the Faeroes.

The interaction between mission and theology can be defined in various ways, and I suggest that it is appropriate to mention some of them because already in the 1860s Sloan was probably conscious of what he was doing although not in a systematic way. In his *Christen zur Christologie und Mission*, from 1908, the German theologian Martin Kähler claimed that "Mission is 'the mother of theology'";²¹³ and another theologian, Dr. J. Andrew Kirk, wrote 90 years later, in his *Mission of Theology and Theology as Mission*, 1997, that

"All true theology is, by definition, missionary theology, for it has as its object the study of the ways of a God who is by nature missionary and a foundational text written by and for missionaries."²¹⁴

In the Faeroes, Evangelicalism started with the introduction of the Open Brethren movement. The established Lutheran Church was not an indigenous church because it had not been adapted to Faeroese culture or led by local Christians. I would distinguish between Christianity and Christendom, the latter being a "system of church-state partnership and cultural hegemony (or, rather, monopoly) in which the Christian religion was the protected and privileged religion of society and the church its legally established institutional form".²¹⁵ In those days Denmark was an Absolutist Monarchy. Churches were not planted by missionaries and locals but enacted by royal decrees. Consequently

²¹³ Martin Kähler, *Schriften zur Christologie und Mission*, (1908), Munchen 1971, p. 190.

²¹⁴ Andrew Kirk, *Mission of Theology and Theology as Mission*, Pennsylvania 1997, p. 50.

²¹⁵ Guder, Darrell, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, Eerdmans 1998, p. 6.

the Established Church was neither self-governing, self-supporting nor self-propagating, nor was its Home Mission.

I would argue that in times of great socio-economic and cultural transformation such an authoritarian church could not survive unchallenged.²¹⁶ The State Church was part of the old system and the ruling elite and in periods very oppressive and backward-looking. Sloan found himself in an emerging imagined community, the Faeroese Nation, of which he became part. So his work took place at the same time as the nation-building process emerged from the late 1880s onwards.

*

In chapters 3 and 4 I have gathered information on Brethren penetration in the islands. An interesting point is how soon the missionary work became indigenous although growth was insignificant in the beginning. The theories touched upon at the end of this chapter actually comply with what went on in the Faeroes in the late 19th century and, more significantly, in the 1920s and 1930s.

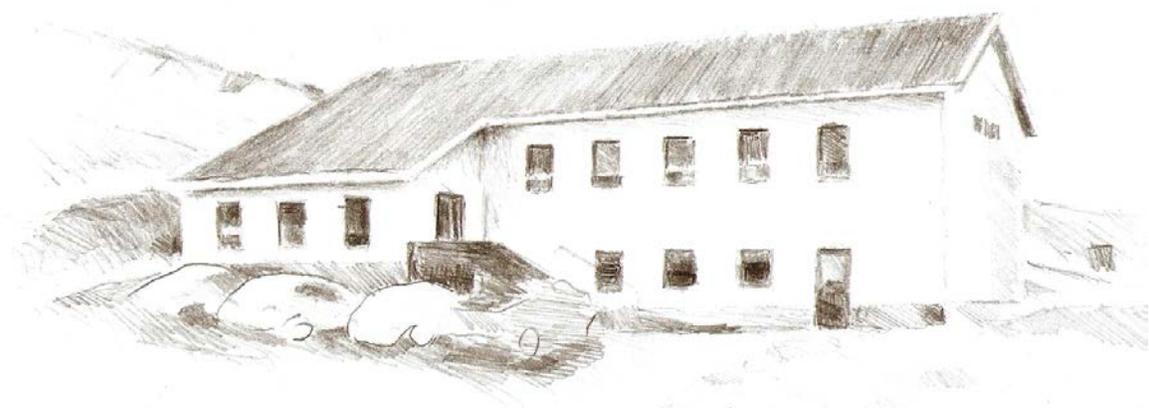
The Brethren assemblies became self-supporting churches right from the beginning although the building of Sloan's Hall was supported financially by a few British individuals and assemblies. All the other halls, as well as the new one, Ebenezer, in Tórshavn in 1905, were paid for and erected by local people in the various parts of the islands, and obviously such initiatives gave the movement strength, self-esteem and a

²¹⁶ Jf. Dickson, Neil T. R., *Brethren in Scotland 1838-2000*, Paternoster 2002, pp. 303ff.

feeling of freedom and independence as well as it generated respect in the wider community.

There are many reasons for the rapid growth, and many single explanations have been offered. The active participation of Brethren members at meetings opened up a new, and probably more satisfactory, way of conducting worship. Everybody, in the Faeroes both men and women, was encouraged to give testimonies, pray and give out hymns in their own language at meetings; in the established church congregations sang Danish hymns decided beforehand by the clergyman, and the only talking was performed by the clergyman in sermons and rituals – and in Danish until after the Second World War. In the 1920s and 1930s the Brethren movement was very much a fishermen’s movement, and this was the period of Brethren break-through. Firstly, I have tried to consider the spiritual and providential hermeneutics, secondly, the material hermeneutics, and, thirdly, the cultural hermeneutics at work in this process. I also think that the interconnection between people in the Faeroes, genealogy²¹⁷ being a very important part of life, Brethren in the Faeroes never ‘withdrew’ or ‘separated’ themselves totally from the rest of the community where they lived and worked (crew-members on smacks, fish-maids processing in teams.) So the interaction between church-people and Brethren has been different from that in for instance Britain; and it was not seen as unacceptable that some converted to Brethrenism, although it was not a popular step to take.

²¹⁷ Indeed the first thing people talk about it the weather, the second if often family; many islanders are obviously related in some way because, although separated geographically and in other ways, most ‘know of each other’s family’.



Medium-sized hall: 'Hebron' at Argir. Drawing by Eli Smith.

5. Key Figures – biographical portraits

In this chapter I am going to introduce the key figures within the Brethren movement in the islands, both British and Faeroese. Conscious of risks of hagiography, I also believe that the culture of remembering and representing the past encountered in these portraits reveals the self-understanding of Brethren which is explored in the fieldwork, chapter 8. Also in a small enclosed community such as the Faeroes with its face-to-face relations individuals and their actions become widely known and remembered over several generations, and so the attitudes and behaviour of individual leaders become magnified. As will become apparent from this survey, in this regard the Brethren have been fortunate, but in any account of the growth of the movement a survey of the individuals involved is crucial. I would argue that the rapid changes in all areas of the community were the main reasons why the new movement gained ground over a period of only 3-4 decades. The first Brethren missionary, William G. Sloan, was introduced in the preceding chapter, so I shall not add so much about him here.

5.1 British missionaries

From 1879 **William G. Sloan** was a resident in Tórshavn, Faeroe,²¹⁸ and in 1881 he married Elsebeth Isaksen (Elska i Geil), who was one of the three people baptized in Hoydal's River 1880.²¹⁹ After this the open-air meetings in Tórshavn became a regular, valued and acknowledged part of the town's life, and people particularly liked their

²¹⁸ 'William G. Sloan's Notebook', *Naade og Sandhed*, No. 8, November 1920, 6th year, pp. 65-69.

²¹⁹ Mentioned in section 4.2.

songs.²²⁰ Elsebeth and W. G. Sloan had six children,²²¹ and the youngest one, Andrew (b. 1896) became a full-time Brethren worker of great importance in his homeland, the Faeroes.²²² The oldest one, Poul (b. 1882), probably introduced football to the Faeroes around 1898.²²³ Old Sloan, as he is still called in the Faeroes, became frail after the turn of the century; but this did not prevent him from visiting villages, holding meetings and doing all the things that he had done since he settled in the islands.²²⁴

On Wednesday 2nd September 1914 he attended a meeting at Ebenezer;²²⁵ and on Friday 4th – on his 76th birthday – Sloan died peacefully some hours after the Medical Officer, Dr. Metz, had paid him a visit and Sloan had said, “On Christ the solid Rock I stand, / all other ground is sinking sand!”²²⁶ Among the many tributes in newspapers and journals, the author of the radical paper *Tingakrossur*, Kristin i Geil,²²⁷ wrote an obituary ending with these words, “Only the fewest have carried the name Christian with more justification than William Sloan.”²²⁸ And the Governor, Bærentsen, wrote this passage in the Danish journal *Atlanten*, “Through his work he was well known all over the Faeroes and was with his kindness and humility esteemed by all, also those who did not share his particular views on religion.”²²⁹

The first Scottish Brethren who came to assist Sloan in the Faeroes were his friends A. H. Darling and Thomas McLaren of Glasgow who had arranged Elsebeth’s

²²⁰ Háberg, P, “William Gibson Sloan,” *Fra penni Petur Hábergs*, Gøta 2007, p. 57.

²²¹ Kelling, F, *Fisherman of Faroe*, Gøta 1993, pp. 124-125.

²²² Short biography on Andrew W. Sloan below.

²²³ Kelling, F, *Fisherman of Faroe*, Gøta 1993, p. 136.

²²⁴ Háberg, P, “William Gibson Sloan,” *Fra penni Petur Hábergs*, Gøta 2007, p. 59-61.

²²⁵ The new Brethren Hall in Tórshavn, completed in 1905.

²²⁶ Háberg, P, “William Gibson Sloan,” *Fra penni Petur Hábergs*, Gøta 2007, p. 61.

²²⁷ Christin Holm Isaksen, Sloan’s brother-in-law, (1877-1935). Mentioned in section 8.4.3.

²²⁸ *Tingakrossur*, September 1914.

²²⁹ *Atlanten*, September 1914.

and William's wedding in his home in 1881 because weddings could only take place within the established church in Faeroe.²³⁰

A. H. Darling (1831-1888)²³¹ and Sloan worked together in Scotland, e.g. in Glasgow and Aberdeen in 1878, and in July of that year Darling joined Sloan on a journey to the Faeroes. They visited villages on Streymoy, Vágur (even the westernmost island of Mykines) as well as the small islands Hestur and Koltur. After that they stayed in Tórshavn and Darling left for Scotland in September.²³² Already in the 1860s Darling was an energetic Brethren missionary in Norway and is regarded as 'the first Plymouth Brethren travelling preacher in the country.'²³³

Thomas McLaren (1832-1908) was the founder and administrator of 'The Home and Foreign Missions Funds' (HFMF) which was established in 1876 to meet the needs of the increasing missionary work, including procurements of tents for evangelistic purposes, supporting delegates from the various assemblies as well as missionary work

²³⁰ Kelling, F, *Fisherman of Faroe*, Gøta 1993, p. 123.

²³¹ Information received with thanks from Dr Timothy Stunt in an email on 16th August 2011: "Andrew Henry Darling was born in Alnwick, Northumberland c. 1831 and died [according to the IGI] on 25th October 1888. His father was a boot and shoemaker in Newcastle on Tyne where AHD was pursuing the same trade at the age of 20 in 1851. In 1861 AHD was probably out of the country (Faeroes and Norway) and his young wife was living with her parents-in-law in Newcastle on Tyne. In that year (1861) 'The British and Foreign Sailors Society' established the Rotherhithe Institute on the Thames and when its first director, a German, August Thiemann went to Sweden in 1862 the Institute was briefly directed by Andrew H Darling "an independent seamen's missionary from Bristol" (Roald Kverndal, *Seamen's Missions: Their Origin and early growth* (Pasadena, CA 1986) p. 746 n.102). In 1864 the Brethren publisher William Yapp produced A H Darling's *A few facts connected with the labours in the Gospel among foreign sailors*. In 1871 AHD and his wife Emily were boarders at 2 Cavendish Terrace, Vauxhall, London, and in the census he is described as a "Missionary among Foreign Seamen". AHD's work now seems to have taken him to Norway. In 1874 he wrote a scathingly critical account of Lutheranism in Norway, likening it to Roman Catholicism (published by Yapp and Hawkins, the book was entitled *An account of the spiritual state of Norway with an introduction to the Norwegian language*. It was signed, A H Darling, Kongsberg, Norway). Around that year their son Martin was born in Christiania, Norway. In 1881 the family are living in 66 Bromley Street, Stepney, London, but by 1891 Emily is living as a widowed boarder in Exmouth, Devon, with a family by name of Goodland."

²³² Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 102.

²³³ Dahlene, K, "Plymouth-Brethren" i *norsk kristenliv*, Mandal 1983, p. 23.

overseas. The institution was based in Glasgow and in 1908 a Missionary Council was formed by leading Brethren individuals.²³⁴ McLaren was also involved in the inception of *Echoes of Service* and was a regular contributor of articles in *The Witness*, mainly on mission.²³⁵ Sloan and McLaren were friends and fellow workers within the movement for years; they had travelled together in Norway, holding meetings in many towns and villages there, and in 1889 they held meetings in the Norwegian capital together.²³⁶ McLaren visited Sloan in Faeroe on some occasions in the 1880s and 1890s.²³⁷

A. P. MacDonald (fl. 1870-1890) was the first assistant working with Sloan for a longer period. He came to the Faeroes in the autumn of 1880 and remained there until the following spring, 1881. MacDonald performed the first believers' baptism in the Faeroes.²³⁸ Often they shared the work so that one stayed in Tórshavn while the other visited the villages.

Alexander Mitchell (1864-1939) is still remembered in Faeroe and is normally 'Slona-Mikkjal'.²³⁹ He was from Govan, Glasgow, where he converted while still a teenager and severed his connection with the Free Church of Scotland, to which he belonged, and a couple of years later and was baptised. Mitchell heard McLaren talk about the Faeroes and became interested in joining Sloan there.²⁴⁰ For some years he was a commercial traveller, visiting places all over Britain and preaching the gospel in the evenings. In 1889 Sloan invited him to the Faeroes and on his return Mitchell decided to

²³⁴ Dickson, N. T. R, *Brethren in Scotland 1838-2000*, Paternoster 2002, pp. 144-145.

²³⁵ Grass, T, *Gathering to his name*, Paternoster 2006, p. 270.

²³⁶ Dahlene, K, "*Plymouth-Brethren*" i norsk kristenliv, Mandal 1983, p. 49.

²³⁷ Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 89.

²³⁸ Also mentioned in chapter 3.

²³⁹ Meaning 'Sloan's Michael', the Faeroese 'Mikkjal' the same as 'Michael' in English, but pronounced almost the same as Mitchell.

²⁴⁰ Kelling, F, *Fisherman of Faroe*, Gøta 1993, pp. 165f.

become Sloan's fellow worker the following year.²⁴¹ Thus he and his wife came to the islands in 1890 and stayed until 1899; and in 1905 he paid a short visit.²⁴² Mitchell was one of the many Scottish Brethren missionaries also working in Norway and Sweden. He was particularly active in Norway where he helped establishing many assemblies, arranging conferences and Bible courses. He also worked with individuals who were not Brethren, and sometimes these encounters resulted in disagreements, especially regarding the question of paedobaptism opposed to believers' baptism.²⁴³ In 1895 Sloan and his family went to Shetland and stayed there until 1898; and during this period Mitchell occupied the Sloans's home and was in charge of the work within the Tórshavn assembly as well as visiting other towns and villages.²⁴⁴ Alexander Mitchell was seen as a more dynamic and enthusiastic preacher than Sloan, and it was said that sometimes at meetings Sloan discreetly pulled the sleeve of Mitchell's jacket to calm him down.²⁴⁵

5.2 First Faeroese missionaries

Among the earliest Faeroese helpers were **Andreas Isaksen**, known as Dia í Geil, (1851-1890) who was the first to be baptised in the islands and was, alongside Sloan, also in charge of the first Sunday school in the Faeroes.²⁴⁶ He was physically weak and slightly crippled caused by a damaged back; but in spite of this he trained as a bookbinder in Germany²⁴⁷ and returning to Faeroe set up a workshop and a shop selling books and

²⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 166-167.

²⁴² Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 212.

²⁴³ Dahlene, K, "*Plymouth-Brethren*" i norsk kristenliv, Mandal 1983, p. 136.

²⁴⁴ Kelling, F, *Fisherman of Faroe*, Gøta 1993, p. 132.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 172-3.

²⁴⁶ Zachariassen, Z, "Sunnudagsskúlin í Føroyum 120 ar", *Leirkerið*, 2000/1-2, pp. 3-11.

²⁴⁷ Háberg, P, "Hugskot við burturferð A. W. Sloans," *Fra penni Petur Hábergs*, Gøta 2007, p. 63.

stationery.²⁴⁸ Dia kept diaries and for the years 1884-1889; he wrote in good English and Danish, mostly about the Brethren work in Tórshavn. According to his diaries attendance at evangelical meetings on Sunday mornings vary from two to 35 with an average of 10-15, at Sunday school from one to more than 30; but on 11th April 1886 he writes that “no more than 12 children came to Sunday school”,²⁴⁹ so maybe at that stage usually more than 15 or 20 attended. In one of his entries Dia mentions that his sister Elsebeth, Sloan’s wife, read to the children in Faeroese, and that can only have been from Schrøter’s translation. Also some evening meetings are recorded in Dia’s diaries. Sadly he easily lost his temper when harassed by townspeople, especially after his baptism, and sometimes got quite agitated, but as time went by he was able to cope.²⁵⁰

Napoleon Andreassen, called Poli i Dali, (1868-1912)²⁵¹ had been a bubbly and lively child and adolescent although a bit mischievous at times as, for instance, when he threw a dead cat at Sloan during an open-air meeting.²⁵² Aged 14 he went to sea on a Danish ship and four years later went to America as a sailor on a German vessel on which he became acquainted with a Norwegian carpenter who was instrumental in Andreassen’s conversion. After this he used every opportunity to give testimony to his faith and preach the gospel on ships he subsequently sailed on; but after a while he decided to go back to the Faeroes.²⁵³ By the end of the 1880s Sloan was keen to have a Faeroese assistant, and in 1889 he met Andreassen in Leith, bound for Faeroe. This was the beginning of a fruitful cooperation. The hall was packed at every meeting and Andreassen’s testimonies and

²⁴⁸ “Andrias Isaksen (Dia i Geil)”, *Leirkerið*, 2000/1-2, pp. 13-19.

²⁴⁹ “Andrias Isaksen (Dia i Geil)”, *Leirkerið*, 2000/1-2, p. 15.

²⁵⁰ Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, pp. 208-209.

²⁵¹ ‘Napoleon Andreassen’, *Naade og Sandhed*, No. 1, January 1918, 4th year, pp. 5-6.

²⁵² Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 155.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 214-215.

preaching had great impact on all present.²⁵⁴ Later he went to Denmark where he qualified as a ship's master, married a Danish woman and settled in Tórshavn. He was not baptised until five years after his conversion but had participated in the breaking of bread. Andreasen was a pioneer in the new fishing industry, experimenting with fishing in the waters south of Iceland, exported fish to Holland,²⁵⁵ was head of a fisheries research expedition to Greenland and was the first to try trawling in Faeroe. For his ground-breaking work, Andreasen received the Royal Medal for his achievements when the Danish king Frederik VIII visited the Faeroes in 1907.²⁵⁶ When not at sea, he visited villages and helped establish assemblies. He was present during the commotion at Porkeri and in Vágur on Suðuroy, mentioned in the preceding chapter, confronting lay-preachers from the Danish Home Mission and here Andreasen was said to have the upper hand.²⁵⁷ In the spring of 1912 he went fishing south of Iceland on his smack, and at Easter went to Reykjavík where he held three packed meetings before leaving to resume fishing. Shortly thereafter a storm broke loose and the ship and its 15-strong crew were lost at sea. Andreasen was only 44 years old.²⁵⁸

The witty and captivating Faeroese Brethren missionary **Daniel Jacob Danielsen**, called Dollin, (1871-1916)²⁵⁹ grew up in Tórshavn and was regarded as a rowdy youth. In his late teens he went to Scotland and was a sailor on British ships; and by this time he was 'a God denier trying to enjoy the sin and the world,' as one writer put it.²⁶⁰ Later he

²⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 215.

²⁵⁵ Kelling, F, *Fisherman of Faroe*, Gøta 1993, p. 198.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 199.

²⁵⁸ Sloan, Andrew, "Poli i Dali," *Liv og læra*, 1962/9.

²⁵⁹ 'D. J. Danielsen', *Naade og Sandhed*, No. 1, January 1918, 4th year, p. 6.

²⁶⁰ Reyni, Jens av, "Dánial J. Danielsen", *Vejen*, 5-6/1941.

went to Glasgow to train as an engineer; and at the age of 27 Danielsen heard a worker there witness at an open-air meeting.²⁶¹ For him this led to a religious experience and he converted at a meeting shortly afterwards.²⁶² Having completed his training, he went on a one-year course at the missionary training school Harley College in London,²⁶³ started working with a sailors' mission and, later, with the Congo-Balolo Mission in Africa as an engineer on one of the mission vessels on the Congo River.²⁶⁴ For a period he was in charge of three of the mission's seven steamers.²⁶⁵ Danielsen gradually learned the vernaculars and started preaching in peoples' own tongues, and with his sense of humour he got along well with them.²⁶⁶

Daniel J. Danielsen was probably the first, or one of the first, Scandinavian missionaries to the Congo;²⁶⁷ and soon he became aware of the maltreatment of the civil population by the Belgian authorities.²⁶⁸ He was stationed at Bonginda, 1000 km (621 miles) up the Congo River, and was soon contacted by the British consul to Congo, Roger Casement (1864-1916), whom the British government had asked to organise an expedition to investigate the state of affairs.²⁶⁹ They were horrified at what they saw and heard, and a report was sent to the Foreign Office in London.²⁷⁰ This report caused much

²⁶¹ 'D. J. Danielsen frelstur', *Naade og Sandhed*, No. 5, May 1917, pp. 41-43.

²⁶² Reyni, Jens av, 'Herrens Gerning paa Færøerne gennem ¾ Aarhundrede', *Vejen*, 5-6/1941, pp. 15-17.

²⁶³ Also called 'East London Missionary Training Institute', founded in 1873 by Henry G. Guinness (1835-1910), one of the great evangelists of the Evangelical awakening during the Ulster Revival of 1859 who had Brethern connections for a while.

²⁶⁴ Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, pp. 220.

²⁶⁵ Kelling, F, *Fisherman of Faroe*, Gøta 1993, p. 183.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁷ Jacobsen, Ó, *Dollin – Havnarmaðurin, sum broytti heimssøguna* (The Faroese who changed history in the Congo), Tórshavn 2010.

²⁶⁸ The Belgian king Leopold II (1835-1909) had grabbed a large part of Congo, the so-called Congo Free State, brutalized and exploited from 1885 to 1908, with the consent of the major powers of the day.

²⁶⁹ Information kindly provided by Óli Jacobsen, Tórshavn, in June 2009.

²⁷⁰ Seamas O'Siochain and Michael O'Sullivan, *The eyes of another race*, London 1903.

popular anger in Britain and elsewhere.²⁷¹ Back in England in 1903, Danielsen corresponded with the Foreign Secretary, held mass meetings where he explained the situation in Congo and showed photos and maps with a projector, for instance in Synod Hall, Edinburgh. He was also active in the campaigning organisation Congo Reform Association²⁷² which was perhaps the first human rights initiative in the world.²⁷³

Whilst in Africa, Danielsen had been contaminated by malaria and in 1904 returned to the Faeroes after staying for a time in Edinburgh and Leith where some Faeroe Islanders lived. Here he met his future wife Lina, nee Niclasen, who was an excellent organ player and singer.²⁷⁴ They settled in Tórshavn and became main workers in the growing Brethren movement. Soon Danielsen became known as Missioner Danielsen all over the Faeroes because the two of them visited towns and villages regularly – he as an extremely popular speaker and she as a superb player on her portable organ and singer.²⁷⁵ Their home was always open to people, and especially younger ones enjoyed coming there and see things from Africa, hear the missionary's stories and discuss religious matters. On some occasions they rented the Tórshavn Theatre for meetings and at one of these Campbell, Danielsen and a couple of other Faeroe Islanders spoke.²⁷⁶ D. J. Danielsen also frequently contributed to *Echoes of Service* with reports and news on the work in the Faeroes. By this time there was an increasing number of

²⁷¹ Sadly Casement, in Irish Ruairí Mac Easmainn, was tried for treason and hanged because of involvement in Irish nationalism; that he was homosexual only made matters worse.

²⁷² The above mentioned Henry G. Guinness was also involved in this campaign.

²⁷³ Information kindly provided by Óli Jacobsen, Tórshavn, in June 2009.

²⁷⁴ Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, pp. 220.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

²⁷⁶ Kelling, F, *Fisherman of Faroe*, Gøta 1993, p. 184.

Faeroe Islanders who were good preachers, and of course they used the vernacular.

Danielsen mentions this in a letter in *Echoes of Service* where he states that

“I speak the Faroese language and the people prefer it, although the Scriptures are printed in Danish. The native language is spoken in all homes...all are compelled to learn...Danish in schools and...all lesson books are in the Danish language...”²⁷⁷

Probably he was able to compare the position of the vernaculars from his experiences in Africa with the language situation in the Faeroes, deploring the state of affairs regarding Faeroese in the same way as that of the African vernaculars and could see the same linguistic obstacles, especially in a missiological context.

After only 12 years' active service in his native country the health problems acquired in the Congo became so serious that he was sent to a hospital in Copenhagen; but nothing could be done.²⁷⁸ Very weak Danielsen arrived at his home in Tórshavn on 14th October but died just two days later, 45 years old.²⁷⁹ It is hardly an exaggeration to claim that with Dánial Jacob Danielsen and some of his compatriots²⁸⁰ the Faeroese Brethren movement developed its distinctive features; and the growing number of assemblies became less dependent on workers from abroad.²⁸¹

²⁷⁷ *Echoes of Service*, May 1905.

²⁷⁸ Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 221.

²⁷⁹ Kelling, F, *Fisherman of Faroe*, Gøta 1993, p. 194.

²⁸⁰ Apart from the ones already mentioned optician Eliesar Arge (1862-1921), Ludvig Poulsen (1865-1938), Niels Lassen Holm (1855 -1933) and others who were involved with the Sunday school, meetings and travelling.

²⁸¹ 'Missioner D. J. Danielsen', obituary, *Naade og Sandhed*, No. 11, 11 November 1916, pp. 91-92.

5.3 New initiatives

The Scotsman **D. M. Campbell** (fl. 1890-1905) came to the Faeroes in 1903 and worked with Sloan until 1905; he often spoke at meetings (Sloan interpreting) and in his diary entry of 11th September 1903, Sloan writes that they broke bread together above the small village Skarð on Kalsoy (last inhabitants moved to Klaksvík in 1919 after most men were lost at sea).²⁸²

Around the time when Mitchell left for Norway, the dynamic dentist and photographer **Arthur Brend** (1880-1959)²⁸³ of London arrived at the scene. He paid a visit to Faeroe in 1898 and again in 1900; also he visited both Norway and Iceland. On one of the voyages he joined Sloan and visited villages in the Northern Isles in Faeroe. After that he was a language teacher in Christiania (now Oslo) and then moved to Skien in 1903 to teach and help the assembly there.²⁸⁴ Among other things he helped arrange an open air meeting at Skien where 2,000 people were present.²⁸⁵ Suffering from asthma, he found the climate in Faeroe most agreeable and settled in Tórshavn late in 1906, first staying with Napoleon Andreasen.²⁸⁶ Like Danielsen, Brend was a regular contributor to *Echoes of Service*, and this makes it easy to appreciate his enormous energy and passion as a Brethren worker. In 1907 he writes a long article which shows how widely he travelled and how conditions were:

“After spending a happy month in Tórshavn, I left for Suðuroy and on arriving in Tvøroyri...was met by Br[other] J. P. Poulsen from Hvalba.

²⁸² The Diaries of William G. Sloan – 1863-1913, Faroese National Archives 2010.

²⁸³ Zachariassen, Z, *Bíblían á føroyskum i hálva øld*, Gøta 2000, p. 441.

²⁸⁴ Kelling, F, *Fisherman of Faroe*, Gøta 1993, p. 173.

²⁸⁵ *For God's Children*, 9/1904. Cited in Kelling, F, *Fisherman of Faroe*, Gøta 1993, p. 173.

²⁸⁶ Kelling, F, *Fisherman of Faroe*, Gøta 1993, p. 173.

The following morning, we set off over the mountains for Hvalba...arriving at 3:30 p.m. ...there are a dozen Christians who meet together; the little assembly was formed a year ago. After...meetings...I left for Tvøroyri...held meeting in a public ball-room.”²⁸⁷

He also visits the assembly at Porkeri on this occasion; and then visits the Northern Isles where he

“had two very encouraging meetings at Klaksvík...set off over the mountains to Viðareiði and had a meeting...During the past fortnight I have visited nearly every house in the place, and spoken with the people, and I did not receive a single rebuff. At the last meeting, I asked those who wished to confess to the Lord Jesus to hold up the hand...some thirty did so. ...I went over the strait to Kunoy; I have now had three meetings here. At Húsum. ...Miðvágur, Isle of Vágoy...hearty welcome on arrival...”²⁸⁸

In a later issue he writes that he left Tórshavn

“...at 5 a.m....to reach Eiði (in the weekly motor post-boat) at 3 p.m., but the sea was so rough that it was impossible for the boat to beat its way up the sound...at nine o'clock in the evening, having been drenched wet for over fourteen hours, I was able to get a bed...in the village of Hósvík...next morning...managed to drag it on and arrived at Eiði, soaked to the skin again, at 3 p.m. ...Also visited the village of Tjørnuvík (north of Haldarsvík). People...are very backward in coming to meetings in these parts; but as it is some twenty years...since a labourer came this way, this is accountable.”²⁸⁹

One of Brend's great accomplishments was that he made it possible to have John's Gospel published in Faeroese. The gospel had been translated earlier into the vernacular by the Lutheran clergyman Andreas C. Evensen (1874-1917),²⁹⁰ later Dean of Faeroe. With his sophisticated attitudes and charming manners Brend was a popular man, and on a visit to Sandur on Sandoy, he was invited to stay with Evensen who told him that he had translated several chapters of the gospel from Greek and would have

²⁸⁷ *Echoes of Service*, May 1907.

²⁸⁸ *Echoes of Service*, May 1907.

²⁸⁹ *Echoes of Service*, December 1907.

²⁹⁰ Zachariassen, Z, *Bíblían á føroyskum i hálva øld*, Gøta 2000, p. 32.

completed a Faeroese translation in six months' time.²⁹¹ The Danish Bible Society was not interested, so Brend made contact with the Scripture Gift Mission²⁹² who would publish 10,000 copies with illustrations and bear half the expenses.²⁹³ The magnificent book was published in 1908 and given to all schools and homes in the Faeroes; and for many this was the first book in their own language which they had ever seen. A review in a Faeroese paper states among other things:²⁹⁴

“St John’s Gospel has now been published into the Faeroese language; this is a really amazing book with many dazzling pictures, and it must be well received by everybody who reads the mother tongue. This book is a beacon of new life in this country; and all those who still doubt are strengthened in the hope that godly life shall improve and thrive in our people.”

Arthur Brend continued as an energetic Brethren worker, visiting villages, assemblies and organising larger meetings in rented dance halls for many years; he was a popular Sunday school teacher and his Bible classes were extremely well prepared and executed.²⁹⁵ Together with D. J. Danielsen he also published the monthly Brethren journal *Naade og Sandhed* (Grace and Truth) from January 1915 until December 1924²⁹⁶ when he withdrew from active service in the movement. The reasons for his leaving are not clear; but it should be borne in mind that the Brethren were under a lot of pressure at the time, and maybe his withdrawal from active service was caused by theological or other disagreements. Brend, lived in Tórshavn and from the late 1920s he was a

²⁹¹ Kelling, F, *Fisherman of Faroe*, Gøta 1993, p. 179.

²⁹² Founded in 1888 by the printer William Walters (1848-1907), sometimes called “God’s Printer”.

²⁹³ Kelling, F, *Fisherman of Faroe*, Gøta 1993, p. 179.

²⁹⁴ Skarði, S. av, “Nýggj bók”, *Ungu Føroyar*, 1/1909. Reprint 1969. Cited in Zachariassen, Z, *Biblian a Føroyskum í halva øld*, Gøta 2000, p. 373-4.

²⁹⁵ I have seen Brend’s Bible, and there he has written commentaries, thoughts, and suggestions, made illustrations, etc., in the margins or on extra pages, glued into the book, in preparation for Bible classes.

²⁹⁶ *Naade og Sandhed*, For Young and Old, ‘Grace and truth have come through Jesus Christ’ (John 1:17), No. 1, January 1915, 1st year, 8 pages, mostly in Danish but also in Faeroese.

businessman, initiator of many initiatives, in the town, e.g. the first taxi company, organised outings and took part in various organisational work, supported charitable causes, etc., until his death in 1959.²⁹⁷

From this time onwards virtually all key figures within the Brethren movement in the islands were Faeroese although British, mainly Scots, missionaries visited the assemblies for shorter or longer periods. Two of these actually settled outside Tórshavn for years. **Angus McKinnon** (1880-1961) and his wife settled in Tvøroyri on Suðuroy for some years before World War II and again after the war.²⁹⁸ He had been a missionary to Sweden from 1910 and later to Norway where he also stayed from 1940-1946 when he returned to Tvøroyri in the Faeroes.²⁹⁹ The other one was **Joseph J. Adams** (1898-1973) who lived at Gøta for some years in the late 1930s and early 1940s. He was commended around 1923 from Roman Road Gospel Hall in Motherwell, evangelising initially in Lanarkshire and the north of Scotland. Later he was a Brethren worker in Norway and in the Faeroes.³⁰⁰

Jens av Reyni (1886-1948)³⁰¹ was an exceptional man, born and bred in Tórshavn where he lived and worked all his life. Jens became a shopkeeper and, later, a businessman. He studied at a business school in Denmark for a year and then worked in Hans Joensen's shop; then he started his own book- and stationery shop and was also a publisher. Later he was in charge of the shipping company 'Skipafelagið Føroyar' and was a pioneer in Faeroese shipping and trawling. He was appointed representative for the

²⁹⁷ I have vague memories of Brend; my grandmother and my mother knew him well. He was a popular man in the Faeroes, always ready to help and support in humanitarian work.

²⁹⁸ Letters from McKinnon to *Echoes of Service* covering the period 1940-1955 are kept at the Christian Brethren Archive, John Ryland University Library, Manchester.

²⁹⁹ Brief obituary notice in *The Witness*, vol. 91 (March 1961), p.116.

³⁰⁰ Brief obituary notice in *The Witness*, vol. 104 (January 1974), p.36.

³⁰¹ Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 210.

local government and the Ship-owners' Association, 'Reiðarafelagið', both before and after the Second World War; in this capacity he went to Spain, Portugal, Britain and Iceland.³⁰² Jens av Reyni converted when he was 17 years old and became an industrious and significant member of the 'Ebenezer' Assembly in Tórshavn. He was instrumental in having the first hymns in the Faeroese language published in 1920; and his role in the publication of the New Testament in 1937 and, in 1949, the whole Bible in the vernacular was of crucial importance as will be explained below. Additionally he published the Brethren journal *Vidnesbyrdet*, later in Faeroese *Vitnið*, (The Witness) from 1923 until his death in 1948.³⁰³ Jens av Reyni was one of the first Brethren to acknowledge the importance of the written language – and he acted upon this. He also published the periodical *Vejen* (The Way) and *Sálmar okkara og teir, ið yrkt hava* (Our hymns and those who composed them) in 1945.³⁰⁴

The dynamic but slightly controversial **Jens Clement** (Klæmint) **Isaksen** (1881-1964) was one of the outstanding Brethren in the Northern Islands. He was born at Kirkja on Fugloy, the easternmost island, and grew up at Hattarvík, the other village on the island. He lost his mother³⁰⁵ and stayed with family at Hattarvík until he went fishing at the age of 16.³⁰⁶ He started as a fisherman on Faeroese smacks and, later, on an English trawler; but he was always anxious about life, death and eternity because he felt that there were so many temptations to resist.³⁰⁷ When a young man he returned to the Faeroes and

³⁰² Háberg, P, "Merkisbrøður", *Lív og læra*, 1/1961.

³⁰³ No. 1, May 1922, 1st year, including articles on the assembly. *Vidnesbyrdet* was published monthly from 1922 to 1924 (32 issues), *Vitnið* (Faeroese for the Danish 'Vidnesbyrdet') 1932-34 in 32 issues, and 1935-48 in 7 issues. The total number was 71 journals.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

³⁰⁵ "Samkoman a Viðareiði, 3", *Leirkerið*, 6/1984.

³⁰⁶ Sloan, A, "Jens Klæmint Isaksen", *Sunnudagsskúlin*, 5/1944, p. 1.

³⁰⁷ Háberg, P, "Merkisbrøður", *Lív og læra*, 1/1961.

started training as a skipper at the Navigation College in Tórshavn; and during this period he went to meetings at Sloan's Hall where he eventually found "peace with God through belief in Jesus Christ", as he expressed it himself.³⁰⁸ Isaksen struggled to come to terms with his faith; and during an illness in 1901 he contemplated the belief in salvation and suddenly realised that "all he had to do was to surrender in belief in Jesus who already had done all that was required and that God promised him salvation through belief in God's Son."³⁰⁹ He was so happy that, during an illness, he told his landlady the good news, but she just replied that it was his high temperature which made him say such things.³¹⁰ This made him withdrawn and unhappy for a long time, and not until 1905 did he finally have a religious experience on a fishing smack in Icelandic waters on which he was skipper. He watched an older fisherman from his village kneeling in front of his bunk bed praying on his own. This touched Isaksen so deeply that he had an evangelical conversion and started witnessing and preaching.³¹¹

Jens Klæmint Isaksen was an enthusiastic and reliable member of the Viðareiði Assembly and held meetings on fishing vessels; and two of his favourite verses in the Bible were Ps. 34: 20 and Isaiah 50: 10. He visited assemblies around the islands, often with other Brethren workers.³¹² In 1917 Isaksen and his family moved to Klaksvík where he became a ship-owner and businessman; and he was instrumental in establishing an

³⁰⁸ Sloan, A, "Jens Klæmint Isaksen", *Lív og læra*, 16/1964. Cited in *Leirkerið*, 6/1984, 250.

³⁰⁹ Sloan, A, "Jens Klæmint Isaksen", *Sunnudagsskúlin*, 5/1944.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, p. 249

³¹² Sloan, A, "Jens Klæmint Isaksen", *Lív og læra*, 16/1964. Cited in *Leirkerið*, 1984/6, p. 251.

assembly and having a hall built.³¹³ He was remembered as a passionate and well-spoken preacher with a unique attitude which made him particularly fascinating.³¹⁴

5.4 Momentous translation work

The undisputed principal figure in the second generation of Faeroese Brethren was **Victor Danielsen** (1894-1961), son of Daniel J. Danielsen, local sheriff stationed at Søldarfjørður on Eysturoy but originally from Tórshavn. He was a good friend of Old Sloan and his house was always open to Brethren workers such as McLaren, his nephew Missionary Danielsen, and others.³¹⁵ Victor was very intelligent and exceptionally good at learning, so in 1911 he started studying at the Teachers' Training College in Tórshavn, graduating in 1914 with top marks.³¹⁶ Around this time he suffered from depressions and mood swings caused by doubts, fears and anxieties about life, death and eternity; and in 1913 he had a religious experience involving a calling to God, as he later said at a meeting.³¹⁷ In the beginning Danielsen was influenced by the Danish Home Mission preacher, later Lutheran clergyman, Ryving-Jensen (1878-1948) who was then teaching at the Navigation College in Tórshavn.³¹⁸ During this period Victor Danielsen only went to Home Mission meetings and not the Brethren assembly 'Ebenezer' in Tórshavn, but he saw it as his calling to make people turn to Jesus.³¹⁹

Having completed his studies he returned home and was appointed teacher at the schools at Søldarfjørður, Glyvrar and Lamba, but this did not last for long. Danielsen

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ "Hvør fer at vanvirða dagin.....," *Leirkerið*, 1985/4.

³¹⁵ Zachariassen, Z, *Bíblían á Føroyskum í hálva øld*, Gøta 2000, pp.21-22.

³¹⁶ Háberg, P, "Victor Danielsen", *14. September*, 15/1961. Cited in *Fra penni Petur Hábergs*, Gøta 2007, p. 72.

³¹⁷ Zachariassen, Z, *Bíblían á Føroyskum í hálva øld*, Gøta 2000, p. 23.

³¹⁸ Háberg, P, "Victor Danielsen", *14. September*, 15/1961. Cited in *Fra penni Petur Hábergs*, Gøta 2007, p. 72.

³¹⁹ Zachariassen, Z, *Bíblían á Føroyskum í hálva øld*, Gøta 2000, p. 24.

could not agree with all that was taught at the Danish Lutheran State schools so after seven months he resigned; but already then he had read homilies in the school and soon started preaching himself.³²⁰ Many were converted on these occasions and the meetings in the school were stopped by the authorities. Then Victor Danielsen had meetings in the dance hall, and this was the reason why he ceased being a schoolteacher and decided to dedicate his life to missionary work. He also became convinced that he needed to be re-baptised, and in 1916 this was done together with some other individuals in the sea at Søldarfjørður. After this he joined the Brethren movement and visited assemblies.³²¹ He married Henrikka Malena, nee Olsen, in 1920 and they lived in Søldarfjørður until 1928 when they moved to Fuglafjørður where Victor spent the rest of his life; but he travelled often for long periods, visiting assemblies all over the islands.³²² A fellow Brethren worker, Jógvan Gerðalíð (1916-2012)³²³ of Klaksvík, mentioned at Victor's funeral that once they had had 69 meetings in 49 villages in only 14 days.³²⁴

In the 1950s Victor Danielsen continued his work as a Brethren evangelist, prolific writer and translator,³²⁵ but exhaustion and ill health forced him to slow down and in 1961 he suddenly died, aged 66.³²⁶ On the writing desk beside his bed was the last but unfinished item of the evangelical column, "Gudsorðið" (The word of God),³²⁷

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Zachariassen, Z, *Bíblían á Føroyskum í hálva øld*, Gøta 2000, p. 25.

³²² Ibid., p. 26.

³²³ Interview chapter 8.

³²⁴ Zachariassen, Z, *Bíblían á Føroyskum í hálva øld*, Gøta 2000, p. 27.

³²⁵ Danielsen's enormous literary work will be discussed in section 7.4.2.

³²⁶ Háberg, P, "Victor Danielsen", *14. September*, 15/1961. Cited in *Fra penni Petur Hábergs*, Gøta 2007, p. 72.

³²⁷ The paper was named after the day when the referendum took place, 14th September 1946.

which he had produced weekly for the leftwing Republican paper *14. September* for some time.³²⁸

Another exceptional Brethren worker of the same generation was Old Sloan's youngest son **Andrew W. Sloan** (1896-1973). Having completed secondary school in Tórshavn he started working as a shop assistant in Hans Joensen's business; and he was 18 years old when his father, William G. Sloan, passed away. At this stage he did not consider becoming a Brethren missionary; but three years later, in 1917, he experienced a calling and resigned from his job in order to start working within the Ebenezer assembly in Tórshavn and assisting elsewhere in the Islands.³²⁹ Andrew Sloan was a conscientious, reliable and central figure within the Faeroese Brethren movement the rest of his life, helping build up assemblies and strengthening existing ones.³³⁰ He was a quiet and highly respected man everywhere and was particularly popular as a Bible teacher and organiser. He visited the small, new assemblies as they emerged in the 1920s and 1930s and people were always very pleased when he came because he was an "extremely good evangelist, a brilliant teacher for the believers, proficient in the Scriptures, popular with children."³³¹ Andrew Sloan was regarded as one of the best preachers and even today it is a joy to listen to recordings of his superb narrative, partly because he felt obliged to present new views and angles – it was never the same.³³² Outside the Brethren movement Andrew Sloan was perhaps best known for his articles in the papers, mainly on questions of

³²⁸ Mentioned by his son, Richard Danielsen, when I visited him in Fuglafjørður in April 2009.

³²⁹ Háberg, P, "Hugskot við burturferð A.W.Sloans", *Dagblaðið*, 29th September 1973. Cited in *Fra penni Petur Hábergs*, Gøta 2007, p. 63.

³³⁰ Sloan A. W., 'En ung Mand', *Naade og Sandhed*, No. 7, 4th year, July 1918, pp. 54-55.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

³³² *Ibid.*, p. 67.

Scripture, misunderstandings and attacks on the movement, not least during the Bible Battle (see 7.2.2), and his contributions were always polite and respectful.

One of the key figures after the Second World War was the more forceful and satirical but extremely well-read intellectual **Petur William Háberg** (1914-1984).³³³ He was born and bred in Tórshavn where he completed primary and secondary school and then became a journalist for various Faeroese papers, mainly *Dagblaðið* (The daily paper). Later he was an office worker, a publisher and, eventually, chief administrator of a fishing enterprise.³³⁴ Petur W. Háberg edited *Bumbur yvir Føroyar* (Bombs over Faeroe), an account of how World War II affected the Faeroes, published by Norrøna Forlagið, where he was involved, in 1946; and in 1954 he published a handbook for taxpayers. However, Háberg is best known as the dynamic worker within the Brethren movement where he devoted most of his energy as an organiser, a writer, a preacher and a teacher. He was one of the central persons involved in having Danielsen's Bible translation published in 1949, and also in the publication of the 1952-edition of the Brethren hymnody *Songbók Guds Fólks*, containing 1,125 hymns and songs, some of which he had written and translated. He was editor of the Brethren journal *Liv og læra* (Life and teaching) from 1960-1974; and he wrote these booklets and books: *Paulusar brøv. Eitt stutt yvirlit* (Paul's letters. A short introduction) in 1955; *Bíblían í høvuðsheitum* (The essence of the Bible) in 1972; *Gumma mín og eg* (My aunt and I) in 1976; *Søgur um sangir* (Stories on songs) in 1954; *Søgur um sangir. 2. bók* in 1979, and *Hugbirtingar*, his memoirs and reflections, in 1981.³³⁵ Apart from this he organized

³³³ Zachariassen, Z, *Bíblían á Føroyskum í hálva øld*, Gøta 2000, p. 444.

³³⁴ http://www.snar.fo/alfroei/alfroei/rithoevundar/haberg_petur/

³³⁵ http://www.snar.fo/alfroei/alfroei/rithoevundar/haberg_petur/

Brethren conferences, Bible courses, group travels abroad, e.g. to Iceland and Israel, and was a renowned and popular speaker and lecturer, both within the movement and outside, e.g. in the Faeroe Broadcasting System, at The Faeroe Academy (now university) and as a public speaker.³³⁶ Háberg was quite fascinated by the American evangelist Billy Graham and organized group visits to hear him in Glasgow in 1955 and in Copenhagen in 1965. He wrote reports on these mass meetings, a biography of Graham and also translated much of his work.³³⁷ Petur Háberg is regarded as one of the most important men in bringing the Faeroese Brethren movement into modern times.³³⁸

There were numerous other dedicated Brethren workers who made major contributions to keep assemblies alive and growing. In such a movement local people participate and guide the work as well as stimulate other, often smaller, assemblies. One of these men was **Niels Vang** (1907-1978) from the small village Kaldbak, north of Tórshavn. He was baptised into the Lutheran Church and after village school education he was confirmed. Then he went to Tórshavn to work at Hans Joensen's business until 1930 when he left for work in Lerwick, Shetland, for a year.³³⁹ Before this, in 1926, he heard a testimony and had a religious experience, and on 3rd September 1926 he wrote these words in his Bible "Born anew!"³⁴⁰ and on the 22nd "Buried with Christ in the Baptism". In Lerwick he met Angus Swanson (1902-1990)³⁴¹ who introduced him to the *Scofield Bible*, a key work for promulgating dispensationalism. In 1931 Niels moved to

³³⁶ Berghamar, Ø, "Ein orðsins stríðsmaður", *Fra penni Petur Hábergs*, Gøta 2007, pp. 7-8.

³³⁷ *Fra penni Petur Hábergs*, Gøta 2007, pp. 130f and 140f.

³³⁸ Berghamar, Ø, "Ein orðsins stríðsmaður", *Frá penni Petur Hábergs*, Gøta 2007, pp. 7-8.

³³⁹ Hans Joensen mentioned in section 3.2.

³⁴⁰ Or "Born Again". Balmer, R., *Encyclopaedia of Evangelicalism*, John Knox Press 2002, pp. 78-79; 156.

³⁴¹ Dickson, N. T. R., *Brethren in Scotland 1838-2000*, Paternoster 2002, p. 190. Swanson had been a Church of Scotland lay reader, converted to Brethren in 1919 and helped start the assembly in Wick and was an active preacher at assemblies in fishing villages.

Klaksvík, from 1934-1944 worked as manager at Kjølbro's new shop. Then started his own grocery store in Tórshavn. He spoke and preached at most meetings in 'Betesda' and was a renowned Bible and Sunday school teacher both there, in Tórshavn and elsewhere; and his meeting diaries have been preserved.³⁴² In his home village Kaldbak he was instrumental in having the Brethren Hall 'Nazareth' built in 1935; and he was a dedicated Brethren worker all his life. Niels was one of the older Brethren who had a good private collection of theological, especially Brethren, literature and even corresponded with British authors.

*

I would argue that there are some features which are recurring regarding most of the characters presented in this chapter. One was the evangelical zeal and the conviction that their evangelism was worthwhile and virtuous; another one was the influence of being in a dangerous industry which undoubtedly invigorated many to work seriously in bringing the new Christian message to others. Demmus á Hamri was perhaps unique in imploring his son to convert as he drowned, but his action was typical of the Evangelical fisherman.³⁴³ A third feature was the attraction of the Brethren to the innovative and entrepreneurial demands and the need to indigenise the Christian message, which clearly is the case of Victor Danielsen, and, seen in hindsight, all this went hand in hand with a commitment to Faeroese autonomy. There is a range of factors which help explain why the Brethren movement grew so markedly, and some of them have been discussed in this and the previous chapters. First, another way of worship which appealed to many people in a turbulent period, marked by insecurity and anxiety. Second, the way in which the

³⁴² Courtesy of his son, Johan Vang (1945-), Tórshavn. He has supplied me with much relevant material.

³⁴³ Mentioned in section 3.2.

movement connected with people, especially fishermen and their extended families. Third, the use of the vernacular at meetings where active participation of all assembly members was encouraged; and also the circumstances discussed in chapters 6, 7 and 8, e.g. losses at sea, poverty, the remarkable energy, not only by leaders but also other Brethren workers organising Bible classes, publications, open-air meetings, conferences and other demanding initiatives.

Part Three

Evaluating the legacy

In the third part of the thesis, comprising chapters 6, 7 and 8 as well as the conclusion, I first want to present and analyse the enormous changes which happened in the socio-economic field in the period 1920-2000 and how members of the Brethren movement participated in the nation-building process. Then, in chapter 7 I go deeper into the discussion concerning the emergence of modern Faeroese culture since the Brethren movement had consolidated itself, including their important contributions in literature, the fine arts and music. Chapter 8 contains my ethnographic fieldwork which tests the validity of the findings in previous chapters. Furthermore it looks at emerging trends within the Brethren movement as well as its relations with other movements and its future prospects. The thesis ends with summing up main findings, relevant conclusions and some reflections on the subject matter.

6. Socio-economic progress

6.1 Social and economic factors

In this section I shall, firstly, consider and discuss the interaction between economic and social developments and the cultural changes which affected identity formation, including the ‘centre change’ from Copenhagen to Tórshavn. Secondly, I shall discuss social conditions in the 1920s and 1930s and compare with those in the 1960s when the welfare system emerged. Thirdly, the role of the Brethren will be discussed. In addition to Benedict Anderson’s theories on “nation”³⁴⁴ and Lamin Sanneh’s theories on missiology and missionary impact,³⁴⁵ I use Dr. Stein Rokkan’s model as presented in his article “Dimensions of State Formation and Nation-Building: A possible Paradigm for Research on Variations within Europe”,³⁴⁶ because the historical processes which took place in the Faeroes are present in Rokkan’s system although there are considerable deviations. However, all these can be explained by the special situation concerning the Faeroes and, in a similar but not quite identical way, Iceland. Therefore Icelandic scholar Dr. Pétur Pétursson’s theories³⁴⁷ are highly relevant in the discussion, the main problem

³⁴⁴ Anderson, B., *Imagined communities*, London (1983) 2006.

³⁴⁵ Sanneh, L., *Translating the message*, New York (1989) 2005.

³⁴⁶ Rokkan, S., “Dimensions of State Formation and Nation-Building: A possible Paradigm for Research on Variations within Europe”, in Ch. Tilly (ed.), *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, London 1975.

³⁴⁷ Pétursson, P., *Church and Social Change – A study of the secularization process in Iceland 1830-1930*, Reykjavík 1990.

being that while they investigate the emergence of nation states,³⁴⁸ this work discusses the situation and development of a ‘stateless nation’.³⁴⁹

6.1.1 Theoretical base

Rokkan (1975) operates with four phases or stages in the nation building process, involving the materialization of an institutional infrastructure, standardisation, people’s participation, and, eventually, government local agencies.³⁵⁰ Pétursson (1990) points out the reasons for discrepancies between Rokkan’s model and the real sequences which took place in small nations which were also late-comers in modern nation building. In his work, Pétur Pétursson³⁵¹ explains how this was exactly what happened in Iceland and adds:

“The late-comers to the process of modern nation-building have had certain problems simply because solutions to the earlier phases had not been institutionalized before yet further demands were raised by the presence of the successive phases. The result of this may be the uneven development of the various sectors of society.”

In my opinion this has undoubtedly been even more marked³⁵² in the Faeroes³⁵³ than in the much bigger and more populous Iceland although there are obvious similarities.

³⁴⁸ Iceland became an independent republic in 1944.

³⁴⁹ A ‘Stateless nation’ is often called ‘national minority’ which corresponds to a group of people meeting some minimum criteria such as cultural factors (language, religion, history, culture), space structures, etc. (territory), and a social identity (feeling of membership). The Faeroe Islands achieved home rule within the Danish state in 1948. – Cf. Keating, Michael, *Nations Against the State: The New Politics of Nationalism in Quebec, Catalonia and Scotland*, Palgrave 2001. Also Minahan, James, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Stateless Nations: Ethnic and National Groups Around the World*, Westport 2002.

³⁵⁰ Rokkan, S., “Dimensions of State Formation and Nation-Building: A possible Paradigm for Research on Variations within Europe”, in Ch. Tilly (ed.), *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, London 1975, pp. 571-572.

³⁵¹ Pétursson, P., *Church and social change*, Reykjavík 1990, p. 5.

³⁵² One of the differences being that although the Icelandic Church was administered from Denmark, both bishops and the clergy were Icelanders. This was not the case in the Faeroes.

³⁵³ The nation building processes started much later in the Faeroe Islands.

Life in the traditional Faeroese society was supported by agriculture, in addition to which there was some inshore fishing, whale hunting and fowling. Such an economic base could only sustain a population of 5,000 people at the most; and it was only because of significant changes in the productive sphere that the Faeroes were able to sustain ten times as many individuals, almost 50,000 at the end of the 20th century. After 1900 offshore fishing and fish processing had overtaken agriculture both in volume, value and the number of persons employed. One hundred years previously, around 1800, wealthy Crown farmers, locally known as ‘Kongsbóndi’ (King’s Farmer),³⁵⁴ formed the ruling elite while the majority consisted of farmhands, landless labourers and paupers. The beginning of the 20th century saw a totally different community; and the main classes were now ship-owners and businessmen on the one hand, fishermen and workers on the other.

Correspondingly the whole community, including economy, politics, culture and religion, went through considerable changes. In the economic sphere free trade was introduced in 1856 after centuries of a Trade Monopoly; in the political sphere the local parliament, the lögting, was re-established in 1852; in the social sphere work patterns and opportunities changed beyond recognition and people were paid for their work. Education changed from the traditional home teaching to established school in 1844/72; but religious life changed deplorably little to meet new challenges. However, the established church and its clergy were still part of the dwindling traditional community, the old elite, incapable of change; but many people were probably

³⁵⁴ Although they were in fact just tenant-peasants; the King was the landowner but far away.

opposed to changes in the traditional kind of religious life which they regarded as untouchable.³⁵⁵

The impact that Protestantism, especially the Puritan, Pietistic and Evangelical brands,³⁵⁶ may have had on socio-economic life and other areas in various societies will be considered in this chapter. Here Max Weber's thought provoking analysis in *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism* is part of the theoretical background.³⁵⁷ A considerable part of the new economic elite in the Faeroes were Brethren and Home Mission people.³⁵⁸

From the 1960s scholars brought forward different views and theories, often contradicting earlier ones or at least modifying them. Peter L. Berger came up with the theory that social reality is a form of consciousness and the relationship between society and the individual is central to his research within social sciences. In *The Social Construction of Reality*,³⁵⁹ written with Thomas Luckmann, Berger posited with the sociological theory regarding "Society as Objective Reality and as Subjective Reality";³⁶⁰ and his analysis of society as a subjective reality describes the processes by which an individual's conception of reality is produced by interaction with social structures. His theories also consider how new human concepts or inventions become a part of our reality through the process of objectivation; so then this reality is no

³⁵⁵ Jackson, A., *The Faroes – The Faraway Islands*, London 1991, p. 67.

³⁵⁶ The Brethren in the 1860s, the Danish Home Mission, promoted by Pietistic clergymen, in the 1890s.

³⁵⁷ Weber, M., *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*, (1904-5), translation, Dover Publications 2003.

³⁵⁸ Explained in chapter 1.

³⁵⁹ Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, New York 1966.

³⁶⁰ Calhoun Craig J., *Contemporary sociological theory*, London 2002, p. 28.

longer recognized as a human creation, through a process Berger calls reification.³⁶¹

This prefigures Anderson's theories about "imagined communities" where something that was initially constructed or invented by humans gradually becomes part of "reality", though imagined reality.³⁶² While recognising that religion is still a powerful social force, Berger points out how pluralism and globalisation change the world fundamentally and also the ways in which individuals experience faith. The almost absolutist character of religion has often been replaced by a more individual search for personal religious preference.³⁶³

6.1.2 Modernisation and secularisation

The idea of a Faeroese nation, this newly imagined community, gradually emerged towards the end of the 19th century, and in the same period, 1890-1950, new political and social processes took hold. All these developments were part of the general modernisation of the society. This period also saw substantial changes in the cultural and religious life in the islands; and it was during this period that the Brethren movement expanded considerably as an indigenous church. I suggest that it is possible to see a pattern of religious change similar to those which took place in many other societies around the world, maybe especially smaller ones as for instance in Iceland, which in

³⁶¹ Opposite of "deification". Making something abstract into something concrete or real; the action of regarding an idea or concept as if having material existence.

³⁶² Anderson, B., *Imagined communities*, London (1983) 2006, pp. 35-36.

³⁶³ Beck, U., *Risk society*, London 1992.

many ways shared its history with the Faeroes.³⁶⁴ With some exceptions Pétursson's analysis also applies to the Faeroes regarding its nation building.³⁶⁵

Although it is not correct to talk about 'nation state'³⁶⁶ construction regarding the Faeroe Islands,³⁶⁷ some processes were analogous. Unlike Iceland where the vernacular³⁶⁸ had always been used in the church while the language of the secular administration was Danish,³⁶⁹ in the Faeroes the language of both church and state were Danish after the Reformation. Also the special brand of Scandinavian Lutheranism led to a fusion of church and state where the secular monarch became the chief guardian of the Lutheran doctrine as the only true faith, what Max Weber labelled "Caesaropapism."³⁷⁰ The result was that the established church and its clergy became integral parts of the administrative penetration throughout the realm; and even in the Faeroes an important role of the clergy was the control and administration of the lives of the people in the parishes in the islands. So not only could the Danish language be seen as a foreign and oppressive force, but so could the administration, not least through the church and its clergy. Additionally, as wealthy landowners, the clergymen, almost exclusively Danes, belonged to the social, political and cultural elite, and the centre was the Danish capital, Copenhagen, not Tórshavn.

³⁶⁴ Both were Danish colonies or provinces from the 14th century; but Iceland became an independent republic in 1944, the Faeroe Islands got Home Rule in 1948.

³⁶⁵ Pétursson, P., *Church and Social Change – A study of the secularization process in Iceland 1830-1930*, Reykjavík 1990, p. 1.

³⁶⁶ See note 952.

³⁶⁷ Because the Faeroes are (still) a stateless nation.

³⁶⁸ The Bible was translated into Icelandic already in 1584.

³⁶⁹ Pétursson, P., *Church and Social Change – A study of the secularization process in Iceland 1830-1930*, Reykjavík 1990, p. 3.

³⁷⁰ Weber, M., *Economy and society*, New York 1968, p. 1198. Cited in Pétursson 1990, p. 4.

Norwegian political scientist and sociologist Stein Rokkan (1921-1979) describes the nation building and secularisation processes in Europe in four stages:³⁷¹ phase one consists of the penetration of society and building up an institutional infrastructure; phase two involves standardisation at the cultural level, e.g. creating channels from the centre to the parish populations in order to make the latter identify with the political system (sometimes in conflict with old identities); phase three moves to active participation or mobilisation of the masses in support of the political system; and the fourth phase is redistribution such as local government agencies of redistribution, organising welfare services and “the development of nationwide policies for the equalisation of economic conditions.”³⁷²

This fits well with Benedict Anderson’s theories regarding imagined communities which see the concept ‘nation’ in a similar way. They both acknowledge that nation building is a rather new phenomenon created by the endeavours of the ruling classes and gradually and ideally involving the whole population of a community. Although Rokkan does not mention the importance of print capitalism the way Anderson does, the realisation of his four phases in the process is hardly possible without such means of mass communication. Like Anderson,³⁷³ Rokkan demonstrates that the church is a basic factor in any study of the particular process of centre building;³⁷⁴ but Anderson

³⁷¹ Rokkan, S., “Dimensions of State Formation and Nation-Building: A possible Paradigm for Research on Variations within Europe”, in Ch. Tilly (ed.), *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, London 1975, pp. 564ff. Cited in Pétursson 1990, pp. 4-5.

³⁷² Rokkan 1975, pp. 571-572.

³⁷³ Anderson, B., *Imagined communities*, Verso (1983) 2006. pp. 40-41.

³⁷⁴ Rokkan, S., “Dimensions of State Formation and Nation-Building: A possible Paradigm for Research on Variations within Europe”, in Ch. Tilly (ed.), *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, London 1975, p. 564ff. Cited in Pétursson 1990, p. 4.

emphasises the change from a vertical, i.e. hierarchical or dynastic,³⁷⁵ to a horizontal structure of society and Rokkan identifies four phases in exactly this process.

6.1.3 The situation in the Faeroes

In a European context Faeroe, like Iceland, was late in its modern nation-building process. One of the reasons was probably that solutions to earlier phases were not institutionalised until further demands presented themselves as a result of consecutive phases already being there.³⁷⁶ The centre for both ecclesiastical and secular power and administration was Copenhagen in Denmark and remained so until the second half of the 20th century³⁷⁷ although a local parliament, only advisory, was re-established in 1852 and a council law came into force in 1866/71.³⁷⁸ The church, however, remained Danish until 2007 even if the use of the vernacular was partially permitted alongside Danish from 1937/1948 and a Faeroese vice-bishop under the bishop of Sjælland, Denmark, was appointed in 1963.³⁷⁹ In 1990 this position was elevated to a bishop;³⁸⁰ but for 17 more years the ecclesiastical centre was in Copenhagen.³⁸¹

So while the Icelandic church contained within its framework national values and a cultural heritage because they succeeded in retaining the vernacular after the Reformation,³⁸² the situation in the Faeroes was the opposite. Danish was the language of

³⁷⁵ Anderson, B., *Imagines communities*, Verso (1983) 2006. p. 37.

³⁷⁶ Same as in Iceland. Pétursson, P., *Church and social change*, Reykjavík 1990, p. 5 and pp. 87-108.

³⁷⁷ The Home Rule Act came into force on 1st April 1948.

³⁷⁸ <http://www.tidsskrift.dk/visning.jsp?markup=&print=no&id=75459>

³⁷⁹ www.folkakirkjan.fo/Default.aspx?pageid=6050

³⁸⁰ Danish Parliamentary Act No. 729 of 6th November 1990.

³⁸¹ While working on this thesis I obtained information that the committee in charge of legal framework governing the Faeroese Church had orders not to make substantial changes from the Danish one.

³⁸² Mentioned in chapter 1.

the church as well as in all other administrative and judicial areas, and this prevented the established church from having any significant role in the nation building process in the Faeroes although some church hymns praise this institution as ‘The Fathers’ Church in the Faeroese Nation’,³⁸³ going back to the Celtic Christians in the islands before Viking Times, Sigmundur Brestisson,³⁸⁴ and other historical figures up to Hammershaimb.³⁸⁵

Of course many individual Lutheran clergymen, both Danes and Faeroe Islanders, made great contributions to Faeroese culture and language; but as an institution the Church in the 19th and 20th centuries can be seen as an alien oppressive force in the islands, and it may seem strange that most of the population stuck to and defended this church against their fellow countrymen, the emerging Brethren. Even in 2009 I heard some people blame Brethren for leaving ‘our’ church³⁸⁶ while others say that now there is almost no difference any more: “They [i.e. the Brethren] are now like the rest of us.”³⁸⁷

Rokkan’s phase one did not start until the late 19th century in the Faeroes and was not completed until the middle of the 20th century. Penetrations of the society were set in motion by the rulers of the Kingdom in Copenhagen and their officials in the islands, starting with the two acts of 1852 and 1866, but not until the Home Rule Act of 1948 did local politicians and administrators gradually take over.³⁸⁸ Thus the building up of a Faeroese institutional infrastructure only effectively took place in the second half of the

³⁸³ Bruun, G., “Fedranna kirkja í Føroya tjóð”, *Sálmabók Føroya Kirkju*, (Faeroese Church Hymnary), Tórshavn 1991, No. 243, pp. 264-265.

³⁸⁴ The Viking chieftain who (re-)Christianised the islands in 1000, mentioned in 1.2.2.

³⁸⁵ See chapter 6.

³⁸⁶ A woman in her 50s.

³⁸⁷ A woman in her mid 60s.

³⁸⁸ It must be added that a Faeroese administration became a necessity when Denmark was occupied by Nazi Germany in April 1940, the Faeroes by the British shortly after.

20th century, and at that stage the language and national movements had existed for almost a century. However, the Danish administrators undoubtedly did what they thought was best for the small, scattered and comparatively backward population; and the majority of the Faeroese population did not seem to support policies pursuing radical changes at elections.

The beginnings of phase two, involving standardisation, especially at the cultural level, started earlier with the Folk High School just before 1900;³⁸⁹ but no effective channels from a Faeroese centre to the parishes were created until much later. Therefore the latter had problems in identifying with any new, in this case Faeroese, political system. People all over the country were engaged and interested in elections to the løgting already in the early 20th century, but the dividing lines were, and still are, the degree of independence from Denmark. In the language questions the situation had been different because practically all islanders agreed on the importance of the vernacular and its promotion although there were differences about the details. Since the late 20th century all papers have used the Faeroese language only and this is the case as well with the broadcast system.³⁹⁰ In spite of severe political splits in the late 1940s and the 1950s, the population on the whole has been able to identify with the political system, i.e. Home Rule,³⁹¹ from the 1960s onwards;³⁹² but still there were individuals and groups who

³⁸⁹ Discussed in the previous chapter.

³⁹⁰ Kringvarp Føroya, formerly Útvarp Føroya.

³⁹¹ In Faeroese: “Heimastýrislógin”; in Danish “Lov om Færoernes Hjemmestyre”.

³⁹² The Republican Party did not recognize the Home Rule System until the 1970s when they participated in Danish Parliamentary elections and even had MPs there. Before that some of them refused to stand up and shout hurrahs for the king or queen.

would have preferred the old ways or identities while others obstinately stuck to the referendum of 1946.³⁹³

The movement in support of the new system, indicated in phase three, is still taking place; but in the Faeroes any active participation or mobilisation in the population has hardly taken place yet. There seems to be ambivalence towards the political system, maybe because of historical reasons: some would have seen an independent republic in 1946, others would rather have maintained to the old pre-war system. It seems as if the majority thinks that in today's world the present system is as good as it can be, i.e. better than the old one, better than independence or maximum devolution from Denmark.³⁹⁴

Rokkan's phase four, involving redistribution, does actually take place at the beginning of the 21st century. Since the late 20th century the lögting (local parliament) and the landstýri (local government) have gained increased powers and importance. Many areas have been devolved to Faeroese authorities and the role of the Danish 'Rigsombudsmand' (Governor, High Commissioner or State Representative) has become negligible as compared with only a few decades ago. The local government, landsstýrið, has agencies spread over the islands and local town and village councils (now fewer in number and covering several towns and villages) have become quite efficient local administrative centres, overseen by a landsstýri department. Social services, previously administered by the Governor's office, were devolved in 1975³⁹⁵ and since then

³⁹³ For instance the Unionist paper, *Dimmalætting*, kept its Danish subtitle *Amtstidende for Færøerne* (County News for Faeroe) until the 1970s and most editorials were written in (excellent) Danish even later, as were many articles.

³⁹⁴ Opinion polls published in January-May 2011; *Dimmalætting* and *Sosialurin*.

³⁹⁵ 1st April 1975 according Parliamentary Act of 1974.

reorganised several times, and today there are departments or branches in the four major areas in the Faeroes.³⁹⁶ The same is the case within the taxation and duty system, devolved in 1948, education, devolved in 1975, and other nationwide authorities and services.

Consequently it may be difficult to see any straightforward continuity from phase one through to phase four in Rokkan's system; but still it seems worthwhile to bear the process in mind when discussing the kind of nation-building which took place in the Faeroes from the late 19th century to the late 20th century because it helps understand the multiple problems facing a small population in such a demanding process, even a process which many islanders did not want to take place. This may be one reason for the discrepancies between the system put forward and what actually went on. On the other hand, although a theory may be valid in principle, in practice there are always divergences. However, it makes good sense to observe that this form of nation-building went on in the Faeroes and that, on the whole, it can be understood in terms of the system suggested by Rokkan, partly modified for the reasons put forward by Pétursson.³⁹⁷

³⁹⁶ <http://www.amr.fo/Default.aspx?pageid=9418>

³⁹⁷ Cited above.

6.2 New society emerges

6.2.1 Progress

From the 1960s onwards everything changed rapidly and soon the society was beyond recognition. A workers' strike in 1951³⁹⁸ and successful fishermen's strikes in 1953 and 1954³⁹⁹ increased earnings considerably; and from around 1960 a new, modern fishing fleet replaced the old fleet of 19th-century British smacks and coal-fired, steam-powered trawlers. New roads⁴⁰⁰ connected towns and villages which it had only been possible to reach by sea or walking over mountains, tunnels and bridges were constructed and, later, modern roll-on-roll-off ferries were introduced in the islands. Also the nationwide electricity company, SEV,⁴⁰¹ was founded in 1946, based on cooperation between councils, eventually covering the whole country. So in the last third of the 20th century an increasing number of people lived in spacious homes, timber-built Scandinavian style, roof-tiled, centrally heated, electrically lit, stored food from big freezers; and in addition many had hi-fi, television and cars.⁴⁰² It was an enormous change compared with thirty years earlier.

6.2.2 Economy and politics 1948-2011

³⁹⁸ Jóansson, T., *Saman tí standið*, Tórshavn 1975, pp. 174-179.

³⁹⁹ Patursson, E., *Fiskivinna og fiskivinnumál 1940-1970*, Tórshavn 1976, pp.154-182.

⁴⁰⁰ "Landsverk", formerly "Landsverkfrøðingurin" (Country Engineer). Infrastructure, including road works, tunnels, ferries, was devolved in 1948.

⁴⁰¹ SEV stands for Streymoy, Eysturoy and Vágar, but now the company covers all islands.

⁴⁰² Jackson, A., *The Faroes – The Faraway Islands*, London 1991, p. 102.

In spite of numerous mistakes and difficulties, the economy and consequently the work pattern for the majority have settled down although the employment rate was at around 7 per cent in 2011. Migration from smaller villages on isolated islands to the towns increased but was not really felt until the 1960s.⁴⁰³ During the period 1950-1966 the whole population increased from 31,781 to 37,122; but while in Streymoy, where Tórshavn is situated, there was an increase of 43.9 per cent; in other districts there was a dramatic decrease, e.g. on Suðuroy, the former centre of fishing and industry, where the population dropped from 6,268 to 5,734 or by 8.7 per cent.⁴⁰⁴ Even during the six years' period 1960-1966 noticeable changes took place. In Norðuroyar (Northern Islands) all smaller villages experienced decline, e.g. Svínøy from 146 to 117 inhabitants or Húsar from 140 to 99, while in Klaksvík the population increased from 3,894 to 4,257.⁴⁰⁵ Even more dramatic was the growth of Tórshavn: from 7,447 inhabitants in 1960 to 9,738 in 1966. And in 2000 there were 16,453 inhabitants in Tórshavn.⁴⁰⁶

An enormous expansion of the road network, tunnels and modern ferries changed the way people travelled; and this can be seen in the rapid increase of motor vehicles during the period. In 1955 there were only 532 vehicles, in 1966 this had increased to 2,052, and in 1971 there were 4,258 motor vehicles in the islands. In 2000 there were 18,848, and in 2011 the total number of motor vehicles was a staggering 29,763.⁴⁰⁷ Maybe this is one of the best illustrations of the socio-economic changes over the past three to four decades and where priorities are.

⁴⁰³ Ibid. West, J., *Faroe: the emergence of a nation*, London 1972, p. 220.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 221.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., p.222.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 223.

⁴⁰⁷ Hagstova Føroya (Faeroe Statistics), June 2011.

http://www.hagstova.fo/portal/page/portal/HAGSTOVAN/Hagstova_Foroya

6.3 Fears and dangers

6.3.1. Deadly diseases

Around 1900 tuberculosis reached epidemic proportions until after World War II. Hardly any family was unaffected by this terrible and, then, incurable and deadly disease.⁴⁰⁸ The reason for the sudden increase of tuberculosis was the emerging fishing industry where men were confined in cramped conditions on board old smacks for weeks at a time. Obviously the danger of infection was enormous and sometimes one contaminated fisherman could transmit a disease to the whole crew.⁴⁰⁹ Also the living conditions of the women who came to the towns for the summer, crammed in small, unhygienic living quarters, made infections easy. Already in 1908 a Tuberculosis Sanatorium was erected near Tórshavn.⁴¹⁰ At its height in the 1920s and 1930s tuberculosis was regarded like a plague, and the situation was made worse by general bad health, living conditions and poverty.⁴¹¹ After 1950, when inoculation had been made compulsory, numbers fell drastically. However, within little more than a generation no less than 1000 people succumbed to tuberculosis.⁴¹²

The other infectious disease which scared people in the Faeroes was ‘nátasjúkan’ or ‘havhestasjúkan’, i.e. the fulmar disease, the Faeroese term for ‘parrot fever’. It is

⁴⁰⁸ Joensen, H. D., *Læknabók á sjógvi og landi*, Vol. 2, Tórshavn 1989, pp. 564-566.

⁴⁰⁹ Joensen, J. P., *Færøske Sluppfiskere*, Tórshavn 1975.

⁴¹⁰ ‘Sanatoriet, Hoydal,’ *Naade og Sandhed*, No. 7, September 1917, p. 60.

⁴¹¹ Joensen, H. D., ”Tuberklarnir í Føroyum í 19' og 20' øld,” *FF-blaðið* (Fishermen’s paper), 285/2003, 23rd January 2003, p. 5. – First published in 1957.

⁴¹² *Ibid.*

transmitted from fulmar or, more frequently, the young (náti).⁴¹³ The birds were caught at sea in early autumn and were then taken ashore into the boathouses to be rinsed and plucked by women then before the birds were salted. Not until the 1930s were the links between the fulmar and the disease discovered;⁴¹⁴ and it was established that this strain of pneumonia was caused by an infection connected from working with fulmar.⁴¹⁵ Humans also spread the disease by person-to-person contact, and especially pregnant women were exposed to this infection. According to the Chief Medical Officer's annual report as many as 80 per cent of women infected died.⁴¹⁶ Before effective antibiotics were developed after World War II, there was no treatment for 'nátasjúkan', and in the Faeroes preventative measures have been in place since the 1950s.

These two diseases affected everybody in the islands, and one Brethren member who was a fisherman all his life told me that while tuberculosis killed fishermen, the fulmar disease killed their pregnant wives.⁴¹⁷ When a fishing vessel returned from Icelandic fishing grounds in the 1930s, there could be six or seven coffins with dead wives in the church, hall or chapel.

Undoubtedly these terrible diseases made many people turn to a more personal and intensive kind of religion such as Brethrenism, and this is seen as one of the reasons

⁴¹³ <http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/parrot+fever>

⁴¹⁴ Vaag, A, "Historien om psittacosen på Færøerne," *Ugeskrift for Læger* 11/1950, pp. 804-806. Remarks by H. I. Bing, H. I., pp. 872-873; Joensen, H. D., pp. 899-900; Vaag, A, pp. 931-932; Henningsen, E. Juel, p. 964; Rasmussen, R. K., pp. 994-995; and Vaag, A., p. 995.

⁴¹⁵ Joensen, H. D., "Nátasjúkan," *Gluggin* 1/10, Tórshavn 1956, pp. 11-12.

⁴¹⁶ Landslægens Årsberetning, Tórshavn 1956.

⁴¹⁷ Osvald Sivertsen, interview in chapter 8.

why both Brethren and the Home Mission made such progress in the 1920s and 1930s. There are parallels in fishing communities in Scotland.⁴¹⁸

6.3.2 Losses at sea

Especially in the late 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries, when Brethren gained ground, accidents at sea happened quite frequently. Often they could go out fishing in the open boats in fair weather and shortly afterwards, while fishing, a sudden storm could break loose. Some succeeded in rowing back to the village or a sheltered place, but others were not so lucky: the boat might capsize or drift out into the North Atlantic, never to be seen again. One example of such a tragedy, leading to a village dying out, has been mentioned.⁴¹⁹

Even more tragic were the loss of lives when fishing smacks or, later, trawlers were lost at sea with all hands. Not until the 1930s and 1940s were the smacks equipped with radiotelegraphy or –telephony;⁴²⁰ before that families waited for smacks which never arrived and nothing was ever heard of again. One of many examples has been mentioned.⁴²¹ During World War II when Denmark was occupied by Nazi Germany, Faeroe by the British, all sales of fish were made in Britain; and from 1940 to 1945 more than 200 Faeroese fishermen and sailors were lost.⁴²²

⁴¹⁸ Dickson, Neil, *Brethren in Scotland 1838-2000*, Paternoster 2002, p. 307.

⁴¹⁹ The village of Skarð on Kunoy, North Islands.

⁴²⁰ In 1930 a few smacks had motors and wireless receivers installed; in 1937 also radio transmitters. The last smack to have such equipment was “Elin” which had only a receiver until 1950 when a transmitter was installed; and in 1948 the trawler “Sjúrðarberg I” had receiver, transmitter and radar.

⁴²¹ Napoleon Andreassen, one of the leading Brethren, lost at sea in Icelandic waters in 1912 with 15 hands; section 5.3 above.

⁴²² Arge, N. J., *Stríðsárini*, Tórshavn 1986.

The most dramatic was in March 1942 when the trawler ‘Nýggjaberg’ was bombed by the Nazi German air force. The trawler had a crew of 21 men and 16 of them were from the same village, Miðvágur on Vágoy; this was the biggest loss of lives in a single village ever.⁴²³ After the war, the løgting decided to make the 1st November a Day of Remembrance for those lost at sea; this was first held on All Saints Day, 1st November, 1949. One of the last disasters at sea, the biggest loss of human lives at sea in the history of the Faeroes, happened in October 1957 when the Faeroese trawler ‘Stella Argus’ suddenly disappeared in the waters north of the islands and 22 men aged from 15 to 53 were lost without a trace.⁴²⁴ This disaster triggered emotions of sadness, hopelessness and despair; it felt as if a dark cloud had descended and covered the whole archipelago. Hardly a single individual was unaffected by the inexplicable tragedy.⁴²⁵

6.3.3 Socio-psychological challenges

The new and ever changing circumstances paved the way for and demanded new philosophical outlooks and new mindsets, and the alien, hierarchical established church was unable to provide this to the satisfaction of everybody. Consequently the more spontaneous and non-authoritarian Christian movements increased substantially from the 1920s onwards. The growing secularisation in towns weakened the position of the Danish Church, and people preferred new ways of satisfying their spiritual needs.⁴²⁶ Not least the dreadful disasters at sea where vessels and crews were lost after ocean-going fishing had started in earnest around 1930 made an enormous impact on people’s attitudes to

⁴²³ Joensen, J., *Víkingasynir*, Tórshavn 1946.

⁴²⁴ Jacobsen, Óli, "Tá Stella Argus fór - eitt 50 ára minni," *Miðvikan* in *Sosialurin*, 206/2007, 24th October 2007, pp. 1-3.

⁴²⁵ This was how we felt in my family and in our neighbourhood in Tórshavn. (I was 16 at the time).

⁴²⁶ Sølvará, H. A., "Gudfrøðilig rák og vekingarrørslur í Føroyum og í Íslandi," *Vísindavøka*, Tórshavn 23rd September 2010.

future uncertainties, questions of life and death and related issues. The fact that fishermen were regularly facing death in tempestuous weather shook their religious foundations and required a more personal kind of Christianity than the established foreign church was able to provide. Also the horrors at home with deadly epidemics and diseases drew people to the revivalist movements, mainly the Brethren.⁴²⁷

6.3.4 New economic initiatives

A comparatively new industry is fish farming which started on an industrial scale in the Faeroes in the 1990s although some had experimented successfully already two decades before. One of the pioneers was the Brethren fisherman, skipper and industrialist Júst í Túni (1919-1995).⁴²⁸ Over the past few years fish farming, mainly salmon, has become well regulated and organised and the export value from this industry has been of increasing importance to Faeroese trade.⁴²⁹ P/F Fiskaaling (Fish-farming Ltd) is the only company in the Faeroes which solely works with research and development in fish farming; they provide various services to the fish farming industry; and the vision is to create an international research and development environment which can increase the knowledge and constantly improve the quality of farmed fish.⁴³⁰

After the turn of the century most fish farms in the Faeroes belonged to Norwegian multinational companies and in spite of setbacks caused by stormy weather, fish epidemics, parasites and other problems; but in recent years they seem to have been able to avoid most such problems. Many Brethren are involved in this new industry

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

⁴²⁸ Jacobsen, H., *Júst í Túni*, Tórshavn 2006.

⁴²⁹ *Hagstova Føroya*, Faeroe Statistics, Tórshavn 2011.

⁴³⁰ <http://www.fiskaaling.fo/>

which seems quite promising for the future economy of the Faeroes. The export of farmed salmon reached 40 per cent of the total export value for the Faeroes in 2010.⁴³¹

6.4 Brethren in society

6.4.1 Position of Brethren

For almost half a century after the first hall was taken into use in Tórshavn in 1880, the Brethren movement was regarded as alien by most islanders. This seems strange to a 21st-century historian because in fact Brethren were the first ones to break away from the most visible foreign power in the islands: the Danish State Church.

However, Brethren saw themselves as proper, genuine and hardworking islanders, in no way inferior to others.⁴³² The fact that they used the vernacular in worship set them apart as did their religious life and beliefs, but many church people envied them for using the vernacular.⁴³³ Danish clergymen spoke and wrote against Brethren theology and practices as well as their position regarding the vernacular, especially the earliest (Danish) representatives for the Home Mission.⁴³⁴ When the first Brethren song- and hymnbook was published in 1920, some local deacons wanted to introduce it in the established church,⁴³⁵ and the same was the case after subsequent and enlarged editions. Eventually the Home Mission published its own Faeroese song- and hymnbook in 1937.⁴³⁶

⁴³¹ Hagstova Føroya (Faeroe Statistics), June 2011.

⁴³² Hansen, G., *Eindarmentan føroyinga og vekingarrørslurnar*, Tórshavn 1987, pp. 173, 177,190.

⁴³³ Sanneh, L., *Translating the message*, New York (1989) 2005. pp. 201-202.

⁴³⁴ Cf. chapter one.

⁴³⁵ Jóannes Patursson (cf. section 7.1) actually did so, but the Danish authorities stopped it.

⁴³⁶ Petersen, A., *Heimamissionssangbókin*, Klaksvík 1937.

There is no doubt that Brethren initiatives regarding the use of the vernacular in worship forced the established church to reconsider its position;⁴³⁷ and Brethren publications have always been ahead of those of the established church, e.g. hymnodies and Bible translations.⁴³⁸ Of course all this gave them self-confidence and made them feel equal to other islanders, not least in the language and national issues.

The vast majority of first- and second-generation Brethren were working-class, i.e. fishermen and workers, although a few were businessmen and ship-owners; but from the 1960s onwards an increasing number moved to the middle class, e.g. administrators and office workers. During this period Brethren started going to universities;⁴³⁹ but not until the 1960s were Brethren seen fit to be teachers by local school authorities. In 1914 a female teacher, Marie M. Joensen (1874-1960),⁴⁴⁰ lost her position at the Tórshavn Municipal School because she had converted to the Brethren and been baptised, thus revoking her membership of the established church;⁴⁴¹ and Victor Danielsen was a qualified teacher but never held a position.⁴⁴² Only after the school had been reasonably secularised from the 1970s onwards were Brethren allowed to be teachers, and nowadays many Brethren teach at all levels within the educational system – for a period a Brethren

⁴³⁷ Debes, H. J., *Nú er tann stundin...*, Tórshavn 1982, p. 187.

⁴³⁸ Rasmussen, P. M., *Mangt er i brøgdum vunnid*, Tórshavn 1997, p. 198.

⁴³⁹ Cf. note 40 in chapter 5.

⁴⁴⁰ Her children and grandchildren have been active Brethren members in Tórshavn and Copenhagen, one of them historiographer Sigurd Berghamar who published – *men Gud gav vøkst*, often cited in this thesis. His son, Øssur Berghamar, has been a Brethren worker all his life, e.g. as leader of ‘Kristnastova’ in Copenhagen and is also a good poet, musician and composer and has composed and translated several hymns as well as melodies.

⁴⁴¹ Hentze, J. M., *Tórshavnar skúlasøga*, Tórshavn 2000, pp. 274-277.

⁴⁴² Cf. section 4.5.

member was even the landstýrismaður [i.e. local government minister]⁴⁴³ of Education, Cultural and Church matters.⁴⁴⁴

Brethren have always been pioneers, not only in promoting the vernacular, but also in the socio-economic sphere. Already from the early 20th century some of the most innovative and industrious men in fishing and fish-processing were Brethren, such as Andreassen,⁴⁴⁵ and later Jens av Reyni,⁴⁴⁶ Jens Cl. Isaksen⁴⁴⁷ and J. F. Kjølbroy.⁴⁴⁸ This is still the case in the 21st century; and many of the people initiating new industries and businesses are Brethren.⁴⁴⁹

In the early days Faeroese Brethren felt set apart and other people regarded them almost as traitors to the traditional way of life in the islands. The established church was regarded as having a monopoly in religion, and this attitude was vigorously preached at services and argued in papers and magazines by clergymen. One Danish clergyman wrote aggressive articles, calling the Brethren Anabaptists and then hurling accusations against that movement, aimed at the Brethren.⁴⁵⁰ Modern concepts of individualism did not reach the Faeroes until the end of the 19th century, and in religion this notion was introduced with W. G. Sloan. Christianity had to be more personal, e.g. people should know when and why they were baptised. So Brethren were an important force in mediating modernity to its adherents.⁴⁵¹ Brethren “lived the Bible and for them its word was not corresponding

⁴⁴³ Representing ‘Fólkaflokkurin’ (the rightwing People’s Party).

⁴⁴⁴ Jógvan á Lakjuni, teacher, musician and politician, b. 1952. Victor Danielsen’s grandson.

⁴⁴⁵ Mentioned in section 5.3.

⁴⁴⁶ Mentioned in section 5.4.

⁴⁴⁷ Mentioned in section 5.4.

⁴⁴⁸ Note 16 in chapter 5.

⁴⁴⁹ For instance Júst í Túni, mentioned above.

⁴⁵⁰ Bruun, E., “Gjendøberiets historie”, *Kirketidende*, Nos. 1 and 2, Tórshavn 1890.

⁴⁵¹ cf. David Bebbington’s notion of the way religious movements diffuse shifts in the high culture to lower cultural strata; in his *Evangelicalism in Britain*, pp. 273ff.

to the Church, the Word was in heaven and in the hearts and consciousnesses of men.”⁴⁵² Indeed there were occasional Lutheran clergymen, pietists and, later, those belonging to the Danish Home Mission who agreed with Sloan and Mitchell⁴⁵³ in these matters, but not on the question of baptism.

However, they also appear to have conformed to Weber’s ideal type of the inner-worldly ascetic⁴⁵⁴ in which Christian austerity “undertook to penetrate just that daily routine of life”, which is one of the fundamentals for his case that Protestantism fostered the spirit of capitalism.⁴⁵⁵ Indeed the Brethren movement promoted temperance, discipline and financial prudence which gave them relatively prosperous life in comparison to many others as Dr Neil T. R. Dickson notes of the Brethren in Scotland.⁴⁵⁶ The very recent shift from an agrarian economy to capitalism made the latter ideal, and many think that in people’s minds the real change was also about skippers, ship-owners and merchants replacing King’s Farmers as the elite in society. This, in addition to the hero-worship in the medieval ballads, could be the reason why so many islanders still adhere to the idea of ‘strong men’ and ‘leaders’, personified in men like Jóannes Patursson⁴⁵⁷ and other political leaders as well as, for instance, J. F. Kjølbroy⁴⁵⁸ and other industrial leaders.

On the other hand, Brethren separate the spiritual and the secular, in this discussion their Evangelical Christianity and their roles in business and industry. There are several examples, especially before World War II, of Brethren separating themselves

⁴⁵² Viderø, K. O., *Saga Streymoyar og Nólsoyar*, Tórshavn 1994, pp. 194-195.

⁴⁵³ See section 5.3.

⁴⁵⁴ However, not all Faeroese Brethren agree that they were or are “ascetic”.

⁴⁵⁵ Weber, M., ., *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*, (1904-5/1958), New York 2003, pp.154.

⁴⁵⁶ Dickson, N. T. R., *Brethren in Scotland 1838-2000*, Paternoster 2002, p. 301.

⁴⁵⁷ Mentioned in section 7.1.

⁴⁵⁸ Mentioned in chapter 5, note 16.

from the ‘world’, e.g. public entertainment such as cinema and theatre, politics and involvement in ‘worldly’ associations; but in my conversations this has not to been the case for quite some time.⁴⁵⁹ As a rule Brethren capitalists do not spend much on themselves, rather they invest in further developments, and they give substantial financial support to Brethren projects and work.

These attitudes still seem to prevail at the beginning of the 21st century although there may, of course, be exceptions; and there have constantly been rumours and stories about the avarice, corruption and other kinds of terrible behaviour of Brethren businessmen. However, they accept and work within the capitalist system, the main principle of which is the making of profit. If that vital ingredient is taken away, then the system ceases to exist.

6.4.2 Separation from the world

In its early days the Brethren movement separated itself from the ‘world’ and avoided what its members saw as worldly and sinful forms of entertainment, political involvement and materialism. In a letter of 1919 Victor Danielsen wrote that he wished that “our love for our Lord and Saviour would grow every day and that His Spirit, by which we were sealed when we came to belief (Eph. 1, 13), must fill us (Eph. 5, 18) so that we more and more will be capable of seeing ourselves as strangers and foreigners here and work for the purposes for which the Lord gave his life: to win souls for Him.”⁴⁶⁰ This is a clear indication that in those days Faeroese Brethren were very preoccupied with conversion, a holy life, the second coming and other characteristics of Victorian popular Evangelicalism;

⁴⁵⁹ Indicated in interviews in the next chapter.

⁴⁶⁰ Letter from Victor Danielsen to Jóan Petur Vang, Kaldbak, 20th January 1919. Written in Danish, translated by author.

it also shows that for many Brethren earthly life was not much worth – the real home was heaven. Jóan Petur Vang,⁴⁶¹ mentioned in the previous section, went so far that he burned the playing-cards in his home,⁴⁶² and he is also said to have burned the Lutheran homilies at the farm, asking his relatives to read the Bible instead. He and his friends used a former small dairy for dancing, but this was also stopped.⁴⁶³ Alcoholic drink was condemned from the earliest days and later also smoking was not seen as acceptable. Everything that was supposed to influence, lead people astray or distract them from concentrating on living a Christian life was abhorred. Many articles in the early Faeroese Brethren journals and periodicals reflect this, e.g. “Where is your home?”,⁴⁶⁴ “The crowning day”,⁴⁶⁵ “Whom will you chose”,⁴⁶⁶ “A testimony”,⁴⁶⁷ and “On harmful reading”.⁴⁶⁸

Generally, however, attitudes changed during and after World War II, and especially since the 1960s Faeroese Brethren have not felt it necessary to withdraw or separate themselves from the ‘world’. In a small community where many villages have less than 200 inhabitants, it is very difficult for a group to live in isolation; and I do not think that Brethren in the Faeroes have ever really been totally separated from the rest of the population. On the fishing smacks they worked and lived alongside non-Brethren, in their daily lives they were closely connected to workmates and relatives who were not Brethren. So obviously, as discussed in sections 6.4.3 and 6.4.4, on engagement in public

⁴⁶¹ He was actually my maternal grandfather’s brother.

⁴⁶² Vang, H. and Skorá, S., ‘Samkoman í Kaldbak 70 ár,’ *Leirkerið*, 5-6/1986, p. 176.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁴ ‘Hvar er heim títt?’, *Naade og Sandhed*, No. 9, August 1915, pp. 75-76.

⁴⁶⁵ Dam, Johann C. F., ‘Kroningsdagen’, *Naade og Sandhed*, No. 4, April 1918, p. 29.

⁴⁶⁶ ‘Hvønn vilt tú velja?’, *Naade og Sandhed*, No. 3, April/May 1921, p. 1.

⁴⁶⁷ Olsen, A. E., ‘Et Vidnesbyrd’, *Naade og Sandhed*, No. 5, July/August 1924, pp. 35-37.

⁴⁶⁸ ‘Om skadelig læsning’, *Vidnesbyrdet*, No. 4, April 1923, pp. 28-31.

affairs such as politics and economic activity, a number of Brethren have been actively involved since the early 20th century, becoming particularly prominent from the mid-century onwards. In addition, as will be demonstrated in chapter 7, they did not reject cultural pursuits, and in many fields they made significant contributions. So the movement has accepted that members had to adapt and develop interaction with other people, some of whom, in turn, became more accepting towards the Brethren – indeed, not a few converted and became Brethren themselves. Of course this had to happen, considering the enormous growth of the movement. On the other hand, what people today see as Brethren asceticism has all but vanished, and in the 21st century many Faeroese Brethren live in the same circumstances and have the same ambitions as the rest of the population.⁴⁶⁹ Some Brethren can take an alcoholic drink, a glass of wine or beer, a few smoke and many go to the cinema or theatre, travel a lot and so on; and at parties most Brethren participate the same way as others. However, the foundations of Brethren beliefs and practices remain fundamentally the same,⁴⁷⁰ but many older Brethren are not happy with these changes but would prefer a more rigid framework for behaviour and ‘morals’. I suggest that the comparative strength of the movement and the fact that Brethren are hardly being discriminated against anymore have changed attitudes and tolerance in both camps, church people and Brethren.

6.4.3 Brethren trade unionists and politicians

Many Faeroese Brethren were involved in Trade Union work, even some of the earliest ones; and some were politicians, representing various parties in the ‘løgting’. Some of these individuals will

⁴⁶⁹ Cf. the ethnographic fieldwork below, section 8.3.3.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid., section 8.3.7.

be mentioned here. **Johannes E. Joensen** (1871-1938)⁴⁷¹ grew up at Trøllanes, a small village north of Mikladalur on Kalsoy and married the schoolmistress Maria whose conversion forced them to move to Klaksvík in 1914.⁴⁷² He was a worker and a carpenter and had several social functions, e.g. in the local health council, and he also held positions in trade unions. He was one of the founders of the Faeroe Worker's Trade Union⁴⁷³ in 1925.⁴⁷⁴ Another Brethren worker was **Isak F. Jacobsen** (1896-1974),⁴⁷⁵ born and grown up in Sørvágur, Vágur, but moved to and settled in Fuglafjørður. He was a student at the Faeroe Folk High School, attended a craftsmen's high school in Denmark; subsequently trained as a skipper at the Faeroe Navigation College and was a fisherman, sailor and skipper for over 50 years. Isak was also committee member of trade unions and one of the founders of the Faeroe Workers Union in 1925.

Poul J. O. Alex Sevdal (1907-1977)⁴⁷⁶ was born in Fuglafjørður; he worked as a master plumber and blacksmith and had his own workshop from 1929-1960. In 1936 he organised the water supply in Fuglafjørður where water shortages were frequent; and after the war the town council was in charge of the supply. Alex Sevdal was instrumental in having a swimming pool built in the town. He was elected chairman of the water committee and had many other positions, e.g. as council member and chairman of the health board. Also he was an active Brethren worker as well as chairman and deputy chairman of the Fuglafjørður Workers' Union.⁴⁷⁷ In 1939 he was elected committee member of the Faeroe Workers' Union. Another wellknown trade unionist was the Brethren member **Frederik Hansen** (1910-1988), because of his involvement in the strikes in 1953 and 1954 called "Strike-Frederik". He was a fisherman most of his life, a politician and a trade unionist. Frederik was member of the løgting for many years,

⁴⁷¹ Jóansson, T, *Saman tí standið*, (Faeroe Trade Union 50 years), Tórshavn 1975, p. 331.

⁴⁷² Explained in section 6.3.5.

⁴⁷³ In Faeroese: 'Føroya Arbeiðarafelag.'

⁴⁷⁴ The national union, comprising most local unions.

⁴⁷⁵ Jóansson, T, *Saman tí standið*, (Faeroe Trade Union 50 years), Tórshavn 1975, p. 329.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 336.

⁴⁷⁷ The local union.

representing the then leftwing Republican party, ‘Tjóðveldisflokkurin,’ and in this capacity elected on the national accident insurance board. He was also mayor for the same party for Nes Kommunu (Council) from 1961 to 1976. Furthermore he was on the committee of the Fishermen’s Union for many years.

Teddy Michelsen (1928-2006) was another distinguished Brethren worker who was grown up and lived in the first workers’ neighbourhood in Faeroe, Valurin,⁴⁷⁸ in Tvøroyri. He was a fisherman for more than 21 years and a worker from 1966; and in 1950 he was at the Navigation College in Tórshavn, becoming a skipper. He was deputy chairman of the local fishermen’s union until they joined the national union and was on the committee of that union for many years. Also he was on the committee of the inshore fishermen’s union; but Teddy was mostly active in the worker’s unions, both in the local one, ‘Fylking’ (Unity), 1972-1985, and in the national ‘Føroya Arbeiðarafelag’ (Faeroe Workers’ Union) from 1973 until the mid-80s. However, most important for him was the Brethren assembly, ‘Salem’, where he was one of the main organisers and a popular Sunday school teacher. **Óli Jacobsen** (b. 1943-) comes from a Brethren background and was chairman of the ‘Føroya Fiskimannafelag’ (Faeroe Fishermen’s Union) 1971-2007 and edited the union’s brilliant paper, *FF-blaðið*, for many years. He was member of løgtingið, the local parliament, from 1994-1998, representing ‘Verkamannafylkingin’, the working peoples’ list; and as such he was a minister in 1995-95 and in 1998. Óli is a prolific writer and journalist; he published the book *Dollin – Havnarmaðurin, sum broytti heimssøguna*, (The Faroese who changed history in the Congo)⁴⁷⁹ in 2010.

⁴⁷⁸ Probably from the Orkney place-name Kirkwall.

⁴⁷⁹ See below, section 5.2.

There have been many other Brethren trade unionists; and around 30 Brethren politicians have been elected to the lögting (local parliament) as well as the landsstýri (local government), in the earlier period often representing the Social Democratic Party or the Republican Party, but later perhaps the right-wing People's Party.

6.4.4 Brethren involvement in economic affairs

One of the important innovators within industry and finance was the Brethren member **Christian Holm Jacobsen** (1887-1966), born in the small village Leynar on Streymoy but lived in Tórshavn all his adult life. He was trained as a shoemaker but made a significant career within business and industry; and in the 1930s and 1940s he was one of the most important industrialists in the Faeroes. In 1925 Christian Holm was the first one to import oil, and in 1932 he had the first oil depots built at Viðarnes in Tórshavn. He became the representative of Shell until 1953. He had a herring-factory built at Kollafjørður; and in 1934 he was one of the founding members of the shipowners' company 'Uvak', and was one of the initiators of 'Sjóvinnubankin' (the Sea Industry Bank) in 1932, becoming its chairman from 1932-1951.⁴⁸⁰ Christian Holm was also on board-member of 'Skipafelagið' (the Faeroe Shipping Company) and instrumental in buying their passenger- and cargoship 'Tjaldur'. He was elected member of the Tórshavn Council from 1925-1927, and in 1935 he was a founding member of 'Vinnuflokkurin' (the Industry Party) which became 'Fólkaflokkurin' (the People's Party) in 1939 when The Self-government Party leader Jóannes Parursson joined, taking many voters with him. Christian Holm Jacobsen was member of the lögting from 1936 to 1940.⁴⁸¹

⁴⁸⁰ Hansen, J. Asprup and Joensen, J. P., (Eds.), *Føroyar og bankarnir í 100 ár*, Tórshavn 2008, p.26.

⁴⁸¹ Sølvará, H. A., *Løgtingið 150 – Háttíðarrit*, Vol. 2, Tórshavn 2002, p. 292.

The wellknown shipowner and industrialist **J. F. Kjølbro** (nee Joensen) (1887-1967) of Klaksvík, whose father was a poor inshore fisherman, started a small business in 1912 and bought a fishing smack with his brother in 1913,⁴⁸² later became the greatest businessman in the Faeroes, employing more than 1,000 people. Kjølbro had thought much of spiritual matters for some years, and when one of his smacks was lost at sea with all hands in 1920, Kjølbro became a Brethren member. In 1946 the J. F. Kjølbro enterprise became a limited liability company, indeed the biggest one in the islands, comprising 20 good fishing vessels, fishdrying houses, store-houses, an ice-factory, freezing facilities, shops, a shipyard (mainly for repairs, but then also a shipbuilding yard at Skála on Eysturoy), harbour facilities, a yarn-making factory, and a carpenter workshop; in that year the company also started a factory producing various tinned fish products.⁴⁸³

Johan Andreas Godtfred (1879-1968) was a fisherman and skipper from Porkeri who moved to Vágur on Suðuroy in 1910 where he started up a business comprising smacks, fish-processing (klippfisk) and a shop; later his company also aquired trawlers. He was also an active Brethren worker, a founding member of the assembly in Vágur and a popular preacher.⁴⁸⁴

Brethren involvement in economic affairs has been most notable in Klaksvík with numerous shipowners, industrialists and businessmen belonging to the ‘Betesda’ assembly, and they have all left their mark on the growth and modernisation in the

⁴⁸² Dávur í Gerðinum, also an important shipowner and industrialist who became a Brethren member.

⁴⁸³ Madsen, H., *Færøernes hvornår skete det?* (Faeroes, when did it happen?), Forlaget Skúvanes 1999, p. 217.

⁴⁸⁴ Mentioned in section 3.2.

town.⁴⁸⁵ Apart from Kjølbroy, his brother **Dávur Joensen** (Dávur í Gerðinum) (1889-1951) was an important skipper, shipowner and businessman. In 1960 his children, some Brethren, others church-people, founded the fish-processing plant 'Dávur í Gerðinum, Ltd.'. Another Brethren company was founded by **Joen J. Jacobsen** (Jóan J. á Viðareiði) (1872-1950) and had 4 smacks, 3 vessels for inshore fishing, two shops and two fish-processing plants, functioning from 1933 to 1959. This is still (2012) the situation; and today **Hanus Hansen** (b. 1958-) has taken over the JFK-company, i.e. Kjølbroy, with fishing-vessels and the largest fish-processing plant, 'Kósavirkið', and is also part-owner of 'Kollafjorður Pelegic' with plants in Greenland and a sales-office in London. Around 500 people work in the enterprise. **Kristian Martin Rasmussen** (b. 1947-) took over the long-line vessel 'Borðoyanes' in the 1970s and later added the two modern factory-trawlers 'Norðborg' and 'Christian í Grótinum'; he is also the main owner of the freezing plant at the 'Norðhavnin' (the North harbour) and invested part of the landing facilities there. Kristian Martin has bought many trawlers and passed some on to other skip-owners in Klaksvík. These, and many others, are members of the 'Betesda' assembly, where there are between 1,200-1,400 converted and baptised Brethren.⁴⁸⁶ However, many enterprises in Klaksvík are run by both church-people and Brethren.

6.4.5 Alcohol problems

Alcohol abuse was widespread in the Faeroes, especially after free trade was introduced in 1856 and men could buy spirits in their own village and town shops. As early as 1846

⁴⁸⁵ Compare with Tonts, M., 'The Exclusive Brethren and an Australian rural community,' *Journal of Rural Studies*, Vol. 17 (2001), pp. 309-322. – Review by Elisabeth Wilson in *Brethren Historical Review*, Vol. 6, 2010, pp. 115-117.

⁴⁸⁶ Information kindly provided by Jógvan við Keldu, mayor of Klaksvík for 16 years, in email of 30th July 2012.

societies were formed against the use of strong liquors, in 1862 Norwegian abstinence campaigner Asbjørn Kloster joined the Quaker preacher Isac Sharp on a tour in the Faeroes,⁴⁸⁷ and in 1878 a total abstinence society, ‘Thorshavns Afholdsforening’ (Tórshavn’s Abstinence Society), was formed as well as similar organisations were established in other towns and villages. Some early nationalists were devoted advocates of the temperance cause, such as Rasmus Effersøe; but the leader, Jóannes Patursson, was not.⁴⁸⁸ Indeed, excessive drinking was probably the worst social evil in the Faeroes, and many families lost both land and property when the menfolk bought spirits on credit. There are still villages that are called ‘brennivínsbygdir’, i.e. liquor villages, because most land was owned by people in other towns and villages, sold on by the shopkeeper in the late 19th century. In 1894 ‘Thorshavn’s Afholdsforening’ started publishing the periodical *Dúgván* (the Dove) which campaigned against alcohol use and for abstinence until 1928.

William G. Sloan had first-hand experience regarding the social problems caused by alcohol as a young assistant at a store in his native Scotland and was so troubled by selling intoxicating drink to customers that he resigned from this employment. He saw the terrible consequences of alcohol on addicts and their families.⁴⁸⁹ Also in the Faeroes he was a staunch supporter of the abstinence cause, spoke about the evils of alcohol abuse and let the abstinence association use the Brethren hall before they had their own premises.⁴⁹⁰ Brethren members have always advocated temperance and most are tea-

⁴⁸⁷ Budge, F. A., *Isac Sharp, an apostle of the nineteenth century*, London 1898, p. 36. (Mentioned in the introduction of this thesis).

⁴⁸⁸ West, J., *Faroe: the emergence of a nation*, London 1972, p. 245.

⁴⁸⁹ Kelling, F., *Fisherman of Faroe*, Gøta 1993, p. 57.

⁴⁹⁰ *Dimmalætting*, 28th June and 28th September 1881. See also section 3.2.

totallers, although as noted above (see 4.2.1), this has been modified in more recent times.

In 1902 the NIOGT (Nordic Independent Order of Good Templars) was established in the Faeroes from Denmark where the order had started in 1880. In its hayday in the late 1920s there were around 1,000 members of the NIOGT in the islands and they had halls in 11 towns and villages.⁴⁹¹ These halls are popularly called just 'losjan' (the Lodge) and they have been used for many purposes, such as dances, bazaars and Brethren meetings; also the Home Mission had an abstinence association, 'Blaakors' (Blue Cross).⁴⁹² At a referendum in 1907⁴⁹³ the majority of the population voted for the probation of the sale of alcoholic drink in the Faeroes. After that there was a quarterly allowance for each adult to order spirits, wine and strong beer individually from Denmark, provided that the person had no tax arrears.⁴⁹⁴ This system lasted until the early 1990s when the local government set up sales centres for alcoholic drink,⁴⁹⁵ and in 1993 the first four stores were opened. Not many Brethren have been members of abstinence associations because they tend to concentrate on their own assemblies, and intoxicants were seldom, if ever, used by Brethren themselves; but relations between Brethren and the NIOGT have been good and occasional Brethren have been members, e.g. Jákup Zachariasen (1910-1991),⁴⁹⁶ Norðagøta, who was an NIOGT member before becoming a Brethren member. However, when the the alcohol treatment centre, 'Heilbrigdi', was instituted in 1986 the two main initiators were the life-long NIOGT-

⁴⁹¹ www.genealog.dk/jensen/himself/niogt/niogt/niogt.htm

⁴⁹² See also section 1.5.2.

⁴⁹³ This was the first time that women could vote in the Faeroes.

⁴⁹⁴ West, J., *Faroe: the emergence of a nation*, London 1972, p. 245.

⁴⁹⁵ Løgting Act no. 20 of 10th March 1992.

⁴⁹⁶ Brethren worker Zacharias Zachariasen's father.

leader **Jákup Lindenskov** (b. 1932-) social democratic politician and member of the løgting and, sometimes, in the landstýri, and the Brethren member **Ingi Mohr** (1942-2009), local politician in the Tórshavn Council. The involvement of the latter demonstrates once more that it is impossible to draw a hard line between Brethren membership and involvement in public affairs.

6.4.6 Comments

In the beginning the Faeroese Brethren had a generally negative view of ‘the’ world, but due to various local factors in the islands they soon got increasingly involved in a number of areas such as politics, trade unionism and the arts. This makes them unique among Brethren worldwide which have usually been suspicious of such engagements. Temperance is a case in point where they were willing to cooperate in a quasi-religious movement to suppress a perceived social evil – something that Brethren in the UK were often unwilling to do.⁴⁹⁷ This again marks out the distinctiveness of the Faeroese movement and was probably another reason for their success in the islands as they allowed people to be functioning and engaged members of their society, unlike many other places where Brethrenism has meant the rejection of local identity. Thus Brethren were wholly engaged in the shaping and development of modern Faeroese identity.

⁴⁹⁷ Dickson, Neil, *Brethren in Scotland*, Paternoster 2002, pp. 309ff.

7. Modern Faeroese culture emerges

In this chapter I give a summary of the emergence of the written form of the Faeroese language and the literature in the language. My analysis will be related to Benedict Anderson's theories as set out in his seminal work *Imagined Communities*. The vernacular was not a print-language⁴⁹⁸ until after 1900 because practically all publications were in Danish which,⁴⁹⁹ in fact, was the print-language in the islands well into the 20th century. When concerned islanders met in 1888 and 1889 to form an association started an organised struggle for the language and for democracy, a national awakening⁵⁰⁰ took place; and this led to a new, indigenous literature, first mainly consisting of national romantic poems about an imagined past.⁵⁰¹ Later, however, a broader literature, poetry, fiction and drama, emerged as well as fine art and music. For the purpose of this work only the developments which took place until around 1960⁵⁰² are discussed in any detail because already at that stage, after just half a century, an indigenous modern culture had emerged.

This growth and development happened at the same time as the Brethren movement gained momentum, so the development of Faeroese language and culture and that of the Brethren movement occurred simultaneously. Furthermore, the Brethren made significant contributions in the linguistic and cultural fields. Here Lamin Sanneh's

⁴⁹⁸ Anderson, B., *Imagined communities*, London (1983) 2005, pp. 37, 40, 43, 46.

⁴⁹⁹ Even *Færingetidende*, Niels Winther's paper in the 1852, the first to be printed in the Faeroes, was in Danish. And the next paper, *Dimmalætting*, published since 1877, was mainly in Danish until around 1970.

⁵⁰⁰ In Faeroese "Tjóðskaparrørslan", i.e. 'The National Movement'.

⁵⁰¹ Amazingly, almost exclusively glorifying 'bóndasamfelagið', i.e. the wealthy farmers' society!

⁵⁰² Faeroese was partly allowed in 1937; the *Home Rule Act* of 1948 made it the main language of the islands but Danish is still compulsory in schools.

theories form the basis of the discussion.⁵⁰³ One of the earliest Faeroese Brethren, farmer **Johann Dam** (1893-1925),⁵⁰⁴ made important contributions not only as a member of the løgting (local parliament) for many years, but also as a self-taught intellectual. He was an accomplished poet, not writing in Danish but in Old Norse in the late 19th century, i.e. before the written form of Faeroese was normally used.⁵⁰⁵

7.1 Language and literature since 1900

Not until the middle of the 19th century did islanders think about an acceptable written form of the vernacular, and when the tumultuous discussions regarding a constitution for the Kingdom of Denmark took place in Roskilde in 1848-1849 there was disagreement about the existence of an indigenous Faeroese language.⁵⁰⁶ Consequently Hammershaimb V. U. Hammershaimb (1819-1909), encouraged by anxious men in Faeroe, devised an orthography, based on etymological principles, to promote the vernacular. Assisted by the Icelandic scholar Jón Sigurdsson (1811-1879) the written form of the Faeroese language was constructed in such a way that it did not favour any of the many dialects in the islands.⁵⁰⁷ In 1854 Hammershaimb published the first Faeroese grammar and from then onwards a written form of the vernacular took shape.⁵⁰⁸ In 1891 he and the Faeroese linguist Dr. J. Jakobsen (1864-1918) published an anthology comprising two volumes, the first one a collection of ballads, folk tales and other oral literature in the vernacular,

⁵⁰³ Sanneh, L., *Translating the message*, New York (1989) 2005.

⁵⁰⁴ Mentioned in section 5.2.

⁵⁰⁵ Dam, Johan C. F., 'Kroningsdagen', *Naade og Sandhed*, No. 4, April 1918, 4th year, p. 29.

⁵⁰⁶ Mentioned in section 1.4.

⁵⁰⁷ Anderson, B., *Imagined communities*, London (1983) 2005, pp. 43-45.

⁵⁰⁸ Hammershaimb, V. U., "Færøsk sproglære", *Annaler for nordisk oldkyndighed*, Copenhagen 1854.

the second one a grammar and a dictionary.⁵⁰⁹ The result was so successful that the Faeroese orthography is basically the same today.

In *Imagined Communities* Benedict Anderson analyses the emergence of print languages and points out that this process led to the disappearance of many dialects and minority languages⁵¹⁰ because printing in the larger dialects was more profitable.⁵¹¹ In Denmark proper this was so, and gradually a written standard was acquired although a few local people tried to render their dialect in writing.⁵¹² However, almost all European languages eventually had a standard print language.⁵¹³

Most Faeroe Islanders regarded Danish as their written language well into the 20th century; but others maintained that the language was independent Nordic language alongside Danish, Swedish, Norwegian and Icelandic.⁵¹⁴ The problem was that there were too few speakers of the language so it was never going to be preferable to use it in all spheres of society.⁵¹⁵ However, towards the end of the 19th century a language and national movements slowly took foothold; and in 1881 Føroyingafelag, the Faeroese Association, was founded by Faeroese students in Copenhagen.⁵¹⁶ In 1888-1889 a similar association was formally established in Tórshavn. On the 22nd December 1888 the only newspaper in the Faeroes at that time, *Dimmalætting*, carried the following notice:

⁵⁰⁹ Hammershaimb, V. U., *Færøsk anthologi*, Vols. I and II, Copenhagen 1891.

⁵¹⁰ Anderson, B., *Imagined communities*, London (1983) 2005, p. 43.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

⁵¹² Mainly local poets, e.g. the famous Danish poet and novelist Jeppe Aakjær (1866-1930).

⁵¹³ One exception is Norwegian with two norms: one close to Danish, another based on the old language but since 1929 called New Norwegian; used by, for instance, the linguist and poet Ivar Aasen (1813-1896).

⁵¹⁴ Jóansson, T., *English loanwords in Faroese*, Tórshavn 1997, p. 25.

⁵¹⁵ Around 8,000 in 1850.

⁵¹⁶ West, J., *Faroe: The emergence of a nation*, London 1972, p. 115.

“All and everyone are invited to gather in the house of Parliament on the second day of Christmas⁵¹⁷ at 3 o'clock in the afternoon where we will discuss how to defend the Faroese language and Faroese traditions.”⁵¹⁸

The highlight of the meeting was when the poet, agricultural consultant and editor Rasmus Effersøe (1857-1916) recited a new kind of emotional poem written by the young farmer's son of Kirkjubøur, Jóannes Patursson (1866-1946), later the leader of the movement and the political party emerging from it in 1906, the Self-governing Party. The message is apparent in the first stanza:

“Now the moment has come,
when we must join hands
and unite around
our native tongue.”

Apart from initiating the language struggle, the aims of Føringafelag also included “working for the unity, progress, and self-sufficiency of the Faeroese people”⁵¹⁹

The meeting was recommenced on 6th January 1889 when the Faeroese Association, ‘Føroyingafelag’, was formally established with two aims: (1) Faeroese must be restored to its honour and dignity, and (2) The Faeroese people must unite and progress in all areas in order to become self-sufficient.⁵²⁰ This indicates that from around 1890 the ideas of ‘nation’ and ‘nationality’ had been extended to include the notion of self-government.⁵²¹

⁵¹⁷ I.e. Boxing Day, 26th December.

⁵¹⁸ *Dimmalætting*, 22 December 1888.

⁵¹⁹ West, J., *Faroe: The emergence of a nation*, London 1972, p. 116.

⁵²⁰ Skarði, J. av, “Jólafundurin 1888”, *Varðin*, Vol. 38, Tórshavn 1964, pp. 128-136.

⁵²¹ Anderson, B., *Imagined communities*, London (1983) 2006, p. 81.

The national movement always put much emphasis on the language, seen as the hallmark of the nation, and this is frequently used in patriotic songs, e.g. “Bring forth to all nations: / Honour you shall your mother / ... Faeroe language on men’s tongues / means that here live Faeroe people. / Ancient generations and new / saw themselves as a people (nation).”⁵²² Admittedly some of these pompous poems feel somewhat naive and even embarrassing today (2011); but undoubtedly they were a contributing factor in the nation-building process, engaging the islanders in the new sentiments of identity-shaping, self-confidence and the belief that the Faeroes had a future. I would argue that this was the case and that a national awakening was going on in a very small community which later almost achieved what they imagined was their ‘natural’ or God-given right as a ‘nation’, i.e. sovereignty.⁵²³

7.1.1 The Faeroe Folk High School

The next achievement was the foundation of the Faeroe Folk High School, ‘Føroya Fólkaháskúli’, which started in 1899. This school has been of enormous importance for the Faroese language and identity. Before that the vernacular was not even a subject in schools so almost nobody could read or write their own language. The Faeroe Folk High School would, independently of the official educational system, pave the way for education in the vernacular and with Faeroese content.

The idea of folk high schools is Danish and had its origin in the newly established representative government which replaced absolutism in 1848-1849. N. F. S. Grundtvig (1783 -1872) was of the opinion that if the people were to participate in the government,

⁵²² Patursson, J., “Boðar tú til allar tjóðir”, *Songbók Føroya Fólks*, Tórshavn 1950, No. 316, p. 407-408.

⁵²³ The plebiscite on 14th September 1946.

they had to be better educated. The people had to learn about their own history and culture. Instead of academic learning Grundtvig and his fellow pioneer Christen Kold (1816-1870) put the idea into practice, believing that the mother tongue should be used with passion and zeal in teaching or, as they put it, for the enlightenment of the people.

The Folk High School movement aroused great interest in the Faeroes and from the 1870s many islanders went to Danish folk high schools. Both Faroese and Danish high school people, who greatly admired the revival of the Faroese language and culture, realised that if the Faroese national movement should have a future, a Faroese folk high school, based on popular Faroese foundations, had to be established.

Two young Faeroe Islanders decided to work for this cause: Símun av Skarði and Rasmus Rasmussen. **Símun av Skarði** (1872-1942) was born in the small village of Skarð on Kunoy.⁵²⁴ He studied at the Teachers' Training College in Tórshavn;⁵²⁵ and then went to 'Askov højskole' in Denmark. **Rasmus Rasmussen** (1871-1962) was trained as a carpenter and went to 'Vallekilde højskole' for 2 years. Then he went to 'Askov højskole' where he met Símun av Skarði; they decided to establish a Folk High School in the Faeroes and started studying with this undertaking in mind. For two years they were students at 'Askov højskole' and then studied for another year at Postgraduate College for Teachers in Copenhagen. Símun studied history and languages, Rasmus studied natural history and mathematics.

⁵²⁴ The last nine people abandoned the village in 1919 after all adult males had been lost at sea in 1913.

⁵²⁵ Established as a Danish institution in 1870.

Back in the Faeroes in 1899, they started the school in Klaksvík;⁵²⁶ but in November 1900 students started at the newly erected Folk High School at Føgrulíð. Obviously there were many obstacles to overcome, the financial situation was difficult; but the initiative was widely supported by the population, and a small Danish state grant was obtained.

The løgting (local parliament) transferred the small Danish state grant, but very early in the 20th century, the majority of the løgting wanted to take away this vital grant. Then the Brethren politician Johann Dam protested, saying: “It is not going to be burned out in the Faeroes,” referring to the vernacular.⁵²⁷ He made the majority change their minds and the Folk High School continued getting its grant.⁵²⁸

For practical reasons the building was dismantled in 1909 and rebuilt in the capital Tórshavn where the school is still located. For many decades the school was the only place where people could get teaching in the Faroese language, literature and history. The educational authorities were opposed to giving up the schools’ Danish identity and characteristic, but slowly they were influenced by the language and national struggle and, not least, by the spirit of the ‘Føroya Fólkaháskúli’.

In 1906 Símun av Skarði composed the Faeroese national anthem “Tú alfagra land mítt” (Thou fairest land of mine), wrote many articles in Faeroese papers and periodicals; and he translated novels, short stories and plays into Faeroese. Rasmus Rasmussen wrote and published the first Faeroese novel *Bábelstornið* (The tower of

⁵²⁶ On a scenic stretch of coast west of Klaksvík under an escarpment.

⁵²⁷ Cf. section 5.2, pp. 136-137 and section 6.1, p. 236.

⁵²⁸ Dam, P. M., “Johann við Sjógv”, *Úrval*, No. 2, Tórshavn 1967. Reprinted in: Zachariassen, Z., “Johann við Sjógv”, *Leirkerið*, 3-4/2001.

Babel)⁵²⁹ in 1909. He was one of the founders of the Fishermen's Union in 1911 and from 1921-1928 he edited the Union's paper. Additionally he was the first Faeroese scholars, especially within botany, and published *Plantulæra* (On plants) in 1910, *Føroya flora* (The flora of Faeroe) in 1936, with an extended edition in 1952, as well as other related works in which he laid the foundations for a scientific Faeroese language.⁵³⁰

Many poets and writers acquired their own written language at the Folk High School and the school was one of the main catalysts in the promotion of the vernacular. Some of the most popular writers had been studying one or two winters at the Folk High School,⁵³¹ and many later teachers, politicians and others had attended the school. Of course Brethren members also studied at the Folk High School, and it has been of the greatest importance in the shaping of a Faeroese identity. Many islanders started their intellectual journey there and later became academics, scholars and key figures in the socio-economic and cultural life in the islands.

7.1.2 Linguistic and cultural changes

The aim of the language movement was to demonstrate that the Faeroese language was a useful and worthy instrument of not only oral but also written communication, that it was an independent language in its own right and that it was necessary to get rid of foreign influences, mainly Danish words and phrases, and replace those with what was regarded as good Faeroese. Therefore the language movement was rather purist and backward-

⁵²⁹ The title is interesting and probably refers to the nation building process which had just started or to the emergence of Faeroese as the national language.

⁵³⁰ Ibid., p. 148.

⁵³¹ Among them Hans A. Djurhuus (1883-1951), Hans M. Ejdesgaard (1887-1966) and Heðin Brú (1901-1987).

looking.⁵³² The Faeroese language movement was heavily influenced by National Romanticism,⁵³³ and in the wake of the materialization of the written language, many poems and songs⁵³⁴ were written in honour of the language which was presented as the queen of Nordic languages, neglected and suppressed for ages, but now rising from the ashes of obscurity. An example is the following poem from the turn of the century, called “Málið” (The Language),⁵³⁵ and the first stanza goes like this:

Gjøgnum øldir sum ærlunga -	Through ages as dishonourable –
Tveitandi á øskudunga -	thrown on a heap of ashes –
Føroya forna, treysta tunga!	Faeroe’s ancient, lasting tongue!
Reystar hoyr nú røddir runga.	Courageous hear now voices resound.
Hevj teg, málið, gamla, unga,	Raise yourself, language, old, yet young,
Trín á tignarpall.	Step on the stage of dignity.

At the same time speeches were delivered and articles written about the glorious past of the language and its speakers, imagined as the true heirs of an idealised Viking Age and the traditions thought to be found in medieval ballads and tales.⁵³⁶

Like the two pioneers of the Folk High School, other individuals increasingly used the written form of the vernacular, and gradually a new indigenous literature emerged. Also the first textbooks for schools were produced in the early 20th century as well as a growing number of papers and journals; but what was most important was to introduce islanders to the written language by printing texts which made them want to read the vernacular. The publication of the beautifully illustrated translation of the *Gospel*

⁵³² From the latter half of the 20th century especially the Faeroe Language Department at the Academy, now Faeroe University.

⁵³³ Debes, H. J., *Nú er tann stundin...*, Tórshavn 1982, p. 15.

⁵³⁴ Among them the one quoted above.

⁵³⁵ By J. H. O. Djurhuus (1881-1948) who proved that the Faeroese language was a language of culture and not merely a barbaric mountain dialect, as some claimed. See below.

www.denstoredanske.dk/.../Jens_Hendrik_Oliver_Djurhuus

⁵³⁶ Jóansson, T., *English loanwords in Faroese*, Tórshavn 1997, pp. 9 and 29.

according to John, 1908, by Lutheran clergyman **A. C. Evensen** (1874-1917), was made possible by Brethren individuals⁵³⁷ and was free of charge for all children and schools in the islands and extremely well received. In 1914 two other important books were published in Faeroese. One was the popular *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe (1660-1731),⁵³⁸ translated by **Sverre Patursson** (1871-1960), one of the first Faeroe Islanders to write prose in the vernacular; this book was also sent to all children and schools and has since had generations of enthusiastic young readers. The other was the first real collection of original poetry in Faeroese,⁵³⁹ written by the great classicist, poet and high court barrister **J. H. O. Djurhuus** (1881-1948),⁵⁴⁰ himself a rather controversial figure. This collection of poems firmly established that the Faeroese language was just as suitable for genuine poetry as other languages.

The Brethren poet, farmer **Jóhann Dam** (1863-1925),⁵⁴¹ read, wrote and spoke several languages, and many deplore that most of his work was lost after his death, because he has later been acknowledged as a pioneer within cultural work.⁵⁴² In an article his relative, Social Democratic politician and local Prime Minister Petur Mohr Dam (1898-1968), himself a good poet, mentions that only few of Jóhann's poems were published, one being "Færeyinga kvatt" (Faeroese Ballad)⁵⁴³ where he used the pen-name 'Bragi'. In another poem, "Forløgskvæði" (Ballad on Fate), he demonstrates his mastery of alliteration, and he also composed ballads in the traditional form. This is an example of

⁵³⁷ Most notably the Brethren missionary Arthur Brend, mentioned on pp. xx.

⁵³⁸ Defoe, D., *Robinson Kruso*, translated by S. Patursson, Tórshavn 1914.

⁵³⁹ Djurhuus, J. H. O., *Yrkingar* (Poems), Faeroese Students' Association, Copenhagen 1914.

⁵⁴⁰ Subsequently he had several collections of poems published and translated Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as well as Plato and other classical authors and romantic poets.

⁵⁴¹ See section 7.2.

⁵⁴² Introduced in sections 3.2 and 6.2.

⁵⁴³ Published in *Dimmalætting*.

an early Brethren member who composed secular poetry already in the 1890s or before. His attitude in the language question was purist, wanting a written norm close to Old Norse which he used himself, but in the *løgting* he followed the Unionists when parties emerged in 1906.

Another distinguished poet and prolific writer from the early 20th century was J. H. O. Djurhuus's⁵⁴⁴ brother **Hans A. Djurhuus** (1883-1951)⁵⁴⁵ whose *Barnarímur* (Children's rhymes) were published in 1915 and still cherished today. He wrote many collections of poems, plays, short stories and one novel. Hans A. Djurhuus was an energetic initiator and supporter in many cultural fields; and already in 1905 he was involved in the establishment of 'Havnar Ungmannafelag' (Tórshavn's Youth Association), founded in the Brethren 'Sloan's Hall'.⁵⁴⁶

The opposition to both the Faeroese language and national movement was strong in some quarters, and one of the best known challengers was indeed Rasmus Effersøe's brother **Oliver Effersøe** (1863-1933), lawyer, local sheriff and politician.⁵⁴⁷ In 1906 he was a co-founder, alongside the intelligent and sarcastic Andrass Samuelsen (1873-1954), of 'Sambandsflokkurin' (the Unionist Party), and its chairman from 1917 to 1932. Oliver Effersøe was extremely Danish oriented and fought bitterly against the national movement and the Self-governing Party. He was also elected member of the Danish Parliament from 1906 to 1933 with a few interruptions. It was indeed there that he made

⁵⁴⁴ Mentioned above.

⁵⁴⁵ Joensen, Leyvoy, "Atlantis, Bábylon, Tórshavn. The Djurhuus Brothers and William Heinesen in Faroese Literary History", *Scandinavian Studies*, LXXIV, 2002, pp. 181-204.

⁵⁴⁶ In November 1906.

⁵⁴⁷ In Tvøroyri, northern Suðuroy.

his infamous proclamation implying that Faeroe Islanders were Danish, felt Danish, spoke Danish and wanted to remain Danish!⁵⁴⁸

7.2 Politics and culture

7.2.1 Politics

Up to this time there was almost no controversy within the work of the lögting because the members of this local parliament had shared interests. Practically all were King's Farmers,⁵⁴⁹ clergymen and other persons belonging to the elite, e.g. merchants, after around 1880.⁵⁵⁰ Laws passed in the lögting included the allotment of land to tenants after 25 years' rental,⁵⁵¹ especially important in and around Tórshavn, in 1863, and the introduction of primary education in 1872. These laws were later amended and, like the original ones, passed through the Danish parliament. The lögting's proceedings did not lead to much discussion until the young nationalism became political.⁵⁵²

This happened when the charismatic but controversial Jóannes Patursson ripped open the peaceful and semi-dormant political landscape with romantic and patriotic ideas and introduced a new type of politics in the Faeroes, the type from which islanders still suffer to this day. In 1903 Patursson, while member of the Danish parliament, published a book in Danish entitled *Færøsk politik* (Faeroese politics)⁵⁵³ arguing for self-government. He worked out a programme which the Danish government initially supported, and

⁵⁴⁸ *Rigsdagstidende*, Copenhagen 1906.

⁵⁴⁹ Explained in the Introduction: Theoretical base.

⁵⁵⁰ West, J., *Faroe: the emergence of a nation*, London 1972, p. 121.

⁵⁵¹ Developed into the Allotment Act of 13th April 1894, enabling landless people to buy crown land sufficient for one cow, maybe a couple of sheep and some potatoes.

⁵⁵² West, J., *Faroe: the emergence of a nation*, London 1972, p. 122.

⁵⁵³ Patursson, J., *Færøsk politik*, Copenhagen 1903.

therefore called “Tilboðið” (The offer), consisting of five points.⁵⁵⁴ The programme was not well received in the Faeroes, especially the last point, on taxation, made wealthy farmers, merchants, the clergy and other officials anxious because the Faeroes cost the Danish exchequer more than the islands yielded in tax. Also it was obvious to them that expensive new capital projects would be too heavy a burden for the fragile Faeroese economy.⁵⁵⁵

This turbulence led to the establishment of two opposing parties. Opponents of Patursson’s policies joined together to prevent him from being re-elected for both lögting and the Danish parliament, forming the ‘Sambandsflokkur’ (Union Party). The foremost individuals were Frederik Petersen⁵⁵⁶ and Oliver Effersøe,⁵⁵⁷ and the main aim of the party was to defend and preserve the constitutional links with Denmark. The initiative proved successful, and the new party won a convincing victory at the election in 1906, the first secret ballot in the Faeroes.⁵⁵⁸ After the election, the lögting’s opposition then formed the other party, ‘Sjálvstýrisflokkurin’ (The self-governing party) with Jóannes Patursson as leader, and after that the whole community was split down the middle depending on which side people took regarding the relations between the Faeroes and Denmark, the islands’ position within the kingdom, the degree of self-governance and the status of the language.

⁵⁵⁴ West, J., *Faroe: the emergence of a nation*, London 1972, p. 123.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁶ Mentioned above.

⁵⁵⁷ Also mentioned above.

⁵⁵⁸ Sølvará, H. A., *Løgtingið 150, Hátíðarrit*, Vol. I, Tórshavn 2002.

As Benedict Anderson argues in his book, the ultimate goal for a national movement is, in theory at least, total independence;⁵⁵⁹ and indeed in the late 1920s Jóannes Patursson's brother, Sverre Patursson,⁵⁶⁰ founded the new political party 'Móti loysing' (Towards severance) together with Andreas Ziska (1883-1960) working for a socialist republic,⁵⁶¹ and the former wrote a book of the same name consisting of a political programme.⁵⁶² The party was never represented in the lögting. However, in 1925 the Social Democratic Party, 'Javnaðarflokkurin', was established but did not gain much electoral support until well after World War II when Danish welfare reforms were introduced in the Faeroes. Its founders were the charismatic teacher and poet **Petur Mohr Dam** (1898-1968) and worker, sailor and writer Maurentius Viðstein (1892-1971), heavily influenced by political developments in Scandinavia. Both were elected members of the lögting in 1928,⁵⁶³ and some saw the party as an attempt to introduce another perspective in the narrow two-dimensional Faeroese politics. Later, also the Brethren member and Social Democrat **Jacob Nielsen** (1902-1978), skipper of Vágur, Suðuroy, from 1927-1940, was elected to the lögting in 1936, but he did not stand at the 1943 election because then he had been appointed lighthouse master;⁵⁶⁴ but in 1945 another Brethren member, painter-decorator and artist **William Smith** (1910-1978), was elected for the same party in the same constituency.⁵⁶⁵ Other Brethren have been members of the lögting not just representing the Social Democrats but other parties as well. Sadly,

⁵⁵⁹ Anderson, B., *Imagined communities*, London (1983) 2006, p. xx.

⁵⁶⁰ Mentioned above.

⁵⁶¹ In Faeroese called "sjálvstýrissosialistar", i.e. self-government socialists.

⁵⁶² Patursson, S., *Móti loysing*, Tórshavn 1925.

⁵⁶³ Waag, Ei., *Val og valtøl 1906-1966*, Klaksvík 1967, p. 60.

⁵⁶⁴ Information kindly provided by his son, Dr. Rodmundur í Liða; see section 5.3.4.

⁵⁶⁵ Oldest son of the early Brethren member in Vágur, Johan Smith, see section 5.

Waag, Ei., *Val og valtøl 1906-1966*, Klaksvík 1967, p. 117.

however, the questions surrounding union with Denmark or independence still prevail in the 21st century.

Obviously culture and politics were intertwined from the early 20th century, and some individuals rejected the idea that anyone who did not support the self-government policies could be regarded as a true Faeroe Islander. On the other hand many unionists claimed that self-government would be destructive for the economy as well as culture and detrimental to the majority of the people. In spite of this people from both camps made major contributions both regarding the promotion of the vernacular as well as in the literary and artistic fields.

However, up to World War I the Unionist Party got far more electoral support than the Self-government Party, and the ratio of votes was usually three to two.⁵⁶⁶ The Self-government party usually had the upper hand at public meetings with voters, probably because of stirring nationalist emotions, but when people went to the polls they seemed more concerned about economic matters and how to survive in challenging times. A story still circulates which tells that Andrass Samuelsen of the Unionist party sometimes said to Jóannes Patursson of the Self-government party: “You get the applause but I get the votes.”

7.2.2 Literature

The energetic Brethren missionary and fiery but popular preacher, **Victor Danielsen** (1894-1961) was one of the most industrious Faeroese writers, translators and poets of his

⁵⁶⁶ West, J., *Faeroe: the emergence of a nation*, London 1972, p. 125.

time.⁵⁶⁷ In 1917 he translated his first hymn into Faeroese and it was “After the earthly shadows have lifted”; and in 1920, impelled by Jens av Reyni, the first Brethren hymnary, *Sálmar* (Hymns), was published with 85 hymns.⁵⁶⁸ The following years he edited the following:⁵⁶⁹

1922:	<i>Sálmar</i> (Hymns)	extended edition	121 hymns
1923	<i>Nýggir sálmar</i> (New hymns)		
1926	<i>Songbók fyri børn</i> (Songbook for children)		
1932	<i>Guds fólks songbók</i> (God’s people’s songbook)		
1933	<i>Útvaldir sálmar</i> (Selected hymns)		
1939	<i>Evangelisk songbók</i> (Evangelical songbook)		
1942	<i>Nýggir andaligir songir</i> (New spiritual songs)		
1946	<i>Nýggir andaligir songir</i>	extended edition	
1949	<i>Nýggir andaligir songir</i>	extended edition	
1952	<i>Songbók Guds fólks</i>	new edition	1,125 hymns

However, Victor Danielsen is probably best known as the translator of the Bible, first the New Testament, published in 1937, then of the whole Bible, published in 1949.

The dean of the Faeroes, **Jacob Dahl** (1878-1944), was among the first clergymen in modern times to realise the ineptness of banning the vernacular from the Church and the schools.⁵⁷⁰ He was one of the enlightened Faeroe Islanders who deplored that there was no Bible translation in Faeroese although individuals had translated parts of Scripture, starting with Schrøter’s *St. Matthew Gospel* in 1823, among them A. C. Evensen’s translation of *St. John’s Gospel* of 1908, mentioned above.⁵⁷¹ In 1921 Dahl had started translating parts of the Bible and especially of the New Testament, and from

⁵⁶⁷ Presented in section 4.5.

⁵⁶⁸ Victor Danielsen’s hymn ‘Er Jesus nær?’ (Is Jesus near?) was published in *Naade og Sandhed*, No. 5, August/Septemner 1922, p. 1.

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁵⁷⁰ Zachariassen, Z, *Biblian á Føroyskum í hálva øld*, Gøta 2000, p. 31.

⁵⁷¹ A scholarly linguistic and historical research of Faeroese Bible translations by clergywoman Elsa Funding, *Føroyskar bíbliutýðingar og týðingarroyndir*, Cand.Phil.-dissertation, Fróðskapur, Tórshavn 2007.

1923 these were published in the newly established Faeroese quarterly journal *Varðin*;⁵⁷² but unfortunately it seemed very difficult to have his translation of the New Testament published as a book. Many Brethren individuals cut out Dahl's New Testament translations and collected them, glued in exercise books, so that they had a complete translation.⁵⁷³

Jacob Dahl was a lecturer at the Faeroe Teachers' Training College until 1912, i.e. when Victor Danielsen was a student there; and then he was appointed clergyman in Tórshavn. From 1918 until his death in 1944 he was dean of Faeroe. Dahl was one of the most proficient islanders in the vernacular. In 1908 Dahl published the first Faeroese grammar for schools,⁵⁷⁴ and in 1909 he became a central figure in the language struggle because he refused to use Danish as language of instruction. He published homilies and other religious works, some of which only published after his death, and was also a poet and translator of many hymns. His New Testament translation was published a few weeks after Victor Danielsen's in 1937, and Dahl also translated parts of the Old Testament, a work completed by the highly intellectual theologian and clergyman Kristian Osvald Viderø (1906-1991), so that the whole Lutheran Church Bible was published in 1961 by the Danish Bible Society.⁵⁷⁵

Although Brethren had used the vernacular at meetings for half a century,⁵⁷⁶ they normally read the scriptures from Danish or Norwegian Bibles, so for them it was

⁵⁷² Zachariassen, Z, *Bíblían á Føroyskum í hálva øld*, Gøta 2000, p. 53-55.

⁵⁷³ Háberg, P, "Prestalótir", *Føroya Sosial-Demokrat*, 21st June 1952. Reprinted in Háberg, P, *Fra penni Petur Hábergs*, Gøta 2007, p. 154.

⁵⁷⁴ Dahl, J, *Føroysk mállæra til skúlabrúks*. Tórshavn 1908.

⁵⁷⁵ *Bíblía*, translated by J. Dahl and K. O. Viderø, Copenhagen 1961.

⁵⁷⁶ British missionaries used a mixture of English, Norwegian and Faeroese, but mostly broken Danish.

absolutely vital to have the Bible translated into Faeroese.⁵⁷⁷ Victor Danielsen's first Bible translation was *Paul's Letter to the Galatians*, published in 1931, where he used a more popular register which people found easy to read and understand.⁵⁷⁸ Consequently members of Brethren assemblies appealed to Danielsen to translate the whole New Testament.⁵⁷⁹ After Andrew Sloan had been informed that the National Bible Society of Scotland was willing to publish a Faeroese translation of the New Testament in 1934, Danielsen went ahead immediately.⁵⁸⁰ Two years later the printing started in Tórshavn and New Testament in Danielsen's translation was published on 30th March 1937 in 5,000 copies, and in the preface he says that he had used the Danish translation of 1907, the Norwegian of 1904 and the Swedish one of 1917. Additionally Danielsen made use of Thomas Newberry's (1811-1901) edition of the *English Bible* with its aids for Greek tenses and Robert Young's (1822-1888) *Literal Translation of the Bible* (1862/1898). Occasionally he used Luther's translation.⁵⁸¹

A few weeks later J. Dahl's translation of the New Testament was published by the Danish Bible Society. This led to much controversy, developing into attacks and counterattacks in local papers, but most Brethren seemed to be of the opinion that if two translations could make more people read the New Testament, then it was a good thing. However, Danielsen's 1937-translation reflects the language actually used by Faeroe Islanders at the time while Dahl's translation may give an impression of what the Faeroese language might ideally look like.⁵⁸² When Danielsen started translating the

⁵⁷⁷ Otherwise they used Schrøter's, Evensen's and Dahl's translations.

⁵⁷⁸ *Galatiabrævið*, týtt hefur Victor Danielsen, Tórshavn 1931.

⁵⁷⁹ Zachariassen, Z, *Bíblían á Føroyskum í hálva øld*, Gøta 2000, p. 46.

⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁵⁸¹ *Nýggja Testamenti*, umsett hefur V. Danielsen, Tórshavn 1937, preface.

⁵⁸² Háberg, P, "Laðasteinur...", 14. *September*, 15/1961.

whole Bible, he was aware of the changes that had taken place in the passage of time, so he decided to revise the New Testament for his 1949 Bible translation.⁵⁸³ He started this challenging work right away so that most of the translation was completed before the Second World War. Negotiations, conducted by Jens av Reyni, were finalised with the printers Grøndals & Søn, Oslo, and some of the manuscript had been typeset when war broke out and all had to be postponed indefinitely.

After the war, however, it proved very difficult to resume the work in Norway, so after intensive correspondence and negotiations in both Norway and Denmark, conducted by Jens av Reyni, it was decided to have the Bible typeset and printed in the Faeroe Islands. A printing press was bought in England and a modern typesetting machine in the United States.⁵⁸⁴ Many problems had to be overcome and much work had to be done to get the necessary equipment, including matrices, lead and paper, all quite difficult to get hold of just after the war.⁵⁸⁵ The work started from scratch in February 1947 and the first 1,000 copies of the first complete Bible in the Faeroese language had been printed on India paper in November 1948.⁵⁸⁶ The rest of the 5,000 were printed in 1949 and most copies were bound in Edinburgh.⁵⁸⁷

Apart from Victor Danielsen and Jens av Reyni several other people were directly involved in the mammoth task of translating, printing and publishing the first complete Bible in the vernacular.⁵⁸⁸ The translation was made by Danielsen but, of course, others acted as assistants, linguistic advisors, proofreaders and so forth, primarily Conrad

⁵⁸³ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁴ Zachariassen, Z, *Bíblían á Føroyskum í hálva øld*, Gøta 2000, p. 103.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid., 109.

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 143.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 149.

⁵⁸⁸ Sadly, Jens av Reyni died in June 1948.

Joensen (1907-2002), Sigurd Berghamar (1910-2004), Andrew Sloan (1896-1873), Petur W. Háberg (1914-1984), and Jógvan Skýlindal (1902-1977) who was acquainted with Greek and Hebrew, and others. Additionally the teacher E. A. Reynberg (1896-1981), not a Brethren member himself, had helped with the New Testament translation.⁵⁸⁹

To finance such a remarkable enterprise ‘Føroya Traktatfelag’ (The Faeroe Tract Society) became ‘Hin føroyski Bíbliugrunnurin’ (The Faeroese Bible Fund),⁵⁹⁰ and they sent out appeals to the assemblies for support, including a budget.⁵⁹¹ All assemblies and many individuals gave gifts to make it possible to have a Faeroese Bible translation published.

The Bible was well received although some clergymen and a couple of other persons within the Danish Lutheran State Church reacted rather unexpectedly with aggressive and frenzied articles in the newspapers. This led to the so-called Bible Battle,⁵⁹² an unholy and pathetic affair, which lasted almost three years. Unfortunately some Faeroe Islanders envisage that there was some sort of competition, envy or grudge between Danielsen and Dahl or, maybe more precisely, between Brethren and Lutherans. While the first seems nonsensical, the second is probably more to the point. There was hardly any animosity between the two persons; Danielsen had been Dahl’s favourite student while at college, and both admired and respected each other’s work.⁵⁹³

In the 1930s very few Faeroe Islanders had learned to read or write their own language and almost everybody corresponded in Danish which was the only language

⁵⁸⁹ Zachariassen, Z, *Bíblían á Føroyskum í hálva øld*, Gøta 2000, pp. 148-149.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 148.

⁵⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 110-112.

⁵⁹² Ibid., pp. 154-313.

⁵⁹³ Ibid., p. 42.

taught in schools and used in churches, newspapers and in official matters. Even the National Movement had to use written Danish in its papers because people were unable to read the vernacular. Of course this led to problems regarding Bible translations, and there seemed to be two divergent views: (1) to create a purist and exemplary church language which might cause problems for the majority of people, or (2) to compromise and adapt to the actual language situation and employ a language which would not be so difficult for people to read and understand.⁵⁹⁴

In other words, on the one hand some translators saw the aim of a translation to be the creation of a high style, appropriate for the use in the Church for years to come, on the other hand some translators aimed at scripture being translated into a language which people felt comfortable with and understood without difficulty, the purpose being to make the Christian message accessible to all sections of society.

However, both positions are valid and acceptable because it is mainly a question of attitude and choice, but the divergence can also be seen as being between the view that it was preferable to establish a final high style of Faeroese religious language immediately and then hope that people would get used to it and accept it. The other view assumed that a gradual improvement in the language was going to take place once the vernacular had been introduced in the schools, churches, papers and in written discourse.

It seems appropriate to add that within the Danish Lutheran Church, Dahl was the central proponent for the introduction of the vernacular in Faeroese churches and therefore had to comply with real or imagined requirements regarding a new Church language put forward by Danish ecclesiastical authorities who had been involved in the

⁵⁹⁴ Zachariassen, Z, *Bíblían á Føroyskum í hálva øld*, Gøta 2000, p. 44-46.

question for some time.⁵⁹⁵ This may have been one reason why he chose a high, purist and sophisticated register, style and choice of vocabulary. Victor Danielsen was not in a similar situation. As an Evangelical his central purpose was to use a language that served evangelisation best. He and his fellow Brethren accepted that the Faeroese language was in a bad state because Danish had influenced Faeroese so much both in vocabulary (replacing Faeroese words with Danish ones), syntax and in phrases, not least in religious language usage, that early translations had to make concessions to the factual situation.

Apart from this enormous work, Victor Danielsen also translated a total of 18 books from English, Danish, Norwegian and Icelandic, but overwhelmingly from English into Faeroese and two from English into Danish, later translated into Faeroese. The best known is John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's progress*, Faeroese title: *Pílagrímsferðin*, 1946; and other well-known authors whom he translated were J. R. Macduff, G. Thornton, O. Walton, O. F. Walton, Silas K. Hocking, D. L. Moody, Amy Le Feuvre, Mary Carter, C. H. Spurgeon, and Newman Hall. Additionally Victor Danielsen wrote two rapture novels, the first one, *Aðru ferð* (Second time), 1927, about the Second Coming the way he imagines this to take place in an ordinary Faeroese village and on a fishing vessel; the second one, *Nei, lyftið sveik ikki* (No, the promise was not broken), 1947, with the same theme but seen from the angle of those who are taken away.⁵⁹⁶

These two novels are written in good, ordinary Faeroese, close to the spoken language as are Danielsen's translations. The environments and persons are very well presented in an intimate and lively style which makes the novels easy to read and

⁵⁹⁵ Since the 1820s when Schrøter offered to translate the whole New Testament.

⁵⁹⁶ Zachariassen, Z, *Bíblían á Føroyskum í hálva øld*, Gøta 2000, p. 29.

understand. Both books have been reprinted, and many readers have found them exciting and thought-provoking. Some have even claimed that the novels made them reconsider their spiritual state and were instrumental in their conversion.⁵⁹⁷

Around 1930 there were some innovative novelists and short story writers. **Heðin Brú**, penname for Hans Jacob Jacobsen (1901-1987), published his first novel, *Lognbrá*, in 1930 and a sequence, *Fastatøkur*, in 1935. The first one describes a young boy's childhood in a small Faeroese village, his fears and joys, his anxieties and hopes; and the second one tells about his life as a young fisherman on a smack, his dreams and disappointments, his hard work and love. Heðin Brú had many other novels and collections of short stories, some of which have been translated into several languages, including English.⁵⁹⁸

Another significant writer was **Martin Joensen** (1902-1966), born in the small village Sandvík on Suðuroy. As most Faeroese boys he became a fisherman on a smack, but his interest in learning made him go to the Folk High School and then he studied at the Teachers' College in Tórshavn. Martin Joensen wrote poems, short stories and parts of novels in the literary and cultural journal *Varðin* (The Cairn).⁵⁹⁹ His prose was clearly social-realistic, mainly describing the circumstances and struggles of ordinary and poor people with deep psychological insight. The first novel *Fiskimenn* (Fishermen) was published in 1946 and takes place on a fishing smack in Icelandic waters where many characters are crammed together and in the Faeroes between tours. His second novel, *Tað lýsir á landi* (It lights on land), was published in 1952. Here the main character in the first

⁵⁹⁷ Danielsen, V, *Aðru ferð*, 3rd ed., Gøta 2002, back cover.

⁵⁹⁸ Brú, H., *The old man and his sons*; translated by John F. West, New York 1970.

⁵⁹⁹ Started in 1921 and published two to four times a year; now just once a year.

novel is in constant conflict with himself in questions of belief, trade unionism, solidarity, and of love.⁶⁰⁰

Internationally **William Heinesen** (1900-1991)⁶⁰¹ was the best known Faeroese writer of poems, short stories and several novels;⁶⁰² he was also a composer and an artist. Heinesen wrote in Danish,⁶⁰³ but his novels and most of his short stories have been translated into Faeroese. While studying in Denmark he was influenced by new trends in philosophy and literature, mainly social realism, existentialism and Marxism.⁶⁰⁴ His first publication was *Arktiske elegier og andre digte* (Arctic elegies and other poems), 1921,⁶⁰⁵ and then he published many collections of poems. His first novel, *Blæsende gry: nutidsroman fra Færøerne*, (Stormy dawn: contemporary novel from Faeroe), was published in 1934 and describes Faeroese village life, concentrating on eccentrics in Tórshavn and attacks on hypocrites and fanatics.⁶⁰⁶ Both in his poetry and fiction Heinesen was the author of his generation most capable of elevating the local onto a universal level. He was awarded many literary prizes and awards, e.g. for *Det gode håb* (The Good Hope), which won the Nordic Prize for Literature in 1965. Many consider William Heinesen to be one of the greatest Scandinavian novelists of the twentieth century,⁶⁰⁷ and these books have recently been retranslated into English: *Mother Pleiades*, *The Black Cauldron*, *The Good Hope*, *The Lost Musicians*, and *Windswept*

⁶⁰⁰ http://www.snar.fo/alfroei/alfroei/rithoelvundar/joensen_martin_sandvik/

⁶⁰¹ Jones, W. Glyn, *William Heinesen*, New York 1974.

⁶⁰² <http://www.dlb.dansklf.dk/iframe.dsp?author=243>

⁶⁰³ Brønner, Hedin, »William Heinesen: Faroese Voice - Danish Pen«. *The American-Scandinavian Review*, LXI, 1973, pp. 142-54.

⁶⁰⁴ Jones, W. Glyn, "Toward Totality. The Poetry of William Heinesen", *World Literature Today*, LXII, 1988, pp. 79-82.

⁶⁰⁵ Heinesen, W., *Arctis*, Selected Poems 1921-1972. Translated by Anne Born, Findhorn 1980.

⁶⁰⁶ <http://www.litteratursiden.dk/artikler/klassikeren-william-heinesen-forfatteren-kunstneren-mennesket>

⁶⁰⁷ <http://www.dedalusbooks.com/catalog.php?s=4&id=74>

Dawn.⁶⁰⁸ Furthermore, in a Faeroese context he was a great supporter of cultural initiatives in the islands, a reviewer and a critic;⁶⁰⁹ and he is frequently cited in this work.

The efforts of Faeroese writers had certainly been successful because in 1948, when the vernacular was finally accepted as the main language in the islands, several idealistic pioneers had laid the foundation not only for the written norm but also for modern Faeroese literature.

In the 78 years from 1822 to 1899, 22 books were published in Faeroese, i.e. 0.28 a year; in the 40 years from 1900 to 1939, 197 books were published, i.e. 4.9 a year; from 1940 to 1949, 124; from 1950-1959, 153; from 1960-1969, 274 books, corresponding to 12.4, 17.3 and 27.4 a year. Then radical changes took place during the next decade because in the 10 years from 1970 to 1979, 689 books were published which corresponds to 66.8 a year; from 1980 to 1989, 1,074 books were published, i.e. 107.0 a year; and from 1990 to 2000, 1,332 books were published which is on average 133.2 a year.⁶¹⁰ The Brethren published more than 120 books during the period 1970-2000⁶¹¹ and since 2000 around 50 books have been published.⁶¹²

7.2.3 Fine art

Around the middle of the 19th century **Díðrikur á Skarvanesi** (1802-1865) was the first islander to try artistic painting. He was in Denmark for a while, maybe working with

⁶⁰⁸ <http://www.denstoredanske.dk>

⁶⁰⁹ William Heinesen, *William ummælir fagnar listir*, (Reviews by William Heinesen 1924-1984), J. Enni edited, Fannir, Tórshavn 2000.

⁶¹⁰ Føroya Landsbókasavn (Faeroe National Library), Annual Report 2000; courtesy of Mr Erhard Jacobsen, chief librarian.

⁶¹¹ The Brethren publishers 'Røddin' (The Voice) and 'Leirkerið' (The Clay Cup) and individuals.

⁶¹² Most by 'Leirkerið'. Detailed list in section 4.2.2.

colours on various materials.⁶¹³ He is the first known painter in the Faeroes and his marvellous pictures of colourful birds, especially doves, are still preserved.⁶¹⁴

The pioneers within the visual arts were drawn by the dramatic scenery and the wealth of colourful motives which provided a wealth of potential inspiration for future artists.⁶¹⁵ **Niels Kruse** (1871-1951) of Eiði is often regarded as the first Faeroese artist, but also **Christian Holm Isaksen** (1877-1935)⁶¹⁶ of Tórshavn and **Joen (Jógvan) Waagstein** (1879-1949) of Klaksvík were talented and productive as well as very popular artists. Waagstein studied drawing in Copenhagen and in Germany in 1919, and apart from exhibitions in the Faeroes he had exhibitions in Copenhagen, Oslo and Glasgow.⁶¹⁷

Many of the second generation of Faeroese artists were professionals, trained at the Royal Academy of Arts in Copenhagen; and the first one was **Sámal Joensen Mikines** (1906-79) of Mykines, the often inaccessible island with most breathtaking scenery. After his training in Copenhagen he soon became the leading Faeroese artist, his works being of international significance. His most valued works include ‘Grindadrápið’ (The Whale Hunt), a dramatic, lively and colourful painting in oil, and ‘Líkaskari’ (Funeral procession), a bleak, emotional and heartbreaking artistic rendering of a village funeral. In his earlier years his grand paintings were mostly expressionist, but after World War II he used a more colouristic way of painting.⁶¹⁸

⁶¹³ Joensen, H. D., “Fuglamyndirnar eftir Dídrik a Skarvanesi,” *Fróðskaparrit*, Vol. 18, Tórshavn 1970.

⁶¹⁴ <http://www.flickr.com/photos/14716771@N05/sets/72157607054243382/>

⁶¹⁵ West, J., *Faroe: the emergence of a nation*, London 1972, p. 141.

⁶¹⁶ A close relative of William G. Sloan’s wife, Elisabeth, and sympathising with Brethren although a left-wing socialist and free-thinker.

⁶¹⁷ Wind, T., *Joen Waagstein, liv og virke*, Gyldendal, Copenhagen 1952.

⁶¹⁸ Jákupsson, B., *Mikines*, Tórshavn 1990.
Ingólfsson, A., *Mikines*, Reykjavík 2006.

The Brethren painter **Ruth Smith** (1913-1958) was from Vágur on Suðuroy⁶¹⁹ and as a young girl went to Copenhagen to work. In 1936 she went to the Royal Academy of Arts where she studied part-time because of lack of funds. After World War II she returned to the Faeroes and was one of the most prolific artists, working both in oil and pencil. Her paintings are often strong and in dark colours, frequently self-portraits and her finest works are probably her pencil drawings of children, clearly reflecting her evangelical upbringing.⁶²⁰

Her brother, the Brethren painter-decorator, writer and politician **William Smith** (1910-1978), was also a good and wellknown artist, working in various materials;⁶²¹ and among his works was the plastics decorations in the Brethren-owned Hotel Hafnia, Tórshavn city centre, but most of his works are in oil and drawings. Also his sons, John Smith (1934-19xx), Thomas Michael Smith (1936-) and Heri Smith (1939-2006) were talented artists as are many of his grandchildren.

The most popular modern painter was **Ingálvur av Reyni** (1920- 2005), son of the Brethren pioneer Jens av Reyni,⁶²² and himself an active Brethren worker all his life, especially as a Sunday school teacher.⁶²³ He studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen from 1942-1945 and also made study tours abroad, mainly to France. His oil paintings are often on a grand scale with almost brutal colours; but he has also produced idyllic landscape paintings, influenced by the French impressionists.⁶²⁴ The later works

⁶¹⁹ Daughter of Johan Smith, early Brethren member in Vágur, mentioned in section 3.2.

⁶²⁰ West, J., *Faroe: the emergence of a nation*, London 1972, p. 142.

⁶²¹ Absalonsen, Frida, 'Minningarorð om William Smith' (obituary), *Sosialurin*, 12th November 1978.

⁶²² Jens av Reyni, Brethren pioneer, see chapters 3 and 4.

⁶²³ In the 1950s I was one of the children who went to his Sunday school.

⁶²⁴ Frederiksen, F. T. *Rød Regn: En bog om maleren Ingálvur av Reyni*. Randers 1998.

are often strong, semi-abstract paintings of islands, mountains and rock formations.⁶²⁵ He also made numerous pencil and ink drawings for books, collections of poetry as well as many sensitive pencil portraits. Moreover, Ingálvur was an accomplished singer and many said that he was the finest tenor in the islands. He sang both Brethren hymns and secular songs, many of which were composed by Brethren.⁶²⁶ In the 1950s Ingálvur av Reyni was one of three artists who ran evening courses in drawing, composition, painting and sculpture on behalf of the Faeroe Arts Association; the other two were the sculptor Janus Kamban (1913-2009) and the painter Jack Kampman (1914-1989), both outspoken communists, making people wonder how they got on so well with Ingálvur.⁶²⁷ William Heinesen compared S. J. Mikines and Ingálvur av Reyni in this way: “Reyni’s art mirrors Mikines’s temper by expressing deep religious emotions...but while Mikines is drawn towards the Old Testament, Reyni’s art is clearly evangelical.”⁶²⁸

The first Faeroese sculptor was **Janus Kamban** (1913-2009), an internationally recognized artist who studied at the Royal Academy of Arts in Copenhagen, first painting but later attended the School of Sculpture at the Academy. In the 1930s he made study tours to Paris, Florence, Oslo and Stockholm, and later he visited Rome, London and other places. Back in the Faeroes after World War II he established himself as a sculptor, and already in 1948 he had completed his first commissioned work, the monumental work ‘Móðurmálið’ (The Mother Tongue), carved in local basalt, an anniversary

⁶²⁵ Jákupsson, B., *Mikines*, Tórshavn 1990.

⁶²⁶ Notably Jens Guttesen and Knút Háberg, mentioned below.

⁶²⁷ They used to have tea together in a café in the afternoons.

⁶²⁸ *Fra Færøerne – Úr Føroyum*, Vol. I, Dansk-færøsk samfund, Copenhagen 1964, p. 7.

memorial for V. U. Hammershaimb,⁶²⁹ creator of the Faroese written language in 1846.⁶³⁰

Thus the foundations for Faeroese visual arts were firmly laid in the first few decades after World War II; and these inspired younger generations to produce works of art, not least Brethren artists, both professional and amateurs.

7.2.4. Music

Before the late 19th century music in the Faeroes was vocal only. The traditional medieval Faeroese chain-dance was accompanied by singing but no instruments, and the melodies had been imported with the ballads from the 14th century onwards. In the passage of time they changed and it was not unusual that the same melody was sung differently in various villages.⁶³¹ The dance is still an important part of Faeroese folk culture, but, additionally, the study of the language of the ballads has been vital in the work in promoting the vernacular.

In the churches the Kingo-psalms⁶³² were used from shortly after the Reformation and well into the 20th century in many villages. The first organ was installed in

⁶²⁹ Short biography above, 6.1.

Dahl, Á., *Bókmentasøga I*, Fannir, Tórshavn 1980, pp. 84 and 94

⁶³⁰ Jákupsson, B., *Myndlist i Føroyum*, Sprotin, Tórshavn 2000.

⁶³¹ Thuren, Hj., *Folkesangen paa Færøerne*, Copenhagen 1908. - Digitized by Google from the library of Harvard University and uploaded to the Internet

⁶³² Thomas H. Kingo (1634-1703), Danish theologian, hymnwriter and composer; mentioned in Chapter. 3.

Tórshavn's Church in the 1830s⁶³³ so from then onwards new hymns and melodies were gradually introduced, much to the dismay of many people. However, the old melodies had been corrupted beyond recognition, and Arthur Brend⁶³⁴ characterises how this type of song sounded to a modern ear:

“...I heard the villagers sing some hymns in their own style. To the stranger the effect is quite startling. One of the men begins the verse, almost every other consonant sung being slurred up and down in a remarkable manner. One hymn lasted twenty-three minutes; at times I was nearly alarmed, the men were singing at the top of their voices, nearly screaming, not all singing together, but following up the scale one after the other; suddenly the leading singer drops to a lower A and is soon followed by the others. The women most of the time seemed to “chant” a kind of monotone in a low voice, though occasionally one of the elder women struck in with several high-pitch notes. Of course, all is sung in the fullest sincerity.”⁶³⁵

This piece is the best description I have read regarding the traditional Faeroese way of singing Kingo-psalms, a singing or chanting which my parents' generation, i.e. people born between 1910 and 1920, found utterly despicable, probably because it reminded them of the awful backwardness of the imagined past. No wonder that Faeroe Islanders were amazed and felt uplifted when they heard the Brethren pioneer William G. Sloan sing modern gospel-hymns and songs as early as in the latter half of the 19th century.

However, around 1900 also musical life changed when the talented Danish baker **Georg C. Hansen** (1844-1924) settled in Tórshavn. He was a great musician and played the violin but also numerous other instruments. After a while he gave up baking and

⁶³³ West, J., *Faroe: the emergence of a nation*, London 1972, p. 231.

⁶³⁴ Short biography in chapter 4.

⁶³⁵ Brend, A., “From the Faroes”, *Echoes of Service*, May 1907. – Cited in Kelling, F, *Fisherman of Faroe*, Gøta 1993, p. 173.

devoted himself entirely to music.⁶³⁶ In the late 20th century there were still old people who spoke fondly of Baker Hansen and how he brought cheerfulness and life to the small town, starting choral and instrumental groups which developed into string quartets, mixed ensembles and a brass band.⁶³⁷ One of the most popular brass bands still bears his name and is called GHM, i.e. Georg Hansen's Minde (Georg Hansen's Memory).

It was his pupils who started the Faeroese musical life which has developed and, already quite early on, got indigenous characteristics. Around the middle of the last century there were jazz, swing or dance bands in most towns, several brass bands, a chamber orchestra in Tórshavn, and many choirs. At that stage many Brethren were distinguished amateur and professional musicians such as **Christian Restorff** (1909-1997)⁶³⁸ and **Viggo Dahl Chrtstiansen** (1919-1993) who was also a music teacher at the Teachers' Training College; they both played the violin in the Tórshavn Chamber Orchestra for decades. Furthermore bigger Brethren assemblies have had their own choirs since the 1920s and 1930s. Today (2011) there are professional Brethren musicians,⁶³⁹ both within classical and rhythmical music,⁶⁴⁰ and Brethren choirs and musicians have been on tours and had concerts in many countries, e.g. Iceland, Britain, the US, Norway and Denmark. At the time of writing (April 2011) the 60 strong Ebenezer choir was on tour in Israel and the Double Quartet in England. Christian Restorff's son, Brethren worker **M. C. Restorff** (1950-) composed both songs and melodies, and in 1975 formed one of the first Brethren rhythmical groups, 'Nikodemus Sangbólkurin'; but before the

⁶³⁶ West, J., *Faroe: the emergence of a nation*, London 1972, p. 231-232.

⁶³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 232.

⁶³⁸ Businessman and, later, owner of 'Hotel Hafnia', the biggest hotel in central Tórshavn.

⁶³⁹ One of the professional Brethren musicians is Jógvan Zachariassen, leader of the assembly 'Lívðin'.

⁶⁴⁰ Many modern Brethren rhythmical music groups have published CDs.

group had a name, they published the gramophone record ‘Meistarans hond’ (the Master’s hand) in 1971. His popular band also participated in concerts, e.g. one in the ‘Nordic House’ concert hall in 1984, with both religious and secular songs, his most popular songs are probably ‘Føroyar’ (Faeroes), ‘Kvøda til pinkubarn’ (Greetings to newborn baby) and ‘Ymisk – og tó’ (Different – and yet).⁶⁴¹

Already in the first half of the 20th century there were some Faeroese composers, almost solely composers of melodies for songs and hymns, arranged for piano, organ or choir. **Peter Alberg** (1885-1940)⁶⁴² was one of the first composers in Faeroe. He was closely related to Christian Holm Isaksen⁶⁴³ and William Sloan’s wife; and his first piece was a tune for the patriotic song ‘Mítt føðiland, tú ríkt ert fyri mær’ (My country of birth, you are precious to me) by Hans Andrias Djurhuus. This was included in *Songbók Føroya Skúla* (Songbook for Faeroese schools), edited by Jógvan Waagstein,⁶⁴⁴ Tórshavn 1906. Alberg’s best known melody is undoubtedly the one composed for ‘Tú alfagra land mítt’, the national anthem by Simun av Skarði.⁶⁴⁵ On “Boxing Day 1907 there was a concert in Sloan’s Hall, and this was the first time that any of Petur Alberg’s melodies were publicly performed, among them ‘Mítt alfagra land’ (‘Tú alfagra land mitt’), the national anthem.”⁶⁴⁶

The most popular composer before World War II was **Jógvan Waagstein** (1879-1949), teacher, organist, choir leader and artist.⁶⁴⁷ He was a very energetic and busy man,

⁶⁴¹ Information provided by M. C. Restorff in a telephone conversation on 5th August 2012.

⁶⁴² Mentioned above, 6.3.

⁶⁴³ Mentioned above, 6.4.3.

⁶⁴⁴ Mentioned above, 6.4.3.

⁶⁴⁵ Mentioned in 6.2.

⁶⁴⁶ Marnersdóttir, Malan and Sigurðardóttir, Turið, *Føroyak bókmentasøga*, Vol. I, Nám 2011, p. 567

⁶⁴⁷ Mentioned in 6.4.3.

but still found time to collect traditional hymns, i.e. the more melodic Kingo-hymns, as well as composing music himself. He published *Gomul føroysk sálmaløg I-II*, (Old Faeroese hymn melodies, I and II), Copenhagen 1947,⁶⁴⁸ and his *Songløg* (Song melodies) was published in 1950 with texts translated into English by Brethren pioneer Arthur Brend.⁶⁴⁹

The most popular composer after World War II was the gifted teacher, composer and choir leader **Hans J. Højgaard** (1904-1992) who published *Føroysk Songløg I* in 1951 and *Føroysk Songløg II* in 1977. Much of his music was clearly based on and inspired by traditional ballad and hymn melodies, the latter often simplified but still creating deep emotions.

There were also many Brethren composers, the most popular being **Jens Guttesen** (1916–1996) who created both religious and secular music. He made melodies for hymns by Victor Danielsen, Petur Háberg, Jákup Olsen and others and was also a talented poet himself. He was leader of the Ebenezer choir for many years and published more than 100 melodies in the collection *Ljómur og lag* (Sound and melody), Tórshavn 1988. Another was **Knút Háberg** (1920-2002), Petur Háberg's⁶⁵⁰ brother, who made very popular melodies for both secular⁶⁵¹ and religious poems; he was also an accomplished organist. Also **Leivur Guttesen** (1929-1997) composed music,⁶⁵² for instance around 50 very popular melodies in *Guds Fólks Songbók* (the Brethren

⁶⁴⁸ Wind, T., *Joen Waagstein - Liv og Virke*, Copenhagen 1952.

⁶⁴⁹ See section 4.....

⁶⁵⁰ Short biography of Petur W. Háberg in section 4.5.

⁶⁵¹ For instance Jens Dam's wonderful poem "Vaknaður vársins songur" (Woken spring's song), *Songbók Føroya Fólks*, No. 221, Tórshavn 1950.

⁶⁵² There are plans to collect all his work and have it published.

hymnody); and among the younger Brethren **Øssur Berghamar** (1937-) has made around 40 melodies for original hymns in the Brethren hymnody, some for his own compositions.

The 'Betesda' choir in Klaksvík is the oldest incessant choir in the Faeroes and was started in 1926 by **Elieser Poulsen** (1898-1981) from Gøta who was trained as a teacher but never held a position; the choir was established with two purposes: to support the assembly's singing and to pave the way for choral singing. Elieser was responsible for the choir until 1931 when **Theodor vid Keldu** (1914-1986) from Leirvík conducted the 'Betesda' choir for 27 years, until 1958, when he had to resign for health reasons; he also made melodies for songs. From 1957 to 1961 **Heini Hansen** (Heini í Vátuft) (1920-1976) conducted the choir and played the organ in the hall. Then **Líggjas í Váli** (1922-1993) took over until he moved to Tórshavn in 1964; Líggjas composed and translated numerous songs and was also an artist. After that the distinguished Brethren worker and politician **Jógvan vid Keldu** (1943-), also a composer, took over and conducted the choir for 46 years, until 2010, apart from being organist at 'Betesda', a position that he retains; and, in 1996, he started an a capella choir called '17 singers' who have published a CD. Jógvan has composed several melodies and songs. The 'Betesda Choir' has had between 40 and 70 singers over the past 60 years.

7.2.5 Institutions

Comedies had been performed in the Tórshavn Club⁶⁵³ since the 1860s, but not until 1936 was a purpose-built theatre hall, “Sjónleikarhúsið”, built in Tórshavn. This building it still used as a cinema, dance hall and theatre. Until the 1960s actors were all amateurs but often had directors from Iceland and Denmark, and since then there have been professional and semi-professional actors.

Within science and education enormous progress took place after World War II, and in 1951 the first issue of the scientific yearbook *Fróðskaparrit* was published in Faeroese by the newly established association ‘Føroya Fróðskaparfelag’ (Faeroe Scientific Association), one of its purposes being to pave the way for higher education and research in the islands.⁶⁵⁴ In 1965 they established The Faeroese Academy, concentrating on Faeroese language and literature, which gained university status in 2002, there are now (2011) around 200 undergraduate students. Some Brethren teachers and lecturers work at all these institutions, indeed the principal of the Teachers’ Training College (now part of the university) for the past six years is a Brethren member.⁶⁵⁵

The Faeroe Broadcasting System was not established until 1957 but caught on immediately and was a groundbreaking and extremely popular institution right from the start. Faeroe Television was not introduced until 1983 with news, interviews and commentaries in Faeroese, but most programmes are in Danish and English. Right from the start many employees at these services, especially the Television, have been Brethren.

⁶⁵³ Established by British traders in the 1760s.

⁶⁵⁴ http://www.setur.fo/en/faroe_university_press/publication_list/?type=98

⁶⁵⁵ Mr Jóannes Hansen, M.Pol.Sc, born 1955.

7.3 Comments

Even to many Faeroe Islanders it seems incredible that such a small population was able to adopt its own written language and develop its own literature and a modern culture within two generations practically without any external encouragement or support. The written language was only accepted by the islanders in the 1920s and 1930s, and an indigenous literature not until slightly later. Until then Danish – the print-language of the kingdom – had been regarded as the only written language that could be employed, especially in cultural matters; and many islanders still used Danish in writing after World War II although Faeroese had been accepted as the first or main language in the islands in 1948.⁶⁵⁶

Perhaps it is more amazing that a contemporary indigenous literature emerged within just a couple of decades, and some main works of world literature had been translated into Faeroese by the middle of the 20th century. This work gained momentum from the 1960s onwards when official funds and semi-governmental publishing initiatives emerged.

Also the fine arts, music and theatre have flourished since World War II, and young Faeroe Islanders, not least Brethren, have studied arts, music and drama in Scandinavia, Britain, Europe and elsewhere, for instance at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama (RSAMD), the conservatoire of music and drama in Glasgow, Scotland. Many of them return to the Faeroes and revitalise the cultural life in the islands.

⁶⁵⁶ 'Heimstrýrslógin', The Home Rule Act of 1st April 1948.

As indicated above, many Brethren have been and are professionals. In the 1950s and 1960s the first Brethren got university education and became physicians, dentists, lawyers, lecturers and so on. For many years they have made major contributions, especially within arts and music, even rhythmical music, and they continue to play a vital role in the innovations taking place. So the future looks bright in this respect and Faeroe Islanders do not feel outside or isolated from trends emerging in neighbouring countries, not least thanks to Brethren individuals and groups. Therefore I would argue that the Brethren contributions in the nation building process has been much greater than so far acknowledged and this is also being increasingly recognised in the wider Faeroese community.

However, there are constant challenges and dangers to the language because of the enormous progress made within electronic communication, such as satellite television, the internet. New words and concepts seem to overflow the islands, and some do not think that the traditional way of constantly creating new Faeroese words is sustainable while others see just these efforts as being the only way of maintaining the vernacular and the identity of the people. It is my impression that Brethren belong to the second group and are more willing and eager to use Faeroese words and phrases, even within computing, than certain other groups of people who suggest that so-called “international words”, almost exclusively English, should be incorporated in the language. The first comprehensive and analytical history of the Faeroes was written by British historian John F. West and he called the work *Faroe: the emergence of a*

nation,⁶⁵⁷ which is in exact compliance with Benedict Anderson's theory claiming that the concept "nation", as understood today, is of relatively recent phenomenon. Regarding the Faeroe Islands, the concept has only been applicable since 1890 or later.

*

In comparison to Brethren in Britain and elsewhere, the Faeroese did not reject culture, and in many fields they made significant contributions. I would suggest that Faeroese Brethren have always been much more open towards and engaged in cultural matters, specifically but not exclusively Faeroese culture, not least in the struggle for the vernacular, even if, until quite recently, they drew a line at involvement in certain socio-cultural⁶⁵⁸ activities or even attendance at the theatre and cinema.

I would also argue that Faeroese Brethren feel more integrated within their local culture than Brethren do generally and therefore have been part of the nation building process which is a process which most UK Brethren would not have been part of. Many Faeroese Brethren who were involved in the various cultural features examined above. For instance Victor Danielsen was using the emerging Faeroese literary culture as a vehicle for distinctively Brethren ideas, such as their eschatology. So on the one hand he was explicitly promoting Brethren ideas, but on the other was implicitly contributing to the emergence of a Faeroese literary culture. Within so-called popular culture Brethren have also made major contributions, their music is modern, popular and often experimental, many Brethren participate in several all sporting activities; and some are

⁶⁵⁷ West, J., *Faroe: the emergence of a nation*, London 1972.

⁶⁵⁸ Notably 'Faeroese Dance' accompanied by drinking; but from the last interviews in section 8.3 below we can deduce that even this is not regarded so important any more.

coaches and managers. All this are highly unusual in Brethrenism and are examples and signs of the integration of Brethren in the Faeroese nation-building process.



Large hall: 'Ebenezer' in Tórshavn. Drawing by Eli Smith.

8. Ethnographic Fieldwork

8.1 Rationale

During the work with the interviews I wondered how best to present the results, and gradually it became increasingly obvious that qualitative research method best suited to this work was an ethnographic approach regarding the presentation. In this case the question is how best to explore the Faeroese Brethren movement as a cultural phenomenon and treat the data collected as acquired knowledge and a system of meanings which guide the life of a socio-cultural group.¹ This ethnography, then, is a representation of a selected aspect of Faeroese culture, namely the Brethren in the islands, their history, their branch of Christianity, their attitudes and their practices and how all these has evolved in the Faeroes. The methods of ethnographic data collection try to capture the ‘social meanings and ordinary activities’ of the interviewees or people in ‘naturally occurring settings.’² In this fieldwork the settings were various assembly halls, travelling with Brethren workers, and visiting Brethren members in their homes, in some cases several times. Thus, in a way this has meant ‘the full-time involvement of a researcher....and ongoing interaction’³ with Brethren over some years, either in person, on the telephone, or via email.

Having identified the main historical and social, cultural, theological and missiological characteristics of the Faeroese Brethren movement, it was felt necessary to test and supplement the provisional results of the research in ‘real life’, i.e. go to Brethren

¹ Geertz, C, ‘Thick description: towards an interpretative theory of culture,’ *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays*, New York 1973, pp. 3-30.

² Brewer, J. D., *Ethnography*, Philadelphia 2000, p. 10.

³ Maanen, J. Van, *Tales of the field. On writing ethnography*, Chicago 1988, p. 2.

meetings, listen and talk to people in that environment, but also to visit several assemblies and have more detailed talks and interviews with individuals in towns and villages, old and young, from various social backgrounds and occupations.

For some years many Brethren assemblies in the Faeroes have had websites, so it is not difficult to get information about meetings and people in charge; but mostly I first appealed to Brethren friends and acquaintances who were all happy to put me in touch with others who were willing and able to provide information and answer questions in most places on all islands.

8.2 Methodology

The method preferred has been to use qualitative interviews⁴ for a variety of reasons. First, I found it awkward to conduct a more formal kind of approach such as quantitative interviewing with people that I either knew or wanted to know. Second, a great quantity of amassed answers on questionnaires would hardly have given valuable information. Third, I tried to create an atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence which made it possible to talk about any aspect of Brethren life and attitudes. Experience has taught me that many people, especially older ones, feel somewhat uncomfortable and constrained if recording equipment is used, so I decided on note taking instead. Of course a number of basic questions were prepared and written down, e.g. to generate responses to Bebbington's quadrilateral definition,⁵ conversion, baptism as well as assembly history, worship, life and work; and these questions were usually asked early in the interviews,

⁴ www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/.../Qualitative%20Methodologies.htm

⁵ Bebbington, D., *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, London 1989, pp. 2-17.

depending on the interviewee's frame of mind and attitude.⁶ Consequently I have employed the ethnographic qualitative and semi- or unstructured⁷ type of interview.⁸

This kind of unstructured interview is a method where questions can be changed or adapted to meet the respondent's attitude, understanding or belief. It is not limited to a series of preset questions like the structured interview. Instead it is based on listening to the responses which the interviewee gives as the interview progresses. The unstructured interview makes it possible to ask further questions beyond what has been planned beforehand and, in addition, it makes possible a clarification of the meaning of the responses made. The advantages are that the information obtained can be questioned and corrected because it is just a well-nigh precise rendering of what the interviewee said, thus making the interviewer get back to the respondent for clarification. Furthermore, a researcher can find out important information which did not seem relevant before the interview and ask the interviewee to go further into the new topic. This type of interview is particularly suitable for sensitive subjects such as belief and faith because some people might evade certain questions in a more formal interview. However, all interviews are bound to have disadvantages, especially the so-called "interviewer effect" where the responses of the interviewee can easily be affected by the presence of the researcher because of her or his ethnicity, attitude, behaviour, perceived opinions, or response to certain answer.⁹ Often unstructured interviews can be time-consuming as the conversation can go on and on. The data collected in this way easily leads to digression

⁶ www.ngfl-cymru.org.uk/.../research.../s03research.../090a_unstructured.htm

⁷ <http://www.edu.plymouth.ac.uk/resined/interviews/inthome.htm>

⁸ Burgess, R. G., *In the field: An introduction to field research*, London 1984.

⁹ <http://www.fao.org/docrep/W3241E/w3241e06.htm>

so that some of it may be worthless. Because unstructured interviews involve a limited number of interviewees it can be difficult to make generalisations.¹⁰

In the present work a less structured kind of interviewing, talking and discussing opened up new and often unforeseen aspects and details which proved extremely helpful in the research; and it also gave insights without which the overall picture of the Brethren Movement in the Faeroes would have been incomplete. However, I have chosen to write up the interviews quite close to the way that they were conducted. The interviews were conducted in Faeroese and I have subsequently translated them into English; then they have been edited, broken up and divided into themes.

8.2.1 Aims and scope

The objectives of the four fieldtrips between 2007 to 2011 were to uncover information deemed essential and relevant to the present work, e.g. people's reasons for being Brethren, how they characterise the movement and its history, their interaction amongst themselves and with others, mainly Lutheran church people¹¹, whether they feel set apart in society, and, not least, how they see or feel their relationship to God, the Bible as well as other matters, perceived as central to the Open Brethren. It was also vital to obtain information regarding Brethren attitudes to the language and national questions, without involving narrow local party politics.¹² Additionally I got first-hand information about Brethren attitudes to and emphasis on missionary work, both at home, on fishing vessels

¹⁰ Cicourel, Aaron V., *Cognitive Sociology: Language and Meaning in Social Interaction*, New York 1974.

¹¹ Members of the established Lutheran Church.

¹² Brethren do not favour any single political party although leanings towards the national and independence parties to the centre right, mainly the rightwing People's Party, might be expected because of their promotion of Faeroese issues such as language, their independent ecclesiology and importance of autonomy, and their social conservatism; however, many Brethren have supported the (formerly) leftwing Republican Party, and others support the Social Democratic Party.

and abroad, over the past hundred years. Consequently the scope in this chapter is broad in one sense, narrow in another. I have tried to include as many aspects of Brethren beliefs, life and work as possible and have paid attention to age, background and other personal matters in order to get the widest possible representation as well as exploring as many questions as achievable. On the other hand, not much attention has been paid to other religious movements such as the Lutheran Home Mission, the Pentecostals and other groups, unless brought up by interviewees themselves.

8.2.2 Role of researcher

In my role as the researcher I never felt as an intruder but more like a ‘participant-observer’;¹³ and being a Faeroe Islander myself, my positive attitude to the Brethren movement, and the fact that almost all interviewees knew me (or my father¹⁴) beforehand or soon got to know me helped considerably. Some Brethren were even relatives, not unusual in such a small island community, and therefore contact and a degree of intimacy was soon created. Even awkward questions were answered willingly and complicated issues explained and discussed in a much friendlier way than anticipated. Only one or two were slightly difficult to talk to at the very start of the conversation; most really seemed eager to tell all that I wanted to know, and if anything they were a bit reluctant to say things that might be interpreted as ‘boasting’ Later I learned from others that some had downplayed brilliant initiatives and had remarkable members; and at later visits or in telephone conversations these details have hopefully been remedied.

¹³ Maanen, John Van, *Tales of the field – On writing Ethnography*, London 1988, pp. 2-3.

¹⁴ My father, Hans Debes Joensen, MD, was Chief Medical Officer who also taught medicine, health and first aid at the Navigational College where many of the older Brethren went at that time. Also he travelled to every single village periodically to vaccinate against smallpox.

People interviewed

1. Jógvan Gerðalíð, Klaksvík, born in 1916. Abbreviated as JG.
2. John Høj, Klaksvík, born in 1929. Abbreviated as JH.
3. Roald Norðberg, Vágur, born in 1930. Abbreviated as RN.
4. Kári Hammer, Sumba, born in 1936. Abbreviated as KH.
5. John í Skemmuni, Porkeri, born in 1954. Abbreviated as JÍS.
6. Rodmundur í Liða, Tórshavn, born in 1931. Abbreviated as RíL.
7. Zacharias Zachariassen, Norðagøta, born in 1935. Abbreviated as ZZ.
8. Osvald Sivertsen, Norðdepli, born in 1935. Abbreviated as OS.
9. Richard Danielsen, Fugafjørður, born in 1937. Abbreviated as RD.
10. Martin Nielsen, Sørvágur, born in 1939. Abbreviated as MN.
11. Karl Johan Nielsen, Vatnsøyrar, born in 1942. Abbreviated as KJN.
12. Jógvan K. Mørkøre, Eiði, born in 1940. Abbreviated as JKM.
13. Kjartan Petersen, Sandur, born in 1943. Abbreviated as KP.
14. Niels Absalonsen, Viðareiði, born in 1953. Abbreviated as NA.
15. Sigurð Simonsen, Fuglafjørður, born in 1942. Abbreviated as SiS.
16. Jústines Eliassen, Leirvík, born in 1947. Abbreviated as JE.
17. Hanus Lómstein, Toftir, born in 1947. Abbreviated as HL.
18. Símun í Túni, Toftir, born in 1954. Abbreviated as SÍT.
19. Victor Nielsen, Klaksvík, born in 1961. Abbreviated as VN.
20. Jens Bech, Skála, born in 1965. Abbreviated as JB.
21. Arni Zachariassen, Norðagøta, born in 1983. Abbreviated as ÁZ.

8.3 Interviews

8.3.1 Beginnings seen in retrospect

In June 2007, I visited Zacharias Zachariassen, born in 1935,¹⁵ in his home at Norðagøta on the island Eysturoy. Having completed his apprenticeship in 1956, he worked on a trawler and in 1958 experienced an evangelical calling which encouraged him to start studies at a Bible College in Britain, the first Faeroese Brethren worker to do so.

Q: “Did any of your ancestors have contact with the early Brethren?”

A: “My grandparents knew Old Sloan quite well; and he used to stay with them on his visits. They tried to teach him Faeroese phrases and sometimes he found it difficult to pronounce particular sounds; but after he married a Faeroese woman and settled in the islands around 1880, he gradually learned the language.” (ZZ)

I visited the small village Norðdepli twice and spoke to Osvald Siverson, retired fisherman, mate and sometimes skipper, born in 1935, in his and his wife’s home just beside the Brethren hall.

Q: “How did the movement start here?”

A: “Arthur Brend, Andrew Sloan¹⁶ and others from Tórshavn normally travelled through this village on their way to Viðareiði; and in 1907 a woman experienced an evangelical conversion. After that they held meetings in her home, often joined by Brethren from Viðareiði who sometimes came here. She was married and had two children but sadly her husband was lost at sea; but the villagers helped and assisted her. Twenty years later, in 1928, she was baptised on the beach and other people joined, so around this time there was an assembly here. In 1934 the Lord’s Table and a Sunday school were inaugurated and we started building the hall in 1943 and it was completed in 1948. The 1930s were a bad time in the Faeroes with widespread poverty; but in spite of this most Brethren halls were built in this period. We moved into a new and bigger hall, ‘Hermon’, in 1993.” (OS)

¹⁵ Trained as a plumber; then studied at an English Bible College (Moorlands) for 3 years. Since 1965 fulltime Brethren worker, author, poet, translator and publisher.

¹⁶ Short biographies of both in chapter 5.

In Fuglafjørður I went to meetings in the Brethren hall, Siloa, to which Victor Danielsen¹⁷ belonged from the late 1920s until his death in 1961. His son Richard Danielsen, born in 1937, now lives in the house; and I visited him one afternoon. Over a cup of coffee we started talking:

Q: “How did your father come to live in this town?”

A: “A lady from here had been working in Britain and been converted there; she married a man from Tvøroyri and they built a house in Fuglafjørður in 1924; but shortly after they moved to Tvøroyri. A shopkeeper in Tórshavn who had come to belief in Old Sloan’s time, bought the house in 1928; and then he offered my parents to live there. This is where our hall ‘Siloa’ is today; and indeed the ground floor of old house was the first hall. In 1933 the family moved into this house, only minutes from the hall; and we have lived here since then.” (RD)

The last night before going back home to Glasgow in September 2009, I stayed a night at the Airport Hotel on Vágur and phoned the men responsible for the assembly and hall Kedron in Sørvágur; a moment later Martin Nielsen, born in 1939, and dentist Karl Johan Nielsen, born in 1942, came to see me. Their grandfather, baker Martin Nielsen (1878-1951),¹⁸ was a highly respected early Brethren member; and there is an interesting story about his conversion:¹⁹ In 1907 Missionary D. J. Danielsen,²⁰ his and others had meetings in Sørvágur; but most villagers claimed that they were heretics. Some got interested anyway and went to listen what these men had to say and agreed with much of their message; and especially the concept of the assurance of salvation caught on. Martin, however, was sceptical and decided to see these men and demand explanations. So he talked to Missionary Danielsen who read some quotations from the Bible, e.g. 1st John, 5:

¹⁷ Biography in chapter 4.

¹⁸ Mentioned in chapter 3.

¹⁹ *Góð Tíðindi* (Good News), August 1967; *Røddin* (The Voice), 7-8/1978; cited in Berghamar, S., - *men Gdd gav vøkst*, Tórshavn 1992, pp. 328-332.

²⁰ Biography in chapter 4.

13-15, and John's Gospel, 3: 14-16; 5: 24 and several others saying that he who believes in the Son has eternal life and knows this. Martin replied claiming that Danielsen read from another Bible than his; but the missionary then wrote down the passages and asked him to look them up in his own Bible. Back home he realised that his Bible said exactly the same; and shortly afterwards Martin was converted and baptised in Sørvágur's Lake.²¹

Q: "The Brethren movement started quite early here, didn't it?"

A: "Yes, already in the late 1860s and '70s Old Sloan visited this island; and later Brend and Missionary Danielsen also had meetings in the dance hall here; and in 1897 some people decided to leave the established church in favour of the new faith.²² In 1907 an assembly was formed and the first hall is from 1908."

Q: "Was your grandfather a prominent figure in the movement from the start?"

A: "He was first a baker at Miðvágur but then moved to Sørvágur, married and became a baker here; he was a leading Brethren worker from his conversion onwards." (MN)

One morning in June 2010 I took the bus from Tórshavn to Gomlurætt²³ on the southwest of Streymoy to catch the ferry to Skopun on Sandoy; and there carpenter Kjartan Petersen, born in 1943, waited to take me to the village of Sandur. On arrival his wife had prepared a traditional Faeroese lunch, and then we started talking.

Q: "Sandur is quite an historical village, isn't it?"

A: "Yes, there are many legends and folktales about what went on in the medieval times here; and Sandur has been an important church village. There are tales about priests here both before and after the Reformation, some of them not particularly kind to the clergy. But most people here still belong to the established church."

Q: "How was the new kind of Christianity introduced to the island?"

A: "William Sloan²⁴ visited villages on Sandoy quite early on, in the late 19th century, as did Alexander Mitchell.²⁵ A small assembly was established at

²¹ Sørvágsvatn or Leitisvatn, a big lake near Vatnsoyrar, not far from Sørvágur; adjacent to the airport.

²² Individuals, meetings and assemblies on Vágur are mentioned in chapter 3.

²³ Where the ferry for Sandoy leaves.

²⁴ Biographical notes in chapters 3 and 4.

²⁵ Mentioned in chapter 4.

Skálavík to the east of the island. There they made a hall in Demmus Nicodemussen's basement where later his son Melchior Nicodemussen²⁶ had Sunday school and meetings,²⁷ and his mother came from a Brethren family at Viðareiði. In this village, Sandur, we regard all evangelicals as one, Brethren, Home Mission people, and Pentecostals, although there are differences, for instance about eternal salvation. Andreas Hentze (1911-1983), a very patient and friendly man like Sloan, and Poul Nikkel Hentze (1901-1983) were the first ones to start an assembly here and many fishermen were converted at sea and then baptised in the lake.²⁸ The house where the present hall, Elim, is now was built for visiting missionaries and others in 1943; and in 1962 it was renewed into a hall. Before that Brethren had meetings in the Abstinence Hall as did many others.²⁹ And now (2009) we have bought the Pentecostal hall because there are not many left in that denomination." (KP)

In April 2009 a Brethren friend took me from Klaksvík to Viðareiði in his car and there I visited farmer Niels Absalonsen, born in 1953, descendant of one of the first Brethren in the village.³⁰ The local hotel/restaurant had closed for the winter, so first he and his wife gave me lunch consisting of traditional food, e.g. wind-dried mutton, one of the national dishes. After that he took me to his farm and showed me the three halls which had been in the village, only the remainders of the first one, from 1906, still visible, the second one, built in 1920, now a storehouse, and the present one, built in 1991, with all modern appliances and used in a variety of ways because it is quite big and purpose-built. Here I noticed that the ring tone on his mobile phone was the Faeroese National anthem; and when asked why, he said that he was a staunch republican. After this excursion we went back to his home and talked over coffee and cakes.

Q: "Why do you think that the Brethren movement became so attractive to people?"

A: "It was a new way of bringing the gospel to people, a new message never heard in the church. The Lutheran church was forced upon the islanders. During

²⁶ 1872-1962

²⁷ Account of Skálavík Assembly in chapter 3.

²⁸ Sandsvatn, Sand Lake, a big lake in the middle of the village.

²⁹ "Losja" in Faeroese, "Lodge"; halls of the organisation NIOGT, found in many places in the Faeroes.

³⁰ See chapter 3.

the Reformation a farmer on the island of Svinoy was dragged out of his home and almost lost his life because he would not change his faith.³¹ My great-grandfather, Johan Justesen,³² was old when he came to belief; but my other great-grandfather, Absalon Absalonsen,³³ converted when quite young. People change and develop in different ways; and for some it takes longer. The grandfathers were concerned about the state of the church, the grandmothers about infant baptism; and for many, baptism was a problem. Some see paedobaptism as abuse of infants. For me it was difficult and I waited a long time until I was baptised, but always went to meetings in the hall. Baptism is not unimportant according to Acts 8:36-37; and baptism demands faith. Evangelicalism opened up a new way of seeing and understanding Christianity.” (NA)

One evening, 18th April 2010, my brother-in-law in Fuglafjørður took me by car to visit the dentist Jústinus Eliassen, born in 1947, living in the neighbouring village Leirvík. His wife served coffee and cakes and the three of us sat talking in their living room for a couple of hours.

Q: “When did the assembly start in Leirvík?”

A: “Around the middle of the 1920s people came together in a house where there was a grocery shop; and in 1932/33 a hall was built. The Brethren missionary Victor Danielsen³⁴ who lived in Fuglafjørður helped with the masonry work. Ten families, most of them industrialists, formed the assembly which grew steadily. In my childhood in the 1950s the fear of God was everywhere and the social structure was practically unchanged. Assembly life was a different world and the atmosphere was very warm.”

Q: “What do people emphasise regarding testimonies?”

A: “I read the scriptures and remember that Victor³⁵ and my father³⁶ read Acts together; around that time Victor composed his wonderful hymn “Tá skygdi í...” [Then it cleared...].³⁷ I find it important to read in the Bible regularly. Our testimonies are based on everyday life, what has occurred to us and nature, all linked closely to Scripture.” (JE)

³¹ Hansen, S, *Tey byggja land* (They build land), Vol. 2, Klaksvík 1973, pp. 42f.

³² Mentioned in chapter 4.

³³ Mentioned in chapter 4.

³⁴ Mentioned in chapter 4.5.

³⁵ Victor Danielsen, Brethren missionary, hymn writer and bible translator. Cf. section 4.5.

³⁶ Klæmint Eliassen (1917-2000), local ship-owner and businessman who converted to the Brethren.

³⁷ 3rd stanza of ‘Tá skygdi í myrkri svarta’, *Songbók Guds Fólks* (God’s Peoples Songbook), the Brethren Hymnody, 1974-edition, No. 761.

On 21st April 2010 I visited ‘Betesda’, the Brethren hall in Klaksvík, and had a brief talk with the leader of the assembly, Victor Nielsen, born in 1961.

Q: “How is the Betesda Assembly organised?”

A: “I would say that the leadership is stable; that is to say that when one man leaves the others appoint another one in his place. In some assemblies they present the newly appointed leader at a meeting; and in other places the assembly itself appoints the elders. This is one of many details where the proceedings are not the same in all assemblies. We don’t use the term ‘elders’ but ‘committee’ or ‘steering committee’. There are seven men in our committee and we are responsible for running the hall, meetings and other arrangements and initiatives. We are the guardians of the hall and leaders of the assembly.”

Q: “This is probably the largest assembly in the islands. Why is this?”

A: “Yes, at least in proportion to the population.³⁸ When the assembly was established and the first hall built in the 1920s the town Klaksvík grew enormously because of its importance as a fishing port in the area and the possibilities of establishing fish processing industries. People came from all parts of the Faeroes and settled here because the Kjølbro³⁹ enterprise required skilled and unskilled workers of both sexes. Klaksvík was a new place for them; and their lives had changed completely. Maybe also insecurity, frustrations and a feeling of loneliness were contributing factors why so many joined the Brethren assembly.”
(VN)

On Friday 12th March 2010 I went by bus from Glasgow to Aberdeen to interview Arni Zachariassen, born in 1983, from Norðagøta; but at the time he was a student of theology at the University of Aberdeen. Over a cup of coffee and a cake at a café we had an interesting conversation.⁴⁰

Q: “How far do you think that the Brethren in the Faeroes are an indigenous movement?”

A: “I regard the Brethren movement in the islands as a Faeroese movement, a home-grown branch of Christianity. While the British origins of Brethrenism are important, one has to remember the unique social setting in which Faeroese Brethrenism developed: Brethrenism was the only real alternative to the Lutheran state church for a long time, which meant that it faced some challenges that

³⁸ It is estimated that between 40 and 50 percent of the population are Brethren.

³⁹ Mentioned in chapter 5.3.1.

⁴⁰ It is interesting to note that Arni sometimes uses the term ‘Church’ where older Brethren would use ‘Assembly’ throughout.

Brethren in Britain and elsewhere didn't. It adjusted to these challenges remarkably well, while still maintaining the distinctive Brethren flavour. Right from the beginning, it was for the Faroese people by the Faroese people, one could say."

Q: "To what degree do you think that the movement was dominated from Britain?"

A: "I don't think that this was ever the case. Dominion is quite un-Brethren, I think. While British, primarily Scottish, Brethren missionaries introduced the evangelical message or teaching to the Faeroe Islanders, the Brethren way of doing church which those missionaries introduced is itself anti-authoritarian and informal in nature, making domination very difficult, at least from the top down. Bottom-up influence, rather than domination, has always taken place, of course, and indeed often from Britain. But the ecclesial structure of Brethrenism inherently resists domination. Consider also the fact that local assemblies are autonomous and what one assembly does is largely its own business." (AZ)

8.3.2 Biblicism

I put the question on the authority of the Bible to my friend at Viðareiði.

Q: "So how do you decide on the right teaching?"

A: "We have to go by the Bible; and the Bible must be followed literally, the whole of the Bible, as is said, for instance, in Psalms 119 and 140. However, every single individual has to find out and decide for her- or himself when the time is ripe for conversion and baptism. Here the environment is important; and parental influence can be decisive but without force. Deep faith has to do with solidarity." (NA)

My older friend, the doctor in Tórshavn, answered in this way.

Q: "How do you understand Biblicism?"

A: "As far as possible we understand the Bible in a literal way, as it was originally written, and realise that the allegories represent a deeper, spiritual or moral meaning. I also adhere to Dispensationalism where we acknowledge that dispensations or periods have come and gone. It makes sense to see it like this and makes it easier to understand Scripture, not least regarding Israel which failed and was replaced by the Church but will re-emerge in the future. The most memorable day in my life was when the Bible was published in our own language in 1949!" (RÍL)

During the interview with Zacharias Zachariassen I put a similar question to him:

Q: “Is the Bible regarded as basic?”

A: “Yes, the Bible is fundamental and we use scripture to guide us in all our affairs. We obey the Bible and not human authority; and we regard 98 per cent of the Bible as containing the original meaning, the will and purpose of God. We adhere to what is called verbal literalism; but at the same time we are aware that copying, translation and editing may have led to misunderstandings. Charismatic groups claim that miracles are still going on; but here Brethren apply dispensationalism to prevent us from confusing different periods in God’s plan and dealings with humanity. We try to distinguish between what God did then and does not do now; but in an earlier dispensation God proclaimed and validated the gospel by way of signs and miracles. Today it is not so. However, many people have inclinations towards the charismatic and it is good that there are groups satisfying their needs.” (ZZ)

8.3.3 Conversionism

Next I wanted to investigate how Faeroese Brethren view the crucial questions regarding conversion and baptism and see how far they comply with original Brethren positions:

Q: “Is conversion the most important thing for Faeroese Brethren?”

A: “Yes, the starting point; but it is a personal decision. We regard conversion as revival; and Baptism is a symbolic act of funeral and resurrection which takes place after conversion. Baptism and Breaking Bread are crucial spiritual and symbolic acts for us; but Faeroese assemblies are very open and people who are not baptised are not barred from breaking the bread.” (ZZ)

An old man remembers his conversion and what it led to in his life.

Q: “When did you become a Brethren member?”

A: “At our farm, Uppi í Gerði,⁴¹ people were High Church people, I would say. In the church, people went to communion and thought that they got grace and mercy. My mother was converted in 1919, so it was a spiritual environment and I had heard about Jesus from my earliest childhood. At 13 I had a religious experience which led to my conversion shortly afterwards;⁴² and in my home there was no prejudice or bigotry as far as I can remember. In the late 1920s and the 1930s many people left the established church in favour of the Brethren movement because while reading the Bible they realised that the church did not work according to Scripture. The first hall here, ‘Betesda’, was completed in 1917; and during the winter⁴³ the fishermen and sailors held meetings; but during the

⁴¹ Place name and name of the farm.

⁴² Jógvan can tell the exact time and circumstances when this happened.

⁴³ The fishing season was from April to October; so here winter refers to October to March.

summer they were away, so the women were in charge.⁴⁴ In the beginning there were great disagreements, bordering on abhorrence, between the established church and the Brethren movement, especially in the 1940s; but as time went by these skirmishes softened, probably because many highly respected fishermen, skippers and ship-owners were members of the assembly.⁴⁵ Two of the most interesting preachers were Jens K. Isaksen⁴⁶ and J. F. Kjølbro who were both important industrialists in Klaksvík.” (JG)

In the afternoon I had an appointment with John Høj, born in 1929, formerly a worker at Kjølbro’s fish processing plants, and for many years supervisor of the work. He was employed with Kjølbro for 43 years in total. Later he was manager of his own company.

Q: “Were you active within Brethren during the war?”

A: “Yes, at the age of 14 I came to conversion, read the Bible and was baptised in Betesda shortly afterwards. My grandmother on Skúvoy said that she did not want me to be baptised again, I remember. When 15 or 16, I helped at the Sunday school; and around that time I joined the Betesda choir and visited other assemblies where I gave personal witness. We often travelled on the boat *Sendiboðið*⁴⁷ in 1946 and 1947. Then I was Sunday school teacher until the age of 50 when my son took over. We had Bible classes for children aged from 7-8 to 14. There were frustrations and uncertainty before salvation; and young people sometimes had difficulties in grasping the notions of certainty and relying on Scripture and obtaining a sense of peace and tranquillity with the living God. Christianity is related to history; and at the Sunday school we worked through verses in the Bible. The younger ones only learned a few words at a time and put them into context but the older ones learned whole passages. Bible classes were held Monday evenings at 7, and the children got 10 questions, based on the Bible, each time to work with until next time when the answers were discussed or corrected. We also arranged outings and other things for Sunday school pupils; and there were New Year’s parties, 30th December for children, 31st for adults.” (JG)

Another Brethren leader emphasised the link between baptism and salvation.

Q: “How do you view conversion and baptism?”

⁴⁴ However, women did not preach.

⁴⁵ Such as J. F. Kjølbro (1887-1967) who was probably the greatest businessman, industrialist and ship-owner in the Faeroes from the 1930s to the 1960s, employing more than 1,000 people. for a short biography see section 6.2.10

⁴⁶ Short biography in section 4.4.

⁴⁷ The Brethren boat stationed at Klaksvík and sailing to villages in the Northern Isles; mentioned above mentioned above.

A: “We can read what Matthew writes about baptism; and there is a clear requirement regarding re-baptism or believers’ baptism. It is seen as a measure of obedience after conversion. Baptism is closely linked with salvation which is the precondition for sanctification. Often young people are from 13-14 to 15-16 when baptised. There is a personal talk before baptism to explain the purpose and understanding of the act.” (RíL)

I was also interested in hearing how Brethren themselves see the importance of their movement, so during my interview with farmer Niels Absalonsen I asked:

Q: “Why was it important that the Brethren movement came to the islands?”

A: “Religious conviction and assurance were important; and this involved belief in Christ and in eternal life. It is essential to be aware of the teaching of Scripture, to receive Jesus and live with and in Him as Paul says. I find it reassuring that John mentions in 5:24 that nobody should be judged in advance.⁴⁸ Baptism belongs to the process but afterwards, as indicated in Acts 8; and in Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus in John 3:5-7 it is quite clear that ‘a person is born physically of human parents, but is born spiritually of the Spirit’ and ‘of water and the Spirit’; in 3:7 it says that ‘you must all be born again’. So the sequence is justification, sanctification and, finally, glorification. This is of crucial importance in Brethren theology. Men belonging to the Home Mission are often great believers but not in the question of baptism; on fishing vessels Brethren and Home Mission men often had meetings together and we agreed on everything, i.e. conversion, salvation, etc., but the question of baptism was left open. We tried, however, to point out places in Scripture and argue about strong faith or, rather, real faith.”

Brethren do not keep records or statistics, so it is extremely difficult to come across such materials. However, Siloa in Fuglafjørður has kept records of baptisms since the late 1920s as the only assembly in the islands; and Richard has these notes:

Q: “Could we have a look at the lists that you have got?”

A: “Yes, of course; but this is unusual in Brethren assemblies. I do not know of any other assembly which had such material. These lists comprise the years from 1929 to 2009.

I should add that some have been baptised elsewhere and people from other villages have been baptised here. And often some, 2-3 people, are baptised at the same time. The reason why so many were baptised in 1937 was probably caused by an accident where a man drowned in the harbour; and in 1973 the preacher

⁴⁸ The Faeroese word “fordømdur” means “fore-deemed”, i.e. “before judged”.

Tom Roberts from the Bahamas visited the Faeroes, leading to many conversions in the islands.”⁴⁹ (RD)

Baptisms at Siloa in Fuglafjørður 1929-2009:

1929	3	1949	7	1969	0	1989	12
1930	2	1950	10	1970	12	1990	1
1931	3	1951	1	1971	3	1991	0
1932	18	1952	3	1972	0	1992	0
1933	2	1953	6	1973	63	1993	0
1934	25	1954	1	1974	1	1994	7
1935	5	1955	6	1975	0	1995	4
1936	17	1956	7	1976	9	1996	1
1937	39	1957	2	1977	32	1997	3
1938	8	1958	0	1978	6	1998	3
1939	6	1959	0	1979	9	1999	4
1940	0	1960	10	1980	0	2000	4
1941	0	1961	2	1981	0	2001	0
1942	5	1962	5	1982	8	2002	2
1943	13	1963	2	1983	13	2003	3
1944	14	1964	3	1984	0	2004	10
1945	14	1965	15	1985	0	2005	5
1946	13	1966	5	1986	4	2006	1

⁴⁹ With thanks compared with Jóannes I. Joensen’s (1951-) list, reviewed and discussed with him.

1947	8	1967	3	1987	0	2007	0
1948	5	1968	13	1988	0	2008	2

On a Sunday morning in April 2007 I was stuck at one of the main bus stops because there is no bus connection to Eiði on Sundays. So radio mechanic and politician Jógvan K. Mørkøre, born in 1940, picked me up and we drove to his home in Eiði, the north-western town on Eysturoy. Having known him and his wife for years, we first had dinner together and then went to another house for a talk, bringing coffee and cakes with us.

Q: “Have you ever had a religious experience that you remember?”

A: “My parents were church people; and I remember clearly when I came to personal faith when 12 years old. It happened in the evening of 30th February 1952 and felt as if a strong light from a torch passed my eyes. For some time I had been worried about right and wrong, what came after death and the godly; but this experience removed these worries and made me feel safe in the assurance of faith.”

While visiting the east and north of the Faeroes, I stayed with my brother-in-law, fisherman, skipper, captain and now fish farmer, Sigurð Simonsen, born in 1942, who is also mayor of the town. He has a flat in the basement of his home and that is where I stayed and conducted some of the interviews. Being an active Brethren member himself, I discussed many issues with him.

Q: “Were your parents Brethren?”

A: “No, not until after they had been married and settled in Fuglafjørður. My father went to the Folk High School and then to the Navigational College; he was

first a young fisherman, then skipper, ship-owner⁵⁰ and industrialist. In 1938 my mother, who had been a bookkeeper and clerk, was converted, and then my father had some traumatic days and nights and realised that he also needed closeness to God. Hasty as he was, he immediately went to missionary Victor Danielsen⁵¹ asking to be baptised right away, but Victor calmed him down and suggested that it could wait until the Sunday. So both my parents left the established church in favour of the Brethren.⁵² My older siblings were baptised in church, the younger ones not. I was baptised in 1967, aged 24.” (SiS)

In the morning of 23rd April 2010 I had an appointment with Brethren missionary Jens Bech, born in 1965, at his home at Skála. We had tea and scones and went on talking about the movement.

Q: “Were your parents Brethren?”

A: “No, they belonged to the established Lutheran church; but when the Bahamas evangelist Tom Roberts had meetings in the Faeroes in the late 1960s, they converted and were baptised. So I was baptised as an infant; but my parents let me decide whether I wanted to be confirmed in the church. Instead I was baptised within the Brethren aged 14½. Just before that I went to meetings regularly and have done so since. I was bullied at school and thought a lot about religious matters.”

Wondering how younger people in modern times perceived concepts such as ‘salvation’ and ‘assurance’ I asked a young man:

Q: “Don’t some young people have problems with salvation and assurance?”

A: “Some do; but doesn’t everyone? Maybe it has become a more pressing issue in recent decades, as more and more Faeroese young people go abroad to study and there are introduced to all sorts of influences and experiences that they wouldn’t encounter in the relatively homogenous Faeroese culture. Meeting people of other brands of Christianity, other faiths and no faith at all can prompt some questioning of one’s identity. In addition to actually going abroad, Faeroese young people enjoy the same sort of popular entertainment as other young people in the Western world. They use the internet. So they face the same religious

⁵⁰ He had the first sea going vessel built in the Faeroes, at Tórshavnar Skipasmiðja (Shipyard) in 1939.

⁵¹ Biography in chapter 4.5.

⁵² I would like to add that his father’s brother was a missionary for the Home Mission.

pluralism and questioning young people in Denmark or Britain would do, if in a mediated form.”

Q: “What about doubt?”

A: “The growing challenge to the faith by aforementioned exposure to other cultures and beliefs can create doubts, yes. Personally, I wish the church did a better job at meeting some of those doubts. I feel that Brethren assemblies, with our not having any formal creeds or statements of faith, are in a unique position to accommodate questions in an open and honest way, with reference to the Bible and what it says about the nature of salvation. On the other hand, it might be exactly the missing creeds and not having anything concrete to hold on to that makes people nervous in face of questioning and doubt.” (AZ)

8.3.4 Crucicentrism

Then I thought it relevant to ask Faeroese Brethren about their attitudes to the second point - crucicentrism - in Bebbington’s quadrilateral definition of Evangelicalism:

Q: “Do you attach too much importance on the Cross?”

A: “No, I do not agree. According to John, Jesus carried the Cross; and it says that ‘everyone who wants to follow me must carry his own Cross’. It represents the collected truth about the fulfilled work: The Cross; and most truths emerge from there, also symbolically. Phrases such as ‘The Old Rugged Cross’ are nonsensical, and Christians must consider the crucial importance of the tree.

Q: “Why so much blood?”

A: “We are often criticised for that. And I know that nothing makes such a mess and dirt as blood; but it also cleanses and rinses. Blood was part of Jesus’ death; but within the Brethren movement we do not adore or worship blood!” (RfL)

Another Brethren worker expressed it this way:

Q: “How important is the Cross for Faeroese Brethren?”

A: “The Cross is the foundation of Christianity. The crucifixion is about the restoration of our relationship with God, the central message, prophesied by Isaiah. Jesus’ death on Golgotha was instrumental for this restoration, fulfilled with the resurrection; and this is symbolised in our baptism. Sadly, however, the grisly drama almost 2,000 years ago can be and is often misused.” (ZZ)

8.3.5 Missionary work

An important part of the work performed by Faeroese Brethren is missionary work, both in the islands and in neighbouring countries where many islanders have settled for shorter or longer periods in connection with training and higher education; and since World War II increasing numbers of Faeroese missionaries have been working further afield:

Q: “Did you know Victor Danielsen⁵³ personally?”

A: “Yes, I knew him quite well because he often came to Klaksvík to preach. I also remember that when I was 18-19, he used to read from his Bible translation to hear what people thought of it; and this was undoubtedly important for him because he wanted the translation to be easily understood by ordinary people. So Victor used every opportunity to find out what workers, fishermen, children, housewives and others thought of his translation and to hear what they suggested. Of course he was also a great preacher although some obviously thought that occasionally he was too straightforward and even too fierce and, others might even say, harsh⁵⁴ in his preaching of the Gospel.”

In 1962 an Icelandic journal⁵⁵ printed an interview with Zacharias Zachariassen who was one of three Faroe Islanders visiting the country, having meetings in and around Akureyri⁵⁶ with song, testimonies and preaching. The following is an extract of the interview:

Q: “What were the reasons for your decision to start working as a Brethren missionary in your homeland?”

A: “I was converted at the age of 15. I found that God’s calling came in various ways when I felt that I was not my own but rather bought. There were also circumstances in my life and the environment which affected me. I had five siblings who were born deaf...I asked myself why God had showed me the immense grace of having all my senses intact. Therefore I wanted to give God something for what he had given me. The following years God spoke to me about this. When I was 22 years old (a British missionary) visited the Faeroes and talked about the severe shortage of missionaries...and then I decided to go to a Bible College in England.”

Q: “What subjects are studied at this college?”

⁵³ The Brethren leader and translator. See sections 4.5 and 6.4.2.

⁵⁴ This was indeed the opinion of many people outside the Brethren movement who accused him of threatening people into conversion.

⁵⁵ “Heimsókn fra Faereyum” (Invasion from Faroe), *Norðurljósið*, 9/1962, p. 66. Translated from Icelandic into English by me.

⁵⁶ The largest town in the north of Iceland.

A: "First and foremost the whole Bible is studied and general ideas emphasised. Much study goes into important books of the New Testament. Church History, Greek and Hebrew are also taught at the college as well as more practical subjects regarding missionary work ... How to preach the gospel is an important subject involving placements in various assemblies."

One evening in July 1910, my friend and host in Fuglafjørður took me to an interesting meeting at the assembly hall, Siloa:

Q: "We are going to a meeting tonight. Is it a special meeting?"

A: "Yes, an English preacher will be talking and singing. He is called Brother Clifford and has been here several times and also visited other assemblies. When somebody has opened the meeting, he starts singing from his seat and continues singing while walking up to the platform. Brother Clifford is not within the Brethren movement but an Evangelical, and we sometimes have guest speakers who are not Brethren. His missionary work in Eastern Europe is supported by Brethren individuals here. Quite recently he arranged an open meeting for people belonging to the Home Mission and the Brethren in the Town Culture House."

It is quite common that assemblies invite guest speakers who are not-Brethren.

The morning after, I went to see one of the youngest of the seven full-time Brethren workers in the Faeroes:

Q: "How did you arrive at the decision to become a fulltime Brethren evangelist?"

A: "The IT-business I had was quite successful; but I felt a desire to mature and grow in my faith. I had considered this for quite some time before talking to my wife and others; and I spent much time on my own and had the feeling that God wanted me to take up the challenge and serve Him. Then my wife supported me 100 per cent. I prayed and felt that God gave me an inner peace, leading me gently onwards. Even since my first year at grammar school I had considered going to a Bible school; and my wife had already been at such a college. I was inspired by the Bible, not least by Titus 1: 1 where Paul says 'I was chosen and sent to help the faith of God's chosen people and to lead them to the truth taught by our religion...'; and decided to do something about it as a servant."

Q: "What does your work consist of?"

A: “I have been working at Zarepta⁵⁷ and am now on the committee running the centre. Most of my work, however, is done in this assembly and those in various other villages; this is mostly Bible lessons, Sunday school work, organising conferences and so on. I have now been a full-time Brethren evangelist for 8 years. It is very demanding and requires much preparation; and the day is too short.” (JB)

I was interested in learning what attitudes younger people have to missionary work in other parts of the world:

Q: “Are all young people expected to participate in missionary work?”

A: “No. They are encouraged to do so from time to time, but I don’t think there’s wide spread expectation that they should do, among the young people themselves or those who are older. That said, there are some young who do missionary work. Many of them have worked on the Operation Mobilisation ships and have done other short-term missions with OM. The “serious” long-term missionaries tend to work with New Tribes Mission, but of those, there are only a handful of young people. A positive development, in my eyes, is the growing understanding of humanitarian work as mission. A small, but significant number of young people have travelled to impoverished countries to do that sort of mission work in the last couple of years and Faeroese Brethren assemblies have long delivered aid, especially in the form of clothes, to Eastern Europe. Young people sometimes go on those trips.” (AZ)

8.3.6 Activism

One of the oldest Brethren leaders in Klaksvík is the 94-years-old Jógvan Gerðalíð, born in 1916, still a working farmer and active within the Betesda⁵⁸ assembly in the town. I visited him in June 2007⁵⁹ and over a cup of tea and cakes, served by his wife, we started talking. Sadly Jógvan died in 2012.

Q: “How did you experience the assembly?”

A: “When I was an adolescent and a young man, the Betesda Assembly was relatively new; and many of the leaders came from villages in the Northern Islands, for instance Jens K. Isaksen and some others came from Viðareiði; so that assembly declined and the ones who had settled in Klaksvík went to Viðareiði to

⁵⁷ The Brethren Course and Leisure Centre, discussed in chapter 4.

⁵⁸ Most Faeroese assemblies and halls have biblical names.

⁵⁹ Also visited him in 2009.

have meetings regularly. I really liked listening to people's testimonies at meetings and to hear them talk on and from the Bible in Faeroese. What I found particularly heartening was that each assembly was free, the word was free, and all could talk. Testimonies came from the heart and were not read or otherwise prepared; and when I joined the assembly, Brethren already had their own songbook in Faeroese." (JG)

Q: "So have you been quite active in the assembly all the time?"

A: "I have tried my best, both at preaching, witnessing and organising. I often joined Victor Danielsen,⁶⁰ whom I knew from childhood, on his visits around the islands; and we had meetings in a great many places; both in halls and at open air meetings. The Betesda Choir went on a concert tour to Denmark in 1946 and there they recorded the songs. I became interested in this and discussed recording with the technicians and our singers; and in 1948 we decided to buy recording equipment and try to make our own recordings. It seemed to work satisfactorily so we recorded several songs onto 78 rpm records as the first ones to try this in the Faeroes."

Q: "Is there much cooperation between assemblies?"

A: "I mentioned Viðareiði earlier; and I think that larger and stronger assemblies help and support the smaller and weaker ones. So there is, of course, cooperation; but there is also some competition between assemblies. This must not lead to arrogance; the important thing is to be reborn and then there is no place for arrogance. Lay preachers visit assemblies in the smaller villages; and since the war we have organised conferences for assemblies once or twice a year in one part of the country or for all Faeroese assemblies. We also cooperate in connection with Zarepta, publishing, travels abroad and missionary work in other continents." (JG)

In the afternoon I visited another long-term Brethren leader in Klaksvík:

Q: "Who is responsible for the assembly and the hall?"

A: "We have a committee⁶¹ which is responsible and whose members are guardians of the Hall. There are seven men on this committee and there are often quite heated discussions before agreements are reached. This is the nucleus of the assembly and its work; and I have been on the committee until now."⁶²

Q: "Were there many memorable preachers?"

A: "I would like to mention two here in Klaksvík. The great industrialist J. K. Kjølbro became one of the Brethren before my time and he was a rather intellectual and not too intense speaker of the Gospel; but he was remarkably well informed in biblical matters and always interesting to listen to. His opposite was the skipper and ship-owner Jens Klæmint Isaksen⁶³ who was more like an agitator for the cause, a spiritual fighter and inspiring preacher although not so much an

⁶⁰ Short biography in section 4.5.

⁶¹ Most Faeroese assemblies call it "Elders" or the "Council of Elders".

⁶² I.e. 2007.

⁶³ Short biography in section 4.4.

interpreter or exegete of the Bible; he kept things simple and was a courageous and trustworthy man. The two supplemented each other splendidly because we need different and varied approaches.” (JH)

On the Field Trip in 2009 I took the ferry to Suðuroy and visited assemblies there. In the evening I attended a meeting at ‘Bethel’ in Vágur, the south of the island. The following morning I had an appointment with Roald Norðberg, born at Hvalba in 1930, who was joined by Kári Hammer of Sumba, born in 1936, and John i Skemmuni, born in 1954, from the assembly ‘Betania’ at Porkeri. The four of us had a good talk over a cup of coffee and after a couple of hours Roald’s wife served lunch for us all.

Q: “Is the Porkeri assembly, Betania, among the oldest ones?”

A: “It is, yes. The assembly was established at the beginning of the last century. The first hall was built in 1906; and the third one in 1975. In the beginning Brethren at Porkeri were probably slightly dependent on visiting evangelists from elsewhere in the islands, especially from Tórshavn; and Old Sloan came often as well as Jens P. i Dali,⁶⁴ Arthur Brend,⁶⁵ Missioner Danielsen⁶⁶ and others. After that Andrew Sloan⁶⁷ was a reliable and extremely competent travelling Brethren worker and teacher; before and after the war the Scottish Brethren missionary Angus MacKinnon⁶⁸ lived in Tvøroyri on this island and often visited the south, i.e. the assemblies at Porkeri, in Vágur and at Sumba. The assembly in Sumba, established from Vágur, is very small but we do have Sunday meetings there. Of course the Vágur assembly, Bethel, is the biggest one. The hall of the same name was built in 1920 but extended in 1950. We do not keep records but around 80 households here are Brethren; and up to 80 children attend Sunday school, today there are around 20.”

Q: “How is the work organised?”

A: “There is no leadership for the whole country and the Porkeri assembly, Betania, is among the smaller ones so we do not have guardians or elders; but two or three individuals take charge of the work that needs to be done, e.g. preparing the hall for meetings on Sundays. The programme for Sunday meetings is this: at 11 a.m. there is the breaking of bread and this is central; a man leads the proceedings but it is absolutely free,⁶⁹ it is a meeting where we thank God; at 12 noon there is a break and at around 12:15 there is song and Sunday school for

⁶⁴ Jens P. Andreasen. Short biography in section 4.3.

⁶⁵ Arthus Brend. Short biography in section 4.3.

⁶⁶ D. J. Danielsen. Short biography in section 4.3.

⁶⁷ Short biography in section 4.4.

⁶⁸ Short biography in section 4.5.

⁶⁹ “free” here refers to participation at meetings. Indeed emphasised by most Brethren in Faeroe.

children. There is also good cooperation between the assemblies in the south of the island and we work closely together. Furthermore we have a choir for all the assemblies on Suðuroy.⁷⁰ On Thursday evenings we have prayer meetings with a short talk and discussion towards the end. In the old days⁷¹ travelling preachers held the movement together but this has changed over the past 4-5 decades when Brethren workers like, for instance, Andrew Sloan visited and taught. He used to arrange a series of meetings on a special topic at a time. The same was the case when Angus MacKinnon lived in Tvøroyri in the late 40s and early 50s. He was a great teacher, a bit strict and did not like Christmas!”

8.3.7 Assembly members

Q: “How are the assemblies in this area composed regarding age and professions?”

A: “Migration has affected all aspects of life in the south of the island; there is little work and therefore families move to other places, often to Tórshavn or abroad.⁷² There was a period when most assembly members were old people and few newcomers came, so many assemblies declined. This has changed, and now there are many young people, meetings are more varied and people like the free testimonies. Most come to personal belief between the ages of 12 and 14; but one was actually 54. In the old days⁷³ the bulk of Brethren were workers and fishermen but these professions have declined sharply, so today there are also many white-collar workers, teachers, businessmen, students and retired people.”

Q: “Do assembly members feel controlled and restricted?”

A: “We explain what is meant by being saved; and this is part of the leaders’ job. So we regard home visits as important although not always emphasised enough. I think it is very likely that other people notice leading Brethren’s behaviour; and we must not provoke anybody. If an assembly member shows bad behaviour, we try to help, assist, instruct and talk. It is not social control but assistance and help; for instance the Bible does not say that drinkers are not admitted into the Kingdom of God. And we adhere to the Bible only. Our work is based on the word of God and assurance of the Holy Spirit.” (RN, JíS)

I also asked my young Brethren friend, the student of theology at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland at the time of the interview:

⁷⁰ ‘Vitnið’ (The Witness) at Hvalba, ‘Salem’ in Tvøroyri and the ones in the south of the island.

⁷¹ Before the 1960s when roads between towns and villages were constructed.

⁷² The southern part of Suðuroy has seen serious decline for many years. *Faeroe Statistics*, Tórshavn 2010.

⁷³ Undoubtedly referring to the period from the 1930s to the 1960s or 1970s.

Q: “What is permitted? – I mean is there much social control within the Brethren?”

A: “It’s complicated. There are a couple of assemblies which are more formally organised and thus have the mechanisms in place to directly deal with what they might regard as moral compromise among the believers. I know several examples of persons who were asked to step down from public ministry (in music, for example), because they led a lifestyle which the church leadership didn’t approve of. In the less formally organised churches (which are the majority) it’s much more complicated and subtle. I have a friend who became pregnant when she was 16. Up until that point, she had been a regular church goer with her family, but then she just stopped. As far as I know, she hasn’t been to church since. That’s not because the church would have publicly and officially condemned her, because there’s no structure or organ which could do that. But she knew that many church goers would have disapproved, some possibly telling her to her face, most of the other ones gossiping. So she stayed away. That’s a kind of social control. It’s not one worthy of the church, but that’s what happens sometimes. For me personally, that’s an argument for more formal organisation: There needs to be a way of stopping that sort of moralising mob mentality from taking over. At the same time, social norms, also within the church, change over time. And while the lack of formal structures in Brethren assemblies does create problems, they also allow for that change to take place. There’s no official list of things you’re allowed and not allowed to do, so rules are always open to challenge and questioning. One specific change in the last couple of years has been regarding alcohol. Everyone agrees, of course, that excessive drinking and alcoholism is bad, but drinking wine, beer and perhaps stronger spirits for social reasons or simply for enjoyment has become a lot more accepted, especially among the younger generations. What sort of entertainment and art is permitted for believers to enjoy, and where to enjoy them, has also been subject to quite substantial changes over the last decade or so.” (AZ)

Already on my first field trip, in June 2007, I asked Dr. í Liða how the assemblies worked:

Q: “In what way would you describe assembly life?”

A: “People want and need to come together, not least to listen and talk from the Bible; this is mutual teaching. We see the process as, first, conversion, second, salvation, and, third, to bring the message into the world. Our movement has seven fulltime Brethren workers in the Faeroes and around 80 missionaries abroad. Assembly life is about learning and teaching. Our movement is an indigenous Faeroese layman movement and we expect people to read the Bible themselves.”

Q: “What is the role of women in assembly work?”

A: “They have always participated fully and we talk of brethren and sisters; but brethren are the leaders.”

Q: “Is the movement still growing and how is it financed?”

A: "I would like to see more come; but there is a steady flow of newcomers; and many people come to our various arrangements, e.g. concerts, conferences and camps. Money comes from our own pockets; and this includes pay for preachers, maintenance of halls, publications, etc. Towards the end of Sunday morning meetings, Breaking of Bread, money is collected and each gives according to his conscience. There is no 10% payment as some say!"

Q: "Who makes decisions in assemblies?"

A: "The Elders can make decisions and announce them to the assembly; but each assembly is completely autonomous with its own elders and a governing system based on the Bible. Belief in the Bible is decisive for me. And, by the way, some people accuse us of prohibiting the Lord's Prayer; but this is not the case, there is no exclusion of it. But Jesus says that 'now you can pray in my name'..." (RiL)

Regarding regular meetings and activism I spoke to the full-time missionary at Norðagøta:

Q: "What are the most important activities?"

A: "The Sunday morning meeting, breaking the bread, is central for our movement; but other meetings are important. There are regular open-air meetings,⁷⁴ evangelical meetings Sunday evenings; and other evenings we have prayer meetings and Bible reading. At all these meetings we inform people about our missionary work abroad." (ZZ)

Similarly I asked Victor Danielsen's son:

Q: "Was there an assembly in Fuglafjörður when your father settled?"

A: "No, I do not think so; maybe a few individuals had gathered; but in the late 1920s people started coming together as an assembly. At the first meetings there were only six people, including my parents; but when they came, breaking the bread and regular meetings took place. During the 1930s the assembly grew so much that the hall had to be altered, and in 1951 it was considerably extended." (RD)

The assembly at Eiði is relatively new, so I asked my interviewee there to explain:

Q: "Is this assembly organised in any particular way?"

A: "Yes, for the past ten years we have had elders; but before that a few individuals were in charge. So now it is more formalised. We also have a man who is in charge of the properties of the assembly, notably plot and hall; he is called the Hall Guardian and takes care of legal and financial matters regarding

⁷⁴ Described in chapter 4.

this. The hall was built in 1948. Well, you mention “organisation” and I should add that Brethren assemblies are scared of organisation and we abhor hierarchies in the movement; but it is practical to have some kind of loose organisation so that people, not least young ones, know whom to turn to about questions of joining or being baptised. So a committee of five was appointed to consider this question; and a year later they suggested that the assembly appointed four elders. Our elders are young people and it works well; but I do not know if other assemblies do it the same way.” (JM)

Changes took place while I did the interview at Sandur where they were in the process of moving into a new hall:

Q: “Are there many meetings in the present hall?”

A: “On Saturday evenings at 8 we have prayer meetings, on Sundays we have Morning meetings⁷⁵ at 11 and evangelical meetings at 5. People from other villages on the island come to our meetings and join the assembly. I think that our work will improve considerably when we move into the newly renovated hall because the present one is small and primitive; and we see the move as an opportunity to reach more people, not least young ones. At Skopun there are many Home Mission people and Pentecostals and some of them come to our meetings and feel drawn to the Brethren movement.” (KP)

On 20st April 2010 I drove to the recently completed new Toftir hall ‘Nebo’ and met Hanus Lómstein, born in 1947, and Símun í Túni, born in 1954. Hanus is one of the leaders of the assembly and Símun was at Bible College in the US from 1971 and a missionary in Venezuela from 1975 until 2000. In the canteen of the hall we had coffee and cakes while talking.

Q: “What activities take place in this new hall?”

A: “On Sundays we start with a family meeting at 11:30 and this lasts for an hour; at 12:30 we have the breaking the bread for adults and Sunday school for the children. After this tea or coffee, rolls and cakes are served in this room. We try to make things as flexible as possible to suit everybody. The assembly is mostly made up of around 40 families with children or a total of around 150; at meetings

⁷⁵ An alternative, informal term for breaking the bread.

there are often around 100 people present. Once a month we have prayer meetings; and on Saturday nights there are Songs of Praise.” Símun adds: “I think that Brethren should consider employing the Alcoholic Anonymous methods of holding meetings or use the AA-format for some meetings at least.”

Q: “When was this hall completed?”

A: “It has been in use since 2008 and built by volunteers; and this is a very functional and modern hall with many facilities, a big hall and smaller ones and rooms for various purposes as you can see.”

Q: “Is the assembly declining or growing?”

A: “Over the past ten years there has been steady growth and both children of Brethren families and others join the assembly; but in the 1960s there was a decline because many people moved away from the village. In the 1970s more came; and it was not unusual that 60-70 children attended Sunday school. It is a question how we meet people based on how Jesus encountered people. We have an open house for 11-14 year olds every Friday evening and most of the around 40 youngsters do not belong to the assembly. Here they can play various games and at around 10 pm we end with a short time of worship. On this island⁷⁶ there are youth meetings in the various halls, a kind of rotation so that young people visit each other’s halls where they have rhythmical music, performances and guest speakers.”

Q: “Who is responsible for the assembly and its hall?”

A: “We have guardians for the hall and since 2005 we have also had elders. We have regular worships at the care home and women’s meetings on and off. Toftr has comparatively many missionaries and workers abroad; and at the moment we have five full-time missionaries in foreign lands. For instance in Russia (Moscow), in Latin America and Asia; two young people are on the mission ship *Logos*⁷⁷ and one is a youth missionary with ‘Teenstreet’.

Victor Nielsen of ‘Betesda’ in Klaksvík explained about his assembly:

Q: “How many people can be accommodated in this hall?”

A: “There are 550 seats, but the hall can accommodate 700-800 people. At a normal Sunday morning meeting⁷⁸ there are usually around 300 people present; at prayer meetings the same. After this meeting there is Sunday school, organised by many Sunday school teachers. At a good evangelical meeting on Sunday evenings the number of attendants exceeds 500.”

⁷⁶ Eysturoy, i.e. East Island.

⁷⁷ Formerly the roll-on-roll-off ferry *Norrøna*, servicing Iceland, Faeroe, Shetland, Norway and Denmark, and now an OM ship..

⁷⁸ Breaking the bread.

Q: “What other meetings are there?”

A: “On Monday evenings there are prayer meetings and also Bible lessons for children aged 9-13. On Tuesday afternoons we organise leisure work for boys and girls comprising of handiwork, painting and so on; and on Tuesday evenings there is choir practice. On Wednesday evenings we have meetings for spiritual edification, concentrating on teaching. Occasionally we have guest teachers at these meetings. Our youth leaders arrange special youth meetings on Thursday evenings; and these meetings are arranged differently, it is another style, especially different music.”

Q: “Do you also do pastoral work?”

A: “Yes, we do; and this is all voluntary. Brethren and sisters visit the local hospital every second week; and the assembly sends people to visit those in need of comfort or assistance.”

Q: “For how long have you been leader of Betesda?”

A: “Since 2002; but this autumn I’m planning to go to a Bible college in Britain.”

(VN)

The young full-time missionary at the ‘Nerija’-assembly at Skála:

Q: “Is this one of the newer assemblies?”

A: “Yes, the history of Skála assembly, ‘Nerija’, doesn’t go far back; and our hall, sized 30x10 metres, was built in 1979. The assembly, however, is older; and the breaking of bread was celebrated in a private home between Skála and Strendur, called Innan Glyvur. Meetings were held in the fish drying hall here. It was difficult to acquire a plot of land for the Brethren Hall and the assembly is not so big, around 30-40 people. We break bread every Sunday morning and have evangelical meetings in the evening, but not always. Wednesday evenings we have prayer meetings the year round; and the last Sunday of each month we have dinner together. Every second Sunday we have worship at the care home; and Bible lessons are held Tuesday and Thursday evenings during the winter.”

8.3.8 Meetings at sea

Faeroese Brethren were a fishermen’s movement while it grew particularly rapidly in the 1920s and ‘30s, but I was interested in why it grew so substantially over such a short period.

Q: “Why do you think that the Brethren Movement has been so embraced by Faeroe Islanders?”

A: “To many it is a mystery that such a big proportion of the population are Brethren; but I do not see it that way. In a broader sense I am sure that using the vernacular and introducing our own language in Christian worship was genuinely attractive to many people; and I think that the new songs and melodies had the same effect, especially when we got songs and hymns in the vernacular, both original and translated. However, the spiritual dimension has always been most important; and the reason for using the vernacular was that the message of the Gospel should find its way into people’s hearts. Only through your mother tongue is it possible to meet Jesus and give testimony; and this was not least done on board the fishing vessels, the ‘Cathedrals at Sea’.” (JE)

An elderly retired fisherman had first-hand experience of this phenomenon:

Q: “How was worship conducted onboard fishing vessels?”

A: “When we went out fishing, usually in the waters south of Iceland, all crew members had a Bible in their bunk bed; everybody owned a Bible. On some ships the skipper read from the Bible or from church homilies every Sunday; but on most ships there were evangelical meetings after departure and throughout the fishing tour which lasted for weeks and months. These meetings were free and held in the mess fore ships where the crew’s bunk beds were along the sides; and all men took part. Then there was coffee and after that some men had a prayer meeting in the skipper’s cabin aft. Evangelical meetings were held whenever possible and convenient, not only on Sundays but any day of the week. There was hardly any difference whether it was a Home Mission or Brethren meeting; and many men were converted and saved onboard ships.⁷⁹ Being a fisherman on the old smacks was really tough and dangerous; and I remember that occasionally a vessel landed three times during a season, i.e. they had filled the vessel three times. In the early decades of the 20th century they still relied on sails only; but gradually the old wooden smacks had motors installed.” (OS)

Also my brother-in-law had first-hand experience:

Q: “You have been at sea most of your life; were there evangelical meetings onboard?”

A: “Yes, I went fishing on one of the old smacks when 14; but there were no meetings on that vessel although most hands were believers. Later, in 1957/58, I was on a trawler and there were meetings every night when sailing to the fishing grounds. While fishing it was obviously more irregular but Brethren meetings were held when possible. I remember that once a Home Missionary came with us

⁷⁹ Lofti, Svenning av, *Frelstur umborð* (Saved onboard), Tórshavn 2002.

from Greenland,⁸⁰ and on the voyage to the Faeroes Home Mission men and Brethren had meetings together.”

Q: “You were a skipper yourself for many years, even captain on enormous Greenland vessels?”

A: “Yes, that is right. After completing Navigational College I was first skipper on a modern fishing-line vessel, then on a big trawler for 6 years and we used floating trawl. On these ships there were regular Brethren meetings; on some trawlers we had meetings before supper every second Sunday, after supper every second. However, on the Greenland vessels there were no meetings.” (SiS)

8.3.9 Changes and developments

In my talks with the old farmer and Brethren worker, I took the opportunity to raise questions of change, developments and tensions, both within the ‘Betesda’ assembly and in society:

Q: “Have many changes taken place during your long life?”

A: “Yes, in all areas of life and society; and also within the Brethren movement we have witnessed great changes. We know from the Bible that everything changes; in the Scriptures there is a movement from Law towards Grace, for instance dietary laws, the position of women and numerous other things. Before the war many people came to faith through the Brethren and the Home Mission; but what separated the two evangelical movements was the question of baptism, the latter belonging to the Lutheran church and therefore adhering to infant baptism while we are convinced about believers’ baptism. For us the sequence is rebirth/conversion, baptism, and breaking bread; this cannot be altered. All changes are groundbreaking, sometimes too ruthless, I think; and we have gone through many religious developments in this town where now almost half the population belong to the Brethren assembly Betesda. This process has, of course, led to many frustrations and disagreements, especially during the first decades. Klaksvík was mainly a fishing port with fish processing plants; and the vast majority of Brethren were workers and, especially, fishermen. Since the late 20th century other industries, businesses and kinds of employment have increased considerably; and assembly life has had to adapt to this.” (JG)

Also in Fuglafjørður great changes have taken place:

⁸⁰ Føroyingahavn. A Faeroese fishing port with a processing plant in Greenland. Closed down in the 1980s..

Q: “At the meeting last night I noticed drums and musical instruments in the hall?”

A: “We have always used lively melodies in our singing; not so much at the Sunday morning meetings but at other meetings and this has probably appealed to many; but I think that we should concentrate on listening to God’s word in God’s house, and distractions away from the message are unfortunate. On the other hand we must accept that society and culture change, so maybe we should make some changes at a slow pace.

There are many Christian groups and bands but they do not sing and play in halls and churches so much. We should show reverence towards the spiritual but of course not be too narrow-minded. On the whole neither Church nor Brethren are happy about new instruments.” (RD)

At Eiði developments and changes, not appreciated by all, have taken place; and the interviewee also has experiences from Klaksvík in the 1950s:

Q: “How does assembly life today compare with the mid fifties and sixties?”

A: “What attracted me to the Brethren was the simplicity; but I am afraid that younger people today want to be more in control of things. They want to be regarded as rational people. Formerly there was more humility, I think, and we tried to keep it simple. It was easy for older children and uneducated people to participate in worship and at meetings; but after much lengthened schooling, from 5-7 years to 12-13 years or more since the 1970s, younger people have an unfortunate tendency of intellectualizing testimonies and talking at meetings. This, I think, has had a bad effect on assembly life because it feels more and more difficult for many to say anything. I do not object to theology and related disciplines but would like to see more simplicity and spontaneity at meetings so that everybody felt at ease and was encouraged to speak and witness. The main message is to proclaim salvation in the word of God!”

Q: “You also lived in Klaksvík for some years, didn’t you?”

A: “Yes, in 1958 I went for training in Klaksvík and remained there for some years. During the years after an awakening went on in the town; and maybe there were some Pentecostal elements in this. In the spring 1959 the Betesda assembly started Youth meetings which were open for everybody; and there were 16 youngsters in the beginning. After the meetings there were prayer meetings in the basement of Betesda, led by John Høj.⁸¹ Soon this initiative gained strength and increasing numbers of young people attended. There were also modern music performances and many youngsters spoke and witnessed; older people abstained from speaking. Many came to belief and often meetings were held daily; and up to 50 were baptised on a single evening. Also in KFUM⁸² awakening took place within the Home Mission. It was almost like a spiritual atom bomb; but there were no negative consequences. The following year Youth Meetings were started

⁸¹ Interviewed above.

⁸² In English YMCA. Also KFUK, in English YWCA, has long been active in the islands.

again; and they asked for weekend meetings. On the whole I felt that there was a spiritual balance.”

Q: “Were people sometimes upset at meetings?”

A: “It is only natural that human beings become emotional and upset. I remember that Victor Danielsen⁸³ spoke at a meeting in Klaksvík when he asked the assembly: ‘Am I of any use any more?’⁸⁴ This triggered emotions, and old men started crying and asked and prayed for the way to salvation.” (JM)

The Brethren member at Leirvík has a much more relaxed attitude:

Q: “What do you think of modern rhythmical or rock music in halls?”

A: “Many young people seem to prefer this kind of music and they should be allowed to play it in our halls, I think. Of course all middle-aged people do not agree, but this will always be so. In the old days Brethren introduced completely new songs and melodies which actually caught on and attracted people; so we have a tradition of innovation. Some are worried about the young people; but I see them as young lambs which run about and enjoy themselves. When tired, they return to their mothers. Let the lambs run!” (JE)

A much younger Brethren member, the theologian, sees these tensions in a broader way and seems happy with the Faeroese Brethren movement:

Q: “What about changes and dynamics in the assemblies?”

A: “This relates to my point about social control in the assemblies. I think being a ‘tradition less tradition’ presents some unique opportunities and challenges for the Brethren church. We don’t have any sort of canon law and so assemblies change, adjust and develop in very organic ways. I’ve mentioned some churches becoming more formalised and this has been done in a very bottom-up way, as individual assemblies have felt it right to implement those sorts of changes and have discussed it amongst themselves. What sort of instruments should be allowed in worship has also been an active discussion over the years and it has changed very organically and peacefully. It is this dynamic which has made it possible for Brethrenism to fully integrate into Faeroese culture and society, becoming a truly indigenous movement. At the same time, it can be quite challenging to address problems head on, because there’s no officially accepted creed or statement of belief to point to as the culprit. It can be hard to diagnose what you perceive to be a problem and it can be equally challenging to argue against if you do succeed in identifying it, since those who might disagree with

⁸³ Biographical notes in chapter 4.

⁸⁴ V.D. died in 1961.

you will regard their position as simply and purely biblical and therefore not open to questioning. As an egalitarian, for example, I sometimes envy the Lutheran church for how they simply amended a paragraph sometimes in the 60s to allow for female priests. If only it were that easy. At the same time, though, I think there's great value in doing the hard work of trying to articulate and argue for your position in a comprehensive way, trying to change hearts and minds by theological persuasion, not imposition. All things considered, I'm happy to be part of a church that works like that." (AZ)

One of the Brethren at Toftir has similar views and wants modernisation:

Q: "How do you view Brethren work in the Faeroes today?"

A: "Our work progresses in most places; but we need to define our identity and make changes to meet future demands and expectations. We have a Brethren assembly which is a Free Church, but there are other free churches in the islands. Our assembly, Nebo, is close to 'Lívdir'⁸⁵ in outlook, trying to be modern. We believe with open eyes, based on the Bible, choosing, understanding and comprehending. It is not mystical or charismatic. There are many attitudes and opinions within the Faeroese Brethren, even disagreements on questions such as pre- and postmillennialism or whether Judas Iscariot was lost. Some Lutheran clergymen dissuade people from reading the Bible; but we base our faith on the Bible. For us it is about personal belief." (HL)

8.3.10 Tensions

Disagreements about organisation seem to have been quite serious in some Brethren circles:

Q: "There seems to be some discussion about organisation and leadership?"

A: "Yes, some of the younger Brethren would probably prefer that Brethren in the Faeroes were organised in a different way; and some would even like to introduce titles such as 'pastor' for leaders of assemblies. Of course there is some sort of informal organisation anyway, but I think that most would emphasise the autonomy and freedom of each assembly because this is a fundamental principle within the Brethren movement." (JB)

Brethren in Sørvágur still suffer from the unfortunate episode where charismatic influences halted the work of the assembly for a while:

⁸⁵ 'Lívdir', meaning "The Shelter", is a new free church in Hoyvík, Tórshavn. Regarded as a Brethren hall by some, as an independent Free Church by others.

Q: “Even today people associate Sörvágur with strange things which happened here in the 1920s. What actually took place?”

A: “We are still, almost a hundred years later, being ridiculed and attacked for what happened over a couple of weeks in the autumn of 1922. Our grandfather was away, working on their new home at Vatnsóyrrar, and it seems that a woman from another island got the upper hand in the assembly and the hall for a short period. Maybe she together with others had been influenced by charismatic literature from Norway because the spiritual life went off the track. This woman saw herself, and was perhaps seen, as a prophetess. Hysteria broke out with shouting and crying, healing and other miracles. These events were a great blow to the assembly which lost the hall and had to keep a low profile for a long time.”

Q: “So was all assembly life brought to a halt?”

A: “No, some brethren and sisters continued having meetings in private homes, but not until 1935 did they start building a new hall, ‘Kedron’, where assembly meetings have been held since 1938. This hall has been extended and renovated and now people from the whole island attend meetings here with around 100 attending.” (MN)

The main adversary to the Brethren movement has always been the Danish Lutheran church:

Q: “How would you describe the differences between the church and Brethren?”

A: “The church and its clergymen teach that some drops of tap water on the heads of infants make all the difference. The assemblies teach that it is the blood of Christ which makes the difference. Regarding Grace, the church says that God loves everybody and everything; the grace is total; it has no stance. The assemblies say that there is a difference between talking to people about the gospel and talking the gospel to people. There are fundamental differences. Brethren had open-air meetings already from the start, in the 1860s; but the Home Mission did not have such meetings until 1962. There is, however, a certain fluctuation between the Church and its Home Mission on the one hand and Brethren on the other; and in the old days we went to each others’ meetings. Sometimes men have ‘talked themselves’ out of the Mission and joined the Brethren; and the Home Mission wants to influence the church. A church organist used to go to Brethren meetings on Sunday evenings.” (JM)

The concept of ‘sin’ has also changed and this leads to disagreements and tensions:

Q: “Why so much talk about sin?”

A: “In the beginning many things were regarded as terrible sins including playing cards, going to dances or to the cinema and, not least, drinking alcohol. The concept of sin has changed considerably in the passage of time; and nowadays

there are practically no so-called prohibitions although this varies from one assembly to another and from one environment to another.” (NA)

There are also different views on ‘morality’:

Q: “Is the Brethren movement mostly about morality and behaviour?”

A: “No, absolutely not! We are expected to be good and industrious people; but Brethrenism in the Faeroes is not about morality. The great preacher, poet, author and translator Victor Danielsen, who lived in this town, used to say, ‘We are not here to preach morality but the Gospel!’” Others say that of course we should try to improve our lives and behaviour. I felt forced to divorce myself, but have not been harassed by anyone within the movement; but some time ago a Brethren evangelist had to do the same and later married again. This caused anger and disappointment in some assemblies, but as time passed by, things calmed down and he is now among the most popular evangelists in the islands.” (SiS)

Although many islanders claim that being a Brethren member is solely about behaviour and morality, this interview indicates that it is more than that and that there is an ideology involved; changes have also taken place, e.g. divorce and remarriage are not condemned as in earlier times.

Some point out that tensions are mostly generational:

Q: “Are there tensions within the movement?”

A: “Yes, of course. I think that one is generational. The older people tend to emphasise the plural ‘we’ while, for the younger ones, it is more the singular ‘I’. Another stems from the dichotomy between attempts to hold on to the old forms and a desire to change and modernise. We try to identify and distinguish between attitudes and forces that separate and those binding us together. Most assemblies have elders that function as the leadership. Then we have Zarepta⁸⁶ which brings assemblies and members together; and our international missionary work also joins us together.”

Q: “You mentioned the emerging attitudes regarding ‘I’ and ‘we’ earlier?”

⁸⁶ The Brethren course and leisure centre described in chapter 3.

A: “Yes, we try to promote Christ centrism; but we are also aware that in the US, for instance, some Evangelicals are getting far too close to egocentrism. Personally I deplore this development; but I don’t think that such deplorable trends are widespread among Faeroese Brethren.”

Q: “How are Brethren relations with the Church here?”

A: “There is no animosity or hatred against church people in this village. Brethren were church people before they converted and were baptised into our movement and most of us have relatives and friends who belong to the Lutheran Church. Many Faeroe Islanders went to Iceland⁸⁷ and Brethren were well liked there. Some even said that, ‘Grace comes with the Brethren’. We often talk about the ‘apprehension for dignity’ or ‘fear of God’; and older people used to say that ‘God is a stern judge’ but later they said ‘mercy with the blood of Christ’. Here it is worth bearing in mind Psalm 130 and Heb. 4: 12.” (JE)

8.3.11 Financial

So-called church-people have always accused the Faeroese Brethren movement for luring others with financial gains for paying people to become members and financial corruption:

Q: “How is the work financed?”

A: “At the end of every Sunday morning meeting, i.e. breaking the bread, a small bag is passed among the participants and each gives according to ability. Sometimes collections for special purposes take place in members’ homes but never outside the assembly; and we never applied for grants or support from official bodies such as the Treasury. The money collected in the sack is for missionaries, the running of the assemblies, refurbishments and new buildings; and our assembly has a quarterly meeting to discuss the financial situation. Formerly these meetings were for men only; but now also women participate.” (JG)

Another life-long and esteemed Brethren leader in Klaksvík echoes this:

Q: “Sometimes you are accused of giving people money to join the Brethren?”

A: “Yes, we have been accused of all sorts of things; even of buying people into the assembly and having them baptised. This is, of course, total nonsense. I have heard that in the early years a man in Tórshavn went to see Old Sloan to offer to become one of the Brethren for money; but Sloan was not at home so his wife,

⁸⁷ Especially from the 1920s to the 1950s.

Elsebeth, received the man who told her what he wanted. Then she laughed and informed him that they were poor people themselves and most of the flock were also poor. But such stories have gone around all the time, I think, not least here in Klaksvík where the greatest employer was a staunch supporter of the Brethren movement and our assembly. Kjølbros managing director, Svend Thulesen (b. 1930), the son of a clergyman in Vágur and a Lutheran churchgoer, once asked me whether it was true that people got money for entering the Brethren assembly and being baptised. I replied that I did not know how it was where he came from but that in Klaksvík I did not know of such a thing. Becoming one of the Brethren is a question of conscience, conviction and personal belief; it is a spiritual thing and has nothing to do with money or other material matters.” (JH)

More general attitudes regarding money, self-interest and financial matters are revealed here:

Q: “Sometimes we hear people say that Brethren are capitalists, mostly interested in speculation and money?”

A: “Yes, many non-Brethren have that perception; but from my experience and dealings with fellow Brethren I do not think that it is so. We try to do good for our families, our communities and the country; it is not about selfish personal gain. We live like everybody else and try to accommodate to the conditions we live under and to improve them. That’s why many Brethren take new initiatives, try new industries and new businesses, invest in future developments within the economy; and such people give substantially to the Brethren movement.” (SiS)

It is clear that Brethren see industry, business and innovation in the economy as good things, necessary for progress in the whole community.⁸⁸ However, Christian thought on charitable giving moderates the accumulation of wealth and part of the surplus wealth is donated or diffused to places where Faeroese missionaries go.

⁸⁸ Cf. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, (1904-05) New York 2003.

8.3.12 Social and cultural attitudes

Attitudes to female participation in leading the assemblies were touched upon; and this

Brethren member seems to give the majority view of the movement:

Q: “What is the role of women in this assembly?”

A: “Here we refer to ‘brethren’ and ‘sisters’; and women led the assembly in good weather. As you know this has traditionally been a place with a lot of inshore fishing which is very dependent on weather conditions like so many other places in the islands.” (JE)

Many claim that Brethren members have been set apart and harassed:

Q: “Did you feel isolated in your childhood and youth?”

A: “No, I cannot complain about that. Ours was a Brethren home and we lived in rather isolated places because my father was a lighthouse master. He was also a member of the Løgting (the local parliament) for a period, representing the Social Democratic Party. But I remember that once in the late 1930s we stayed with relatives in a larger village and people asked my aunt if she felt comfortable having ‘heathens’ living in her house. During my studies in Copenhagen there were Brethren meetings to attend there. However, while working at a hospital in Denmark I do remember that the chief surgeon there had a telephone call from the committee appointing doctors in the Faeroes asking whether it was ‘safe and acceptable’ to appoint a Brethren doctor⁸⁹ at the National Hospital there. So even in the late 1950s and the 1960s some felt insecure and were uncertain how to cope with people who did not belong to the established church.”

Q: “Some years ago they celebrated the millennium⁹⁰ of Christianity in Faeroe?”

A: “Well, we did not participate in that. Faeroese Brethren do not think that it was a dignified way of introducing the Christian faith.” (RíL)

Brethren are often accused of doing away with the cultural heritage:

Q: “What about Faeroese dance,⁹¹ for instance?”

A: “We are not opposed to Faeroese dance as such, but to the things deriving from this kind of entertainment. Often, especially in the old days, it is accompanied by drunkenness which, in turn, frequently leads to violence. There are still parents who prevent their children from participating in dance; but today it is hardly an

⁸⁹ The doctor was Eliesar Arge (1925-2007), specialist in anesthesiology and surgery, chief surgeon at the Faeroe National Hospital 1964-1995, grandson of E. Arge, mentioned in chapter 3.

⁹⁰ The established Lutheran State Church arranged this event in 2000, but Brethren refused to participate.

⁹¹ The traditional medieval chain dance still alive in the Faeroes.

either-or, let alone a wall between Brethren and this cultural inheritance. In my youth being Brethren was still looked down upon but this seems to have changed. Some decades ago a harassed Brethren boy might say, ‘When I am 12, I do not want to be called a Baptist!’⁹² Today such a boy would say, ‘Oh, we just call the tormentor Church boy in reply!’ I was the only pupil in our school that had not been baptised in church and sometimes this was a little difficult.” (ZZ)

Many Evangelicals, including Brethren, are often criticised for taking sides in the conflicts in the Middle East; but I should add that several younger ones do not agree.

Q: “Why do Brethren support the modern state of Israel?”

A: “We see today’s Israel as the earthly version of the coming Israel; it is the foundation of what shall come but not the genuine, true or complete biblical Israel at all. Not until the rapture will Israel be more, according to our dispensational thinking. The reality is already there, i.e. Israel; and it is a message from God regarding what is to come.” (JB)

Some decades ago the impression was that Brethren did not want close relationships with ‘outsiders’ unless they joined the movement.

Q: “Do young people outside the Brethren tradition join the movement?”

A: “Not that many. At this point, more than a century after its coming to the Faeroes, the Brethren church is now quite established. That means that most new “members” are born into it. But there are exceptions, of course. I would guess a handful of young people join a year.”

Q: “Do young Brethren associate with others, e.g. church people?”

A: “Well, I am married to a girl who belongs to the state church and whereas that would have created all sorts of problems and scandals up to maybe 40 years ago, no one minds since she is a believer. In the old days, when Brethrenism was still relatively new in the Faeroes, the relationship with the church and its members was much more competitive and thus strained. My father⁹³ was the first child in Gøta not baptised in the village church. For the 1st and 2nd generation of Brethren it has been quite difficult; but for the 3rd and 4th generation things have become much more relaxed. For instance we arrange youth meetings with other denominations, both the state church and other more recent free churches. So

⁹² In the Faeroes, Brethren are usually called ‘Baptists’.

⁹³ Zacharias Zachariassen, see chapter 4.

today there is much cooperation and good relationships between different denominations. I regard this as a positive development.” (AZ)

This interviewee is a good deal more sophisticated in his understanding of what is happening and in his attitudes to change and Brethren tradition. He is also unusual in that he is studying theology in secular university rather than at a Bible college. But he still affirms a number of the essential thesis of this work, notably that he sees Brethren in the islands as a Faeroese phenomenon, as innovators, and as mediating modernity to the people. He shows how at present they are integrated into Faeroe society and co-exist with other churches amicably. Furthermore it is interesting how the internationalism of evangelicalism is assisting the Faeroes in becoming more globalised. Like some other younger Brethren he sometimes uses the term ‘church’ rather than the traditional ‘movement’ or ‘assembly’.

As explained before Brethren in the Faeroes are involved in both trade union work and in politics; and they also support charitable and social work both at home and around the world.

Q: “Are Brethren involved in social work?”

A: “Many Faeroese Brethren have been and are involved in voluntary work from Papua New Guinea to Venezuela, from Greenland to Africa; and we also contribute in the work of ‘Operation Christmas Child’, e.g. by filling shoeboxes with gifts for children in poor countries. Faeroese Brethren also play an active role in various associations, unions and other nonreligious contexts, such as the fund to support children⁹⁴ who have lost their father at sea, the organisation to support people suffering from mental disorder,⁹⁵ as well as similar initiatives. Also Brethren members have been involved in trade union work since the 1930s; and in the 1950s fishermen’s strikes one Brethren individual was at the forefront in the successful struggle. Faeroese Brethren also participate in politics and have had many members of parliament and the local government as ministers, and even one lögmann, i.e. local prime or first ministers.” (ZZ)

⁹⁴ In Faeroese ‘Barnahjálpargrunnurin’, i.e. The Fund to Help Children.

⁹⁵ In Faeroese ‘Sinnisbati’, i.e. improving the mind.

Both in assembly life and in the wider community Brethren have constantly shown initiative and a sense of freedom.

Q: “Supporting the national or republican cause, what do you think the Brethren have achieved?”

A: “First of all our language, Faeroese. Brethren were the first ones to proclaim the gospel in the vernacular; and within industry, especially fishing and fish processing, they were pioneers. Also the movement made people think independently, not only in religious matters but also in other areas. Until the Brethren movement got a foothold in the Faeroes the language of culture and administration was Danish only. We try to teach people, especially young people, that we are not worse than other people, but not better either. And we are anti-racists and against xenophobia. For God we are all equal!” (NA)

Faeroese Brethren do not fear for the future but are optimistic, also regarding their own movement.

Q: “How do you see the future for the Brethren movement in the Faeroes?”

A: “Nobody knows; much depends on ourselves. We must avoid being led astray. We try to see and do good. 2nd Tim. 1: 11f reminds us what we shall and can do; teaching and preaching. The results will be seen in the fruit. We trust and encourage young people to participate and also let them make and be responsible for their own arrangements, such as Youth Meetings, rhythmical concerts and the like, sometimes on Saturday evenings as late as 11 pm. We need to be tolerant towards young people and accept that times and aspirations change.” (JE)

8.4 Comments

It is a central contention of this thesis that the Brethren movement is the only indigenous branch of Christianity in the Faeroe Islands, because the only other branch, the Danish Lutheran Church, had always been governed and run by the imperial power. A number of the interviews above confirm that this is how Brethren see themselves and their movement. The Roman Catholic Church came to the islands from abroad as part of the

Norwegian colonisation; and the Danish Lutheran Church during the Reformation was created by absolutism.⁹⁶ Although the seeds came from abroad, i.e. Britain, the Brethren movement was planted in Faeroese soil as a grass-roots movement; and one of the first books on William Sloan and the first assemblies in the islands has the title – *men Gud gav vøkst*,⁹⁷ meaning “- but God gave growth”, indicating this. The established churches, first the Roman Catholic, then the Lutheran Church, were both governed from abroad and were part of the secular administrative system of Norway and Denmark respectively. Brethren were never in this position; the small assemblies were independent and not centrally governed from anywhere. What the British Brethren missionaries did was to introduce new attitudes to the Bible, encourage people to read Scripture themselves, and preach Evangelicalism. The variety expressed in attitudes also shows that the Brethren in the Faeroes continue to be an independent movement with no imposition of uniform attitudes such as might be got from an institution in which all its leaders are trained centrally as is the case with the Established Church.

In the interviews there is a clear sense of the cultural and social aspects. The Brethren movement was introduced at exactly the same time as major social and cultural changes took place; and this led to a feeling of uncertainty, displacement and frustration in the population. Economically, in 1900 fishing and fish processing took over from agriculture, and simultaneously the language- and national movements took root. In such times of turbulence it is no wonder that the prevalent religious order, carrying with it the old attitudes and authority, was shaken. A growing number of people did not feel that a

⁹⁶ Explained in chapter 1. Also mentioned above in interview 6.3.12.

⁹⁷ Berghamar, S, - *men Gud gav voekst*, Tórshavn 1992.

the church of a foreign state and local wealthy farmers satisfied their needs or met the requirements of the new times.

The interviews explain how people left the Danish State Church to join the Brethren and, later, other evangelical movements. We also get a sense of the relief that many people felt after conversion, obtaining assurance of faith, things which were alien to the established church. Likewise there seems to have been a sense of relief when people realised that the vernacular could be and was used in a religious context and that people ‘of their own kind’⁹⁸ could preach the message, witness and speak at meetings.

The accusation which other Faeroe Islanders often direct at the Brethren is that they tried to ruin or do away with Faeroese culture, and here they often mean solely the medieval chain dance. One of the interviews above gives quite acceptable reasons for Brethren, as well as other evangelicals’ rejection of the environment in which this form of entertainment normally took place, i.e. drinking and violence. However, they do not reject the importance of the ballads as part of the cultural heritage.

The beginning, growth and development of the Faeroese Brethren movement were a result of a Scottish missionary’s endeavours and, not least, his almost dogged determination to succeed. Also modern Faeroese Brethren see Old Sloan as the Apostle of the Faeroes; and maybe subsequent results of the work which he started, e.g. using the vernacular in religious discourse, translating and publishing in Faeroese just after World War I when the language was still outlawed in public discourse and few islanders were able to read let alone write their own language, have increased the respect for, maybe

⁹⁸ Probably including William G. Sloan and most British Brethren missionaries, especially when their social class is taken into consideration.

even veneration of the earliest British and Faeroese Brethren. So viewed from a missiological angle, this is a good additional example of the indigenisation of a Christian mission working the way Lamin Sanneh explains in *Translating the message*.⁹⁹

As in all democratic movements there have always been and still are minor and major tensions between the various assemblies as well as within assemblies themselves; and this was mentioned in, for instance, Chapter 5.¹⁰⁰ For a movement like the Brethren there are pressures to adapt and modify practices according to changing and emerging demands and expectations, especially in times of societal, economic and cultural change. Brethren in the Faeroes have been good at this; in fact better than the established church and its home mission. One reason for this is undoubtedly that all matters to do with the work, style, music and other external matters in worship and meetings are continually reviewed and discussed in the assemblies and decided upon by the elders. The church, in contrast, is a state institution, governed by the Minister of Culture and Church matters in Copenhagen;¹⁰¹ so although there are parish church councils and other advisory bodies, the final decisions were made elsewhere.

Visiting several assemblies and participating in meetings I soon became aware of slight differences in proceedings although the main principles and themes were identical. A meeting in a small assembly differs from a similar event in a big one. Meetings in a village hall, maybe with 8-12 participants,¹⁰² are more intimate and personal than

⁹⁹ Sanneh, L, *Translating the message*, Orbis 2005, pp. 182-189.

¹⁰⁰ Interview 8.3.2.

¹⁰¹ However, in 2002 Church Matters were devolved to the Faeroese Local Government.

¹⁰² For instance “Hermon” at Norðdepli in the North Islands.

meetings in one of the towns, often with 50 to hundreds of participants.¹⁰³ The bigger the meeting, the more organised the leading of the meeting and the more rigid the proceedings. At small meetings there are seldom musical instruments accompanying the singing; but at big meetings there may be piano, organ or even rhythmical music, sometimes a choir as well. Also the position of the main speaker differs; some speak standing up by the chair on which they sat, others walk up in front of the listeners; and in some assembly halls there are pulpits or platforms. The giving out of hymns or songs, individual testimonies and prayers are usually spoken from where people sit; and in bigger halls people may be given a microphone because in recent years loudspeakers have been installed in the medium and bigger halls.

Although the halls appear simple and comfortable,¹⁰⁴ many of them are well equipped with instruments, often modern electronic ones, and in some halls even with impressive percussion instruments. The baptismal tank is usually under a cover in the floor, in the platform or, in one hall that I visited, below the drums.¹⁰⁵ As has been noticed in the interviews there are disagreements among Faeroese Brethren, much discussion and many emerging trends; and based on this it is possible to discuss the future prospects for the movement in the islands.

I would argue that the interviews make it obvious that the Faeroese Brethren movement is in a good shape at the beginning of the 21st century. However, there are disagreements and tensions, e.g. between ‘old’ and ‘new’ or ‘young’, organisation,

¹⁰³ For instance “Bethel” in Vágur on Suðuroy, “Betesda” in Klaksvík in the North Islands or “Ebenezer” in Tórshavn.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. chapter 3.

¹⁰⁵ The new hall at Toftir on Eysturoy.

American influences and other questions.¹⁰⁶ One of the reasons why no serious splits have occurred is that the assemblies have retained their autonomy so that local people feel responsible for the work, meeting new demands and challenges and solving problems themselves. Another reason is the affirmative attitude that the younger generations have towards their assembly, not being afraid of criticising old ways and come up with suggestions for changes and innovations. The substantially increased openness, both amongst themselves and, not least, towards others, undoubtedly stimulates the movement. These emerging trends appear promising regarding the future prospects for the Brethren movement in the Faeroes.

In the capital, Tórshavn, there are disagreements about some details such as using a common cup or individual beakers during the breaking of bread, but these do not cause real splits in the movement although a new hall has been taken into use to accommodate those who have special preferences. This does not seem to upset the Brethren movement as a whole, but obviously there are more hard-line conservative people standing up to innovations and changes.

In informal talks with my Brethren friend, lecturer and theologian Dr. Poul Guttesen, born in 1968, we discussed these and related matters. Also the question of self-definition in opposition to societal definition is important here, and in some of the interviews above younger people seem to be fully aware of this. It is appropriate to bear in mind the distance in time, i.e. the socio-cultural context in the early, mid-, and late 20th century and today (2011). Originally Faeroese Brethren were part of the so-called “low

¹⁰⁶ For instance the global activities of the US evangelical crusader Billy Graham (b. 1918) influenced many Faeroese Brethren; and at the beginning of the 21st century Americanisation and the use of the English language in singing are felt as a threat by many (older) Brethren.

culture”, but during recent decades this is no longer so. The stereotype of “a Baptist” is waning and they are not perceived in the same way as 30-40 years ago although some nominal Christian church people may still look down on Brethren as a slightly awkward part of the population.

However, the question is how Faeroese Brethren of the future are going to define themselves, and here the majority definition of identity always influences that of the minority. In the first decade of the 21st century the Brethren movement has a strong position in the islands, partly because of their innovative spirit, partly because many of them have university education and occupy influential positions in the community. For instance the first ever Darwin Conference in the Faeroes¹⁰⁷ was arranged by young Brethren academics who are involved in research within science and the arts and publish a variety of books and scientific articles. Alongside this, the work within the assemblies proves successful.

¹⁰⁷ In the Nordic House, Tórshavn, September 2009, the 150th anniversary of Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*. And in 2010 they arranged a conference on the topic of the the existence of God.

Conclusion

This thesis has addressed the aims set out in the Introduction and has generated additional questions and answers as well. In the conclusion I want to summarise the main points raised and give new answers and clarifications regarding the role of the Brethren movement in the Faeroes because this has never been done in a comprehensive way before. Globally the movement is not well known due to the limited role that it has played, the reason being its relatively insignificant number of members in relation to global population. In the Faeroes, however, they were an important force in all areas of socio-economic and cultural life in that small community, but in spite of this most islanders outside the movement know deplorably little about the theology and practices of Brethren. The movement and its members have been shunned, persecuted and ignored by the majority for most of its existence.

Not only are Brethren in the Faeroes numerically the largest Christian movement outside the established Lutheran church but they have also contributed much more in the promotion of the vernacular than is usually acknowledged, both within the context of worship and translation work and publications. Brethren meetings have always been conducted in the vernacular, and when British evangelists preach, all has been simultaneously translated into Faeroese. Already in 1908 Brethren were instrumental in having *St John's Gospel* published in modern Faeroese, and the Brethren were the first to have hymnodies in the vernacular. The first translation of the whole Bible into Faeroese was made by a Brethren worker and published by the movement. Moreover they have published numerous journals, tracts and books in Faeroese, both original and translated.

The Brethren in the Faeroes had a much greater impact on the national movement, directly and indirectly, than most non-Brethren are willing to appreciate. The organisational principles of the movement with independent, self-governing and self-supporting assemblies, have obviously affected attitudes of other islanders. The Brethren proved that it was possible to make things happen and change without relying on outside initiatives and leadership. By their example, Faeroese Brethren undoubtedly paved the way for new attitudes to authorities, self-respect and progress. Not least within the new economic basis of the Faeroese community, fishing, fish-processing, industry and business, Brethren were among the pioneers. Already during the first decade of the 20th century a Brethren worker was awarded a Royal medal for groundbreaking initiatives within fishing, and other Brethren fishermen and ship-owners found new, more efficient and profitable ways of fishing; and this has been the role of Faeroese Brethren ever since.

To explain this influence, I have given a broad and original overview of the history of the Faeroes in chapter 1 which briefly describes the early and post-Reformation period as well as the crucial developments in the 18th and 19th centuries which paved the way for modern times and the Brethren movement. In chapter 2 I described and discussed the origins of Brethren as the basic theology and practices as well as many of the attitudes of the founders are clearly visible in the Faeroese movement, and without some detailed knowledge regarding this, it is impossible to evaluate or understand the movement.

Chapters 3 and 4 chronicle the introduction and slow penetration of Brethren in the islands, highlighting the enormous energy and determination of the first missionaries, Faeroese as well as British, to transmit the Christian message the way that they saw as right. The way they were received in small, isolated village communities helps explain

why the movement gradually got so much support in the islands. The early Brethren had the courage to break away from the monopoly of the colonial church, to spread the message, to have challenging open air meetings and build their own halls; some even travelled all the way to Tórshavn to be baptised. Brethren fishermen arranged regular evangelical meetings with other crew-members during often long fishing voyages. I suggest that the short presentations of some key figures within the emerging movement in chapter 4 supplements the previous chapter because it provides additional understanding of the different personalities who took upon themselves the controversial and often unpopular challenge of kindling and expanding the movement.

In chapter 5 I give biographical portraits of a few early and 2nd generation Brethren workers. Furthermore I would argue that points made in the chapter assert the claim of assemblies' and individuals' independence, the feeling of a Faeroese and Brethren identity, industriousness and sincerity. Undoubtedly these attitudes have been beneficial not only for the assemblies but also for Brethren involvement in the wider community.

Part Three of the thesis, comprising chapters 6, 7 and 8, I describe, evaluate and analyse the legacy of the Faeroese Brethren movement. Here I would argue that Brethren have been and are involved in all areas of community life and have had a constructive impact in the economic, social and cultural life in the islands. In many cases they have stimulated the dynamics in the nation-building process, both as initiators and supporters in fishing, industry and business facilitating growth in the economy. Brethren were the group which experienced the greatest social mobility and improvements; also they

showed more openness to modernity and were often pioneers regarding changes and the introduction of new working methods, new technology and new practices.

Chapter 6 clarified the socio-economic and political changes which resulted in a community able to take on the challenges of the 21st century. Here also the role of Brethren, both as a group and as individuals, has been decisive because they hold on to their principles of self-government and self-support.

In chapter 7 I revealed to what extent Brethren wholeheartedly participated in the cultural innovations and were one of the main forces paving the way for a modern cultural life in the Faeroes, both within the assemblies and in the wider community. I would argue that it is dubious if conservative institutions like the Established Church would ever have changed their positions had it not been for Brethren initiatives, e.g. Bible translations and hymnodies in the vernacular.

The third part of the thesis concludes with chapter 8 which tests and brings together points made in previous chapters as well as expands on the themes. This is done also done where younger Brethren members express how they see their movement, its past, its present situation and its future. What they all have in common is that for them the movement brought about the ‘real Reformation’ or the ‘second Reformation’ in the Faeroes and is the serious and genuine Christian movement in the islands, views shared by many non-Brethren as well.¹ Although some of them are critical of certain aspects within the assemblies, they are optimistic and seem convinced that changes in practices are inevitable regardless of stiff opposition from some older people. The chapter also deals briefly with some sociological questions which appear very important to the

¹ My father, born in 1913, used to say that the Reformation did not reach the Faeroes until the Brethren movement had been introduced in the islands, especially with Victor Danielsen’s Bible translation.

younger generation. Increasing secularisation, individualism and openness to 'others' require greater acceptance and insights into other people's lives, ways of thinking, attitudes and beliefs. In conclusion I would argue that although many younger people within the Faeroese Brethren movement oppose changes in an imaginary correct 'lifestyle', in attitudes and in discipline, the educated and vocal ones may stay within the movement, make the necessary efforts and, in typical Brethren fashion, pave the way for the changes which are necessary to meet future challenges and demands.

So there are two possibilities for the future of the Brethren movement in the Faeroes. Firstly, the Evangelical growth which is gaining momentum globally may happen within a Brethren framework. Secondly, Brethren may have reached their peak in the islands and a gradual decline in numbers of assemblies and members could take place as has happened in the UK, depending on the complex interplay with a relentlessly shifting culture and society. Consequently I suggest that the Brethren legacy will develop mostly in practices and form but hardly in the fundamental theological principles on which the movement is solidly founded. However, there are tendencies among younger people that favour a more rigid organisational framework because they think that this would make the movement function better. I am not convinced that steps towards constructing a hierarchical organisation would make the Faeroese Brethren movement stronger or more efficient because it seems to me that just the lack of such structures has served the movement well throughout its history. Additionally, I feel that organisational structures might bring the Brethren movement closer to established church structures which was exactly what the early Brethren passionately rejected. Another tendency which divides Brethren is the question of 'appointed' leaders or pastors in the assemblies. This

has, of course, already happened in Britain and the United States, for instance, where many 'Assembly Halls' have changed their name to 'Evangelical Churches' and where there are indeed 'pastors'. It is difficult to say how this particular problem is going to be solved – if indeed it proves to develop into a 'problem'.

However, these and other questions will undoubtedly be solved without any serious split in the Faeroese Brethren movement which has survived many internal crises and external attacks, so I expect that the movement will continue to play a vital role in Faeroese community life, that the assemblies will continue to attract both members and non-members to meetings and other arrangements, maybe with changed practices and innovations, and that Brethren individuals are continuously going to feel involved in the life of the assemblies.

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In this thesis I have gathered all available material which has been systemised, presented and analysed in order to give a comprehensive insight into a small and remote community, members of which responded positively to an Evangelical movement introduced by a foreigner from outside the realm that the community belonged to. The Brethren in the Faeroes was the first Christian movement where islanders could choose whether to join or not, and during the first decades it required a lot of courage and conviction to leave the established church in favour of the new movement. In spite of this an ever increasing number of individuals felt the need for a more personal and profound faith than the church could offer. I have given examples of this and suggest that material insecurities, displacement and fear of external dangers contributed to the growth of the movement. Finally I would suggest that the fact that Faeroese Brethren always saw themselves as

part of the Faeroese 'nation' and their assemblies as indigenous and home-grown provided them with a self-esteem which most other islanders did not possess. I have argued that this is in harmony with key theorists within missiology and church planting.

This work is important for many reasons. I have compiled, drawn together, presented and analysed rather inaccessible material regarding a Christian movement in an under-researched and under-recorded archipelago in the middle of an ocean. I have put the material in a proper historical context and emphasised the political, socio-economic and cultural circumstances before, during and after the introduction of the movement. The interaction between the movement and the wider society has been particularly interesting, not least its cultural impact, but also within other areas. I have argued that developments in the Faeroes toe the same lines on nationality and nation-building, on missiology and church building, regarding linguistics, notably the role of vernaculars, and culture as communities elsewhere and how all this relates to economics and social studies.

This thesis also makes it quite clear that there is much scope for further research, both in the Brethren movement in the Faeroes, in Faeroese history and other fields. I would suggest that research into the role of women in the movement would be an obvious area of further research, and the sociology concerning the Brethren movement would be highly relevant as would be socio-psychological research into the process of conversion and to what degree this may be influenced by external circumstances. The questions regarding baptism as not just a theological phenomenon but also a sociological one, mentioned the introduction, might uncover new knowledge. Undoubtedly future researchers will embark upon such and related research and I am in no doubt that this would be profitable not only for Faeroese, Nordic and British readers but also globally.

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Ljós á leiðini (Light on the way).

Naade og Sandhed (Grace and truth).

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