

## ...HIS ENEMY BE MADE HIS FOOTSTOOL

### VISIONARY UPRISING ON AN URBAN SCENE – A CASE FROM MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY NORWAY

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**Abstract:** The article focuses on a series of events in the little town Fredrikstad in south-eastern Norway in the year 1852. A small group of proto-methodists, who later on were influenced by Mormonism and emigrated to Utah, made serious efforts to dominate the public urban spheres: the church, the court room, the harbour and the streets. Their actions were, partly, inspired and legitimized by religious visions and hallucinations but their message included both religious and social reformation. They were charged with accusations of blasphemy, *crimen laesae majestatis*, disturbing public order and insulting His Majesty's servants, and they eventually ended up with legal sentences. One of the rebels, the shipmaster Tobias Jacobsen, was also accused of being insane and made the object of a thorough psychiatric investigation.

The author presents four main points of interpretation of these events: 1) The events can be analyzed in terms of "systems in conflict", that is as a confrontation between radically different cultural values and symbols, 2) The conflict had rhetorical implications for both groups of participants: the group in revolt and the established public authority, 3) The rhetorical implications include different conceptions of time and history, and 4) As a contribution to the study of cultural history, a close examination of the visionaries' rebellious narratives may show the close interaction between speech and action, event and narrative.

**Keywords:** Methodism, Mormonism, narrative, rhetoric, religious action, vision

"And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemy be made his footstool."<sup>1</sup>

On April 21, 1852, a sensational message was published in the local newspaper of the little town of *Fredrikstad* in south-eastern Norway: "By the grace of God be it hereby declared to you all, to the whole world, that I, J. A. Jensen, citizen and shipmaster in Fredrikstad, through His grace have received the Spirit of truth in my heart, and the Spirit witnesses with my spirit, that I in this spirit am the true and only son of God united with the heavenly Father. Let this become public to all men so

<sup>1</sup> The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews, ch. 10, vv. 11–13. Bible references from King James's Version.

that any false spirits, claiming to be saved, could be tested anywhere in the world.” This advertisement was part of a complex cultural and religious conflict in the little town. The conflict was dramatic on a personal and institutional level, but still it might look spectacular at first sight. More closely investigated, however, it will be possible to find the events related to a confrontation between the words and acts of a small group of visionary people and official reactions from ecclesiastical and juridical authorities. The different elements in this confrontation will be analyzed in detail later. First, the primary events should be taken into consideration.<sup>2</sup>

## BACKGROUND AND BEGINNING

The years around 1850 were a period of change of popular culture and ideological orientation in many local communities in Norway. *Marcus Thrane* was a central leader of this process. He was inspired among other things by the French revolution of February 1848, and during the last years of the 1840's, Thrane motivated revolt and protest among craftsmen and working class people in different parts of the country. Thrane and his movement spread revolutionary ideas and organized protests against landowners and authorities, demanding better political and economical conditions for labourers, craftsmen and other underprivileged groups. The Thrane movement gained considerable support, and this raised fear among politicians, landowners and urban upper class people. Fearing a violent rebellion, the government and central administration suppressed the protest movement in a brutal way. The most active leaders were put in prison during the summer 1851, and severely punished during the following years. The final sentences were not passed until 1854, and during these first years of the 1850's the authorities were very sensitive to other signals of popular protest or disobedience.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, a loud public criticism of traditional culture and authority developed. This was not least true in religious matters. The Thrane movement had, among other things, attacked the clergymen's aristocratic way of life and their economical pressures on common parishioners. Even individual ministers were harshly criticized or mocked at in the movement's own newspaper, “The Workers' Movement Journal”, edited by Marcus Thrane from 1848.

Still, the authorities had at least one problem when religious protests developed. In the 1840's, the Norwegian Parliament had passed two new laws which made Norway a rather liberal country in religious affairs. From 1842, anyone could preach the Gospel outside the churches and initiate religious organisations within the church without restrictions. And from 1845, anyone dissenting the Lutheran Confession could establish his own church or congregation of another Christian observance.<sup>4</sup> As

<sup>2</sup> The English version of this article was written in 1996, but I have later presented a discussion of the events in Norwegian. (AMUNDSEN 1998: 31–64).

<sup>3</sup> Edvard BULL (1985: 21, 204ff).

<sup>4</sup> Andreas AARFLOT (1967: 293ff).

a consequence, lay religious protests within or outside the Lutheran State Church of Norway in principle were legal and had to be tolerated by the authorities. Clergymen, judges, landowners and other authorities might dislike, discredit or evaluate as rude and stupid popular religious protest, but they had to accept and tolerate it. It was, however, far from common practice to leave the State Church. Instead of leaving it, most of the critics of the Lutheran clergy and church constitution organized their own preaching and religious meetings through local, and later also regional and national, associations and societies for inner and foreign mission. In the same period, new religious impulses reached Norway, not least by sailors and craftsmen visiting foreign countries and cultures. These impulses often became the nucleus of vivid religious protests and protest movements. Important protest movements during the 1850's were Methodism and, for some years, Mormonism. Both appeared in Fredrikstad at an early stage.

*Ole Peter Petersen*, the founder of the Norwegian Methodism and the central ideologist of this movement, was born in the Fredrikstad district in 1822.<sup>5</sup> As a sailor, he came into contact with American Methodism during the 1840's. In 1844, he went to America for the first time, and stayed there for several years. During this period, he experienced a traditional, momentaneous Methodist conversion. According to his own description, he was cleansed of his sins and filled with divine love. On January 28, 1849 he also experienced what was called "a second blessing" as prescribed in the so-called "Holiness Movement", and this became the culmination of his religious striving.<sup>6</sup> He was installed as a new person, reborn in Christ (as he calls it) and feeling free from conscious sinning. He wrote about all this in letters to his fiancée, who still lived in Fredrikstad, and she passed the letters on like informal pamphlets to interested readers in the area. Marked by such strong religious experiences and preluded by remarkable publicity, Petersen, in June 1849, visited his home town Fredrikstad and stayed there for almost one year. He spent much time discussing his new insights with the town's clergy, he married, and preached the new gospel wherever he was welcomed. Late in the summer that year, he went with a ship along the whole coast of southern Norway. Both here and in his home town, Petersen met with small groups of religious men and women listening to his sermons and personal advice. Petersen left Fredrikstad during the spring 1850, but at that time, several families had made his message their own. At this stage, Petersen was no schismatic, and he did not demand that his supporters leave the Lutheran State Church for convictional reasons or publicly criticize the present conditions in the church. It is unknown what this little group of people sympathizing with Petersen's religious views really grasped from his opinions, or what they internally discussed before or after he visited Fredrikstad. But in the beginning they all chose to stay within the state church. Eventually, the group was diminished. After a couple of

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Arne HASSING (1980: 15ff), C. F. ELTZHOLTZ (1903).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Tore MEISTAD (1994: 95–111).

years there were, at least according to the local vicar, only four “main persons” left who explicitly held to the views of Petersen. Despite their modest number, however, they were to be shown considerable public attention during the future events.

## THE PRIMARY EVENTS

In the first period after his return to Fredrikstad in June 1849, Petersen had been living with a skipper or carrier called *Tobias Jacobsen*, who also was a relative of Petersen’s wife. It was with Jacobsen’s little ship that Petersen had made his journey along the southern coast of Norway. Jacobsen seems to have been the leading person in the little group of Methodist or Petersen sympathizers, and it was he who preceded the dramatic events in 1852.<sup>7</sup>

During the spring of that year, Jacobsen and a couple of others in the group had payed several visits to the local minister, Dean *Lars Arup*. They had met with him in the vicarage, discussed and criticized his sermons – according to Arup “in a rude and contemptful way”, and he showed them the door repeatedly. A first climax took place during a service held by Arup in the main church of Fredrikstad on May 2, 1852. The vicar had just closed his sermon, when Tobias Jacobsen stood up in the middle of the church and protested against what the attendants just had been told. Jacobsen was agitated, and said that Arup’s sermon would take both him and his parishioners straight to hell. The Dean did not pay much notice to Jacobsen, but finished the ordinary service as usual. Afterwards, Arup explained to Jacobsen that this kind of behaviour was illegal and punishable, but Tobias Jacobsen just repeated what he had already said: he had been present at “a devil’s service”.

In the evening the same day, Jacobsen had attended a religious meeting in the town where the honourable lay preacher Erik Tønnesen had given a sermon. Jacobsen had demanded to be shown attention there, too, and had started to sing a religious song with a quick and merry melody. Having finished the song, he told the audience how he had acted during the church service, and then he continued to criticize the vicar and the church.

Dean Lars Arup hesitated, but finally he decided not to prosecute Jacobsen. He restricted himself to reporting the episode to his brother *Jens Lauritz Arup*, bishop in Christiania. The civil authorities in Fredrikstad, however, did not hesitate at all, but acted quickly, and the local town judge, *Johannes Henrik Berg*, summoned Jacobsen to a formal interrogation. This took place May 10, 1852, about one week after the incident in the main church of Fredrikstad. Confronted with the juridical authority, Jacobsen used the opportunity to explain his opinions. During the interrogation, he maintained his acts and speech, and went if possible even further in annoying church and clergy. At this time, he also took the opportunity to explain and broaden his own points of view. It was obviously important for him to tell the public about the basis of his action.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Martin DEHLI (1964: 456–464); Arne HASSING (1980: 20–23); Tore PRYSER (1982: 162–167).

To the town judge, Jacobsen explained that at a certain point in his life he had experienced severe, external pressures, which made him doubt his own social status. This experience kept him from working, he didn't sleep well and developed into a silent and introvert person. In June three years ago – that is in June, 1849 – God had, however, “put a light into his heart”. He had had hallucinations, heard voices, felt religiously uplifted and introduced himself as a lay preacher of penitence directly instructed by God; “during these 3 years I [have] according to His own word and the desire and commandment of my spirit several times personally called upon the clergy of this place and tried to make them realize their mistakes and correct them according to the Holy Scripture”. The beginning of these events coincided with Jacobsen's encounter with Ole Peter Petersen, who came to Fredrikstad from America at the same time. These spiritual experiences, then, were the basis of all his attacks on the clergy for delusions and heresy. “The so called Dean Arup”, as he insisted on calling the vicar, was no true disciple of Christ, Jacobsen maintained. As for himself, he was without sin. During the whole interrogation, his statements were supported by references to the Bible and combined with attacks against the court and the town judge.

It obviously was two different worlds, two different ways of speaking, that met during this first legal interrogation. Jacobsen made it clear that he spoke of a reality of another kind than the one referred to by the court administration, the church and the clergy. He judged the present order and society to be false, wrong and eternally damned. Accordingly, Dean Arup was only the “so called Dean Arup”, and the town judge was an unjust judge. He himself represented something new and real, which still was based on the past, on a time-honoured, true tradition and narrative about the real constitution of the “Kingdom of God” and how this kingdom should be realized. The church and the clergy had, however, destroyed the simple message that anyone would be able to find in the Holy Scripture. This was the fact of which Jacobsen wanted to remind his audience. Ideologically, the message seemed rather simple, as Jacobsen's main point was that the Lutheran view of the sinfulness of man was heretical. When Dean Arup in his sermon on May 2, had said that everyone was in a sinful condition while living in this world, Jacobsen had found it his duty to protest publicly, “as whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin” (I. John 3, 9). It is obvious that Jacobsen and his fellow protestants in this part came close to central thoughts in the American “Holiness Movement” introduced to them by O. P. Petersen.

For the moment, the interrogation at the city court hall was the end of the authorities' activity, but Tobias Jacobsen did not want to be cut off like this. A legal interrogation was according to his view of no authority at all, and was not capable of stopping him, anyway. During the whole month of May, 1852, he therefore continued acting as a lay preacher in public places.

Both inside and outside the Glemmen chapel on the 16th of May, Jacobsen had openly arranged a new demonstration against the service and the vicar's sermon. During the sermon, Jacobsen stood up in the middle of the church, shook his head and made gestures every time he heard something that he didn't approve. Two days later, on the 18th of May, standing on a boat at the Fredrikstad harbour, he

preached and sang to a considerable audience gathering on the quay. He continued mocking church and clergy, and accused those who went to church of adultery. The church was a whorehouse, and the ministers were the devil incorporated. By giving absolution for money, they showed their congregation the direct way to hell. No authorities reacted at these two occasions, but what the many listeners on the quay understood, is hard to say. During the later trial, many of them presented different versions of what Jacobsen said.

But then it happened: In the evening on the 20th of May, Tobias Jacobsen held another religious meeting where he gave a speech from the top of the wall around the city. Suddenly, the military commander in chief, Cournal *Jens Christian Blich*, arrived on horseback and told him to stop immediately. Jacobsen refused to follow the cournal's order, and continued without paying further notice to the officer. Blich then turned angry, swore and hit Jacobsen with his whip. Jacobsen then had become even more eager, "with spiritual glory and praise to God because he had the honour of walking in the footsteps of Our Saviour". In the blows from the whip he saw a parallel to the sufferings of Jesus at Golgata.

This scene on the city wall had immediate consequences. Tobias Jacobsen had two stepsons, skipper *Svend Peter Larsen* and dyer *Niels Theodor Emil Larsen*, and they were also present at the meeting. Observing their stepfather being treated like this, they also were "moved in the spirit". Svend Larsen started to call out to the people present: "Repent every one of you, or the Lord will destroy you!" He was then caught by two soldiers commanded by the Cournal and taken to the city prison. On his way there, he sang and prayed with a strong voice, while the soldiers repeatedly hit him on his mouth with the butt-ends of their rifles. Dyer Larsen also received "the Lord's spirit" when he witnessed his brother and his stepfather, and then the soldiers brought him to prison, too.

This initiated some formal complications, as the civil authorities disapproved of the military commander's interference. The three prisoners therefore, after a couple of hours, had a message from the town judge that they were free to leave from the prison whenever they wished. Still they refused. They were of the opinion that they had done nothing wrong, and demanded to be formally interrogated. Not until the next day, after a legal examination, they were released from the town prison, and Tobias Jacobsen immediately commenced to preach and sing on the market-place, in the city streets and in the harbour. He also continued to interrupt the church services.

In this way, Tobias Jacobsen and his fellow protestants had chosen three parallel arenas or scenes for their acts and speech: the out-door public places, the churches and the courtroom in the city.

On the 23 of May, Jacobsen arranged another public meeting at the city wall, and during the service on Whit-Monday, May 31, he appeared again in the Glemmen chapel making gestures and shaking his head. This time the victim was *Carl Fredrik Falkenberg*, the curate. During this whole period, town judge Berg interrogated Jacobsen and the others several times, and on the 4th of June, Tobias Jacobsen was sentenced for the first time. Because of his contemptful acts in the Fredrik-

stad church on May 2, he was sentenced to twenty days in prison and a fine of 4 *speiedaler*.

This did not affect Tobias Jacobsen at all. June 15, 1852, he was arrested again, accused of disturbing public order. At this point, another person had appeared on the public scene. He was a sailor, too, and we have already met him: shipmaster *Johan Andreas Jensen*, the man who two months earlier had put the sensational advertisement in the local newspaper. Again, it is possible to follow the traces back to Ole Peter Petersen and his visit in Norway 1849-50. In 1849, master Jensen had met with both Petersen and Tobias Jacobsen in the city of Egersund in southwestern Norway, and he, like them, had experienced his "spiritual breakthrough". As it seems, Jensen had moved to Fredrikstad and become a citizen of this town as early as in 1850, and thus probably belonged to the little group gathered around Petersen. In 1852, shipmaster Jensen openly proclaimed his support to Jacobsen; he went through the streets, sang and preached his religious message. On the 7th of June, they both were put in the city prison for one night. Before their release, the town judge asked them to promise to restrain from further offending activities disturbing public order. This demand was easily put aside by the two imprisoned gentlemen, and they continued as if nothing had happened. On the 15th of June, 1852, the legal authorities showed no more patience, and master Jensen was arrested. When Jacobsen was told about the arrest, he went straight to the prison house singing and preaching fervently. A few hours later he was arrested, too, and from that time on they both were kept in custody until the town judge could pass his sentence.

The first result of the authorities' action was further interrogations. Jensen, Jacobsen and the two stepsons had little respect for the court and the town judge. According to the court journal they all showed a threatening attitude and both literally and figuratively they defended their own cause with biblical quotations and strong arguments. The process reached a peak when expressions that could be interpreted as blasphemous were presented by both Tobias Jacobsen and Johan Andreas Jensen strongly supported and seconded by the two stepsons. Jacobsen was alleged to have claimed to be Christ incorporated. On Whit-Monday, on the chapel churchyard in Glemmen, he was heard to say that he was the son of Joseph and Mary. And master Jensen was the one who already in April had presented a public advertisement where he claimed to be "the true and only son of God united with the heavenly Father". Not much less provocative were the preachers' view on His Majesty, King Oscar I. Jensen maintained that King Oscar two years previously had allowed him to speak freely. Since this promise had not been kept, Jensen concluded that His Majesty must have lied. This was, of course, included among the accusations against the protestants. On the 30th August, 1852, the town judge passed sentences on shipmasters Jacobsen and Jensen and dyer Larsen. Tobias Jacobsen was sentenced to one year and Johan Andreas Jensen to fifteen months convict labour, while Emil Larsen was imprisoned for fifteen days. Emil Larsen's brother, Svend Peter Larsen, was out of town and partly abroad with his own ship at this time, and was therefore not convicted until February 25, 1853. The sentence was only a minor fine.

Shipmaster Svend Peter Larsen accepted the sentence. The other three, how-

ever, appealed immediately. The Appeal Court in Christiania on 11th of October 1852, upheld the sentences of the local court. The protestants appealed to the High Court, which, in its turn, sustained the sentence of dyer Emil Larsen but reduced the penalty of Johan Andreas Jensen to one year of convict labour. In the meanwhile, several doubts had arisen among the authorities about the mental balance of Tobias Jacobsen. Therefore, the High Court waited for him to be further examined by medical experts. On July 25, 1853, the Appeal Court discharged Jacobsen on the basis of a psychiatric report on his mental health. The experts, however, did not totally agree on the subject, and that finally motivated the High Court to sustain the two sentences on Tobias Jacobsen. This decision was taken by the court 19th of January, 1854, a decision that closed the court proceedings of the religious uprising in Fredrikstad.<sup>8</sup>

During these last legal procedures, some elements in the cases of Jacobsen, Jensen and Larsen became clearer. The Larsen brothers chose in May and June 1852 to leave the Lutheran State Church. Some time later, master Jensen came to the same conclusion and joined them. They all finally and with their families decided to register as members of the Mormon Church. The Mormons had, at that very time and with basis in recently founded congregations in Sweden and Denmark, begun a missionary campaign along the Norwegian coast. The protestants in Fredrikstad were rebaptized, and at least two of the families were among those who during 1853-54 emigrated to the Mormon Paradise Utah. Tobias Jacobsen, on the other hand, opposed Mormonism.<sup>9</sup>

It is, however, no point for me to follow this specific aspect of the events further. Instead, my intention is to take a closer look at the confrontation between the religious discourse of this little group, and the public authorities and their institutional instruments.

## SYSTEMS IN CONFLICT

There are, of course, many ways of analyzing these events. Scholars have, for instance, tried to describe and analyze them as a part, although a more curious one, of the so-called “religious disturbances of the 1850’s”.<sup>10</sup> They have also been treated as part of the growing workers’ movement and social uprising in the same period.<sup>11</sup> There has, however, been no efforts at analyzing the character and dynamics of the acts and speech of the different acting parts in the events. In that perspective the starting point should be that the events took place in a small city, with easily identifiable actors who left many traces in the source material. Not only are the more or less

<sup>8</sup> *Norsk Retstidende* [Norwegian Journal of Law] 18, pp. 111–118; 19, pp. 158–174, Christiania 1853–54.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Andrew JENSON (1927).

<sup>10</sup> DEHLI (1964).

<sup>11</sup> PRYSER (1982).



formal reactions of the authorities, the officials and the juridical system known to us, but also the strategy of the religious rebels due to their efforts to dictate their views and goals to the court journal.<sup>12</sup>

Referring to these facts it should be rewarding to identify the basis of the acts and speech of Tobias Jacobsen and his fellows as “visions”, and the result of the acts and speech as “visionary uprising”. It is also quite clear that they thought of themselves and their actions in such categories. In a more narrow sense of the word, Tobias Jacobsen actually had had visions or hallucinations, spiritual experiences where God had spoken directly to him and told him what to do. The exact implications of these experiences are unknown, but it is likely that Jacobsen’s visions were of a traditional kind, quite common in several popular religious movements in Norway in the first half of the 19th century.<sup>13</sup> He had heard and seen God or a heavenly messenger proclaiming an authoritative message to him. However, Jacobsen and his followers should be regarded as visionaries also in a wider sense of the word, that is: They argued that their behaviour was based on direct divine inspiration exclusive to them, by which God himself told them how to behave, react or respond. The no less than universal uprising they tried to generate in the local community, was based on the conviction that *they* were the seers, while their opponents were the blinded evil-doers and enemies of the truth. What Jacobsen and the others saw, was according to their own conviction hidden to anyone else.

The main point, however, is that the visions – both in a narrow and in a wide sense of the word – made the little religious group culturally identifiable. They not only saw and heard privately or individually, but spoke and acted in public, trying to change the present order and to convince the whole world of the truth of their message.

Let us take a closer look at this: One vital point here is that Tobias Jacobsen, who was the most central person of the events, founded many of his actions on references on hallucinatory and divinely inspired experiences connected with his Methodist conversion from 1849 and onwards. The three acting fellows of Jacobsen also, at several occasions, informed the public that they felt commanded directly by God, and therefore simply had to do what they did. Such a position indicated to them that they could not be mistaken. And during the religious meetings at the city wall, for instance, Tobias Jacobsen proclaimed that even if the false prophets were many, God had called upon him to prophesy against the false preachers. Did not God himself in the Scripture say that “upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit” (Joel, 2,29)? At the same occasion Jacobsen had blessed God for “pouring the Holy Spirit upon him” in order to let him explain the

<sup>12</sup> See the Sources on p. 204, with the following references: *Fredrikstad byfogdarkiv*: Forhørsprotokoll 4, 1852: 10/5, 21–28/5, 15/6, 25/6, 15/10, 1853: 18/1; Domsprotokoll 1, 1852: 4/6, 30/8, 1853: 25/2. *Fredrikstad prestearkiv*: Kopibok 1819–1858; Brev 1831–1855. *Tune sorenskriverarkiv*: Ekstraretsprotokoll 5, 1852: 21/6; Tingbok 32, 1852: 16/7.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Arne Bugge AMUNDSEN (1994: 9–18).

Sacred Scripture in that very moment and speak with other tongues, just like the Apostles on the first Day of Pentecost.

Another vital point is that Jacobsen, the Larsen brothers and master Jensen based their acts and speech almost exclusively on strong motives of change, which gave their strategy a visionary character. The contemporary, common manifestations of religion and piety were, according to their opinion, not corresponding with “true reality”, that is, the ideals of the Bible and the Apostles’ time. This was the inner truth they had “seen”, and it was this “true reality” they tried to realize by, in an almost literal sense, breaking through all traditional discourses on religion and society.

Given this object of their actions, it was of utmost importance for them to choose central arenas for acts and speech. In the beginning, the most important and relevant arena for this “visionary uprising” was the two local churches, where especially Tobias Jacobsen acted with uncovered provocations showing his contempt and irony in confrontation with the clergy’s message and way of preaching. Correspondingly, he tried to arouse anger or passion among the churchgoers by presenting to them an alternative message formed like “He, the minister, tells you, but I know that...”.

A similar strategy is obvious on the other arenas chosen by Jacobsen and his companions. In the streets, at the market-place, in the harbour and the courtroom the visionaries tried to ridicule, obstruct and demolish all accepted ways of speaking and acting. Jacobsen had taken on a special way of gesticulating combined with rolling his eyes, sighing and groaning, all intended to demonstrate how he estimated what he saw and heard. Confronted with the service in church, he could sit on the church fence and recite revivalist songs with thrilling melodies, and tell the churchgoers that their vicar led them right to hell. Confronted with the town judge, he could insist on dictating page up and page down to the court journal, urging that it was he, not the judge, who was the right administrator of the court. And confronted with the military commander trying to intervene in the meeting at the city wall, he tried to contrast the arrogance, uniform and pompous intrusion with horse and whip with the humble appearance of both Jacobsen and Jesus (“The lords ride, while the servants go on their feet.”) These intended provocations and the impressive readiness for suffering showed by the little protestant group, should probably be seen as an important part of a consistent struggle for power and authority. The background of this struggle was the conviction that they had been given a direct, divine message instructing them to call their audience to penitence and thus avoiding the coming wrath of God.

It is especially interesting that these protestant strategies, which we perhaps might call “provocation” and “symbolic speech”, show how the different discourses and arenas were lined up and divided. To a certain extent, the visionaries used traditional discourse and authority to underline their concerns. Both verbally and by dictating to the court journal, they used many long references to the Holy Scripture. Jacobsen often claimed that some hundred thousand verses in the Bible was proof of his own views. Confronted with contemporary authority and justice they all invoked

both law in general and the King himself. The town judge “turns the King’s holy place to a holy place of the Devil” when he refers false accusations against me, Jacobsen said. At the same time the visionaries act and speak contradictory when compared with traditional public discourse. They make use of it, but press its content and meaning, transfer it without reservations to their own situation and thus definitively put themselves outside any publicly known systems of meaning. The whole strategy results in a juridical, linguistic and ideological system conflict. Even when Tobias Jacobsen tried to establish a dialogue with the local vicar and to persuade him to support the new religious views, it is probably correct to assume that he and the other three visionaries in fact rather tried to establish and confirm a system conflict all from the beginning.

In the following, the primary task will be to describe and analyse the dynamic and complexity of the visionary expressions of Tobias Jacobsen and the little group in Fredrikstad, especially by focussing on the relation between speech and act through different confrontations between the visionaries and their opponents. By doing this, we shall try to elucidate the different strategies and modes of time and discourse inherent in the message of the visionaries.

## VISIONS AND PSYCHIATRY

The fact that contemporary psychiatry was given great importance at an early stage of the events, is an interesting aspect of the confrontation between the visionaries and local and central authorities. The authorities had met with religious rebels and protestants before. This kind of uprising was known from both southern and northern Norway during the 1840’s and 1850’s, and the authorities also kept an eye on the more politically and socially oriented Thrane movement. But one thing was movements trying to inspire popular protests against common oppression, protests using religious discourse and behaviour that were confused, vulgar and offensive in the eyes of the authorities, were something quite different. There was of course the possibility of suppressing the rebels with accusations of lese-majesty, public contempt and disorder, but was that sufficient? The question, therefore, quickly rose if the danger would diminish when analyzing the opponents medically.

The county administration consequently asked a medical examination of the accused parts, and during the autumn 1852, both the military doctor in Fredrikstad, dr. *Ole Peter Larsen*, and the director of the newly established mental hospital in Christiania, dr. *Herman Wedel Major*, presented extensive evaluations of Tobias Jacobsen in special. Dr. Larsen’s analysis was restricted, but found the religious protestants quite “calculating” – they suffered, so to speak, from some kind of “controlled madness”. Dr. Major, on the other hand, was of the opinion that Tobias Jacobsen was “partially insane”, as he called it. He had normal intelligence and reactions on every field – except in religious matters. According to dr. Major, he had always seemed a bit odd, but this tendency had accelerated from the time when he started to be occupied with religious questions. “Accessible information suggests that the

concerned was characterized by the habit not to look other people directly in their eyes, but after he tended towards religious phantasies he also started to gesticulate in a special way and roll his eyes." Dr. Major found the reason for this behaviour to be the enervating social position of Jacobsen, a position with strongly negative consequences for his mental balance and judgement. It was, after all, evident that Jacobsen onesidedly emphasized religion as legitimation for acts and speech. Jacobsen, therefore, was mentally too indisposed to be sentenced by a court. This judgement was thoroughly referred and discussed in the High Court, where the case of Jacobsen finally ended. But the High Court was obviously not too happy with dr. Major's conclusion, and decided to ask The Faculty of Medicine at the University of Christiania of its opinion. The professors dissented, but the majority came out with a solution acceptable to the High Court judges. Tobias Jacobsen *was* partially insane, but he was also capable of understanding his actions, and therefore also capable of being legally sentenced. Based on this medical conclusion, the High Court confirmed and sustained the earlier sentences on Jacobsen.

These psychiatric evaluations are, in fact, interesting in themselves, among other things as a further way of analyzing and responding to the visionary religious discourse. In a quite reductionistic way they aim at explaining why Tobias Jacobsen and his combattants acted and spoke like they did. Even if this explanation was not accepted in court, it shows quite clearly that the conflict between the visionaries and the established authorities was a cultural conflict. The authorities sought to explain the religious expressions by referring them to the status of declassification, lacking education and inferior knowledge. The confusion in the important religious matters seemed to the authorities to be so total and so vital that it had to be called "partial insanity".

Even if these evaluations did not affect the visionaries directly, they were an important part of the public legal discussion in the matter. At least they should be analyzed as the final judgement by the majority, finding these cultural phenomena so extreme that they passed the border of human sanity. Still being capable of being sentenced, the visionaries simultaneously were culturally marginalized.

That Tobias Jacobsen found the whole examination by dr. Major suppressing and provoking, is quite evident. Two times he escaped on foot from Christiania to Fredrikstad after he forcibly had been sent to the mental hospital for examination in October, 1852.

## DIMENSIONS OF TIME AND AMBIGUITY OF DISCOURSE

Several times, it has been emphasized that Tobias Jacobsen and the others were anxious to act and speak according to their explicit object, namely the creation of a public space for the new message. That is why it is of great importance to look further into the characteristics of the visionary language or discourse. In particular, it will be of interest to investigate the different dimensions of time in the visionaries' speech. Not least because of the fact that they aimed at reforming and reestablishing

contemporary views and values, the dimensions of time should be regarded as important indicators of how this strategy was incorporated in public.

In the different forms of visionary language used by the Fredrikstad visionaries, several dimensions of time are recognisable.

Behind act and speech in churches, in the streets, on the market-places and in court, there quite clearly is *a continuous discourse on the present times*. The criticism and mockery is obviously meant as an effort to break the present down in order to build up something quite new. The strategy is evident and manifest: The authorities should be injured by showing that they are ridiculous, hypocritical, unjust or ungodly.

The authority of the minister had to be injured, since he, according to the visionaries, only had consideration for himself and his own living, and not for "the truth". If he couldn't be convinced by peaceful means, public attack and chikane had to be the result. Jacobsen's campaign against Dean Arup in the churches of Fredrikstad and Glemmen, is a typical example. Jacobsen gradually went further and further in his provocations of the Dean. At several occasions he made jokes and ambiguous sayings on the relationship between the black and white gown and the personal mendacity of the ministers. In the words of Jacobsen and the others, the ministers were "black men with white collars", or they could even be called "devils". "The Devil or the Evil Wolf is sitting under the ministers's collar", Jacobsen said at one occasion. Another time he mocked the curate Carl Fredrik Falkenberg in connection with a service in the Glemmen chapel on Whit-Monday, 1852. The curate was known for his considerable growth of hair, and that made Jacobsen exclaim: "Esau was hairy, and taking the collar and the gown off this man, you would also see that this was the case with him."

The town judge was, in a similar way, only "the so-called judge" in the eyes of the visionaries, and his authority was also to be destructed. "The so-called judge in this court is an unjust judge", master Jensen dictated to the court journal during one of the legal examinations. And both Jacobsen and his stepson Svend Peter Larsen, went as far as to say that they, not the judge, should be the court administrators. I am the one to pass sentence on the judge, Larsen said, since we all now have seen through the cunning plan of him who wants to lure forth words from our mouths and to force us to swear, which the Lord has strictly forbidden. And at several occasions, both Tobias Jacobsen and Johan Andreas Jensen, referred to their own book of law, "The Lawbook of Truth", which was superior to all other laws and regulations, and which they were obligated to subordinate.

The Cournal, who had tried to stop the meeting at the city wall, was also to be ridiculed. Seeing Cournal Blich approaching on his horse, Jacobsen said: "Blessed be the Lord, who is stronger than you." Blich was never titulated anything else than "the so-called Cournal". And if it is so that he, on behalf of the authorities, is fighting for God and Justice, why is he then cursing and whipping? Jacobsen asked the judge.

People in the town were also able to notice what Jacobsen and the others preached. At the meetings at the city wall, the church had been called a whorehouse. Anyone going there to listen to the minister's sermon or receive absolution from

him, was adulterous. And why did the women of the city dress with jewellery and other finery, quite contradictory to the word of God?

All these elements of the visionary discourse, were meant to be directed towards contemporary conditions and relate to present times, but this is not the complete picture. Looking further into the way in which the visionaries expressed themselves, it is also possible to find another dimension of time, namely *a visionary discourse on the past*. In past events and situations they obviously meant to find a basis from which the present could be judged. This is far from any conscious reflections on historical development. It rather is quite the opposite, that is: references to certain “mythical periods” in the history of religion. The visionaries, among other things, referred to the Lutheran reformation, claiming that the Lutheran fathers had fought religious decadence once and for all. And they referred to the “Urgeschichte”, primordial times, biblical times. By an extensive use of quotations from the Holy Scriptures and dramatic application of such texts, they contrasted contemporary society in a very effectful way. “What is happening these days, is just what happened during the days of the Pope, when forgiving sins was a question of money”, is a very often used saying. Furthermore, Jacobsen and the others all the time try to prove that what happened in Fredrikstad these days, was just a repetition of what occurred on the first Pentecost, in Apostolic times, or a fulfilment of the biblical prophecies about Judgement Day.

Finally, the visionary discourse also includes emphatic *references to the future*, or specifically to the future following the final victory of the new religious views. Ideals and hopes for the future are sketched in perspective of the results of the so-called “conversion”. The prophetic period announced by the preaching of the little group, was the decisive moment. At one of the legal inquisitions, Svend Peter Larsen expressed this clearly, when he “sealed Jacobsen’s statement as dictated to the court journal, by saying Yes and Amen with both hands raised until the coming of the Day of Christ, which takes to the light what now is captured in darkness, discerns the evil thoughts and intents of the hearts, and testifying that the Kingdom of the Devil is trembling in front of what is coming up these days.” The open and expectant attitude towards the future is remarkable. Speaking to the minister, the judge or the disbelieving listeners at the city wall, the visionaries were aggressive and very confident as to the victory of the truth confronting all kinds of secular and authoritative “security”. But at the same time, they kept the possibility open that the victory and revealing of falseness would retard until the end of time, the Day of Judgement. Then, at least, would anyone selling absolution for money, lead both themselves and their listeners right to hell. Then, at last, would those be punished who had tried to force them, the visionaries free from sin, to swear in court. And then, at last, would all hard-hearted men and women experience the terrible consequences of their attitude. But at the present time, the time of grace, they were fully prepared to suffer both physically and economically for the sake of their conviction, just like Christ once did. To risk legal accusation and sentence and eventually emigration from their own country was an accepted result of this position. To be open-minded to the future dimension of time, also included an open mind to an individual “exodus” from the

society in which they lived, criticized and felt suppressed by. This “exodus” was seen as the visionary counter-piece of the secular “security” of their opponents.

The most interesting is, however, that these three dimensions of time in the visionaries’ argumentation and discourse mostly occur as parallel elements. An excellent example of this is the content of Jacobsen’s preachings at the city wall. More than twenty witnesses were heard on this point during the trial, and thus throwing considerable light on the dialogue Jacobsen tried to establish with his listeners. In addition to the harsh criticism on the clergy and other authorities, he warned his audience against walking on the paths that they had followed until the present day. These paths would lead right to hell and eternal damnation. Jacobsen also said that the inhabitants of Fredrikstad soon would observe signs of this turning-point. One of the witnesses was of the opinion that the preacher had said that “the Devil would put the town on fire so that they all would have a foretaste of hell”. Another witness said that Jacobsen told the present that “they already were in hell, and that only fire was missing, which soon was to come, and then they all would experience the results of the false sermons of the clergy”. Several of the witnesses also said that these allegations had created rumours that Jacobsen and others were planning an uprising and wanted to put the town on fire. Confronted with such evidence, Jacobsen admitted to have said things similar to what the witnesses referred to, but it all was meant “spiritually”. He claimed that the auditors must have understood that spiritual fire had reached the city. Fire, of course, was the fire in the hearts, any references to swords meant the sword of the spirit, the word of God, and death and despair was the judgement waiting for unconverted sinners. Another illustrative episode was also referred to during the trial. *Christian Fornebo*, an assistant in the city prison, once entered the visionaries’ cell to bring them food. Tobias Jacobsen had looked at him with harsh eyes, hit the table with his fist and shouted: “I will take your life!” Jacobsen’s stepson, Emil Larsen, was supposed to have said something similar supporting his stepfather. The assistant was shocked, of course, and ran out of the cell, and to the judge he claimed that the prisoners had threatened to kill him. Larsen and Jacobsen, on the other hand, explained this to be meant “spiritually”, too. All they wanted was to put an end to the sinful life of the assistant. The town judge, after all, accepted the visionaries’ explanation of their own intentions: this was not a case “of natural matters”.

In my opinion, these examples demonstrate how the visionaries in different situations were able to balance between three dimensions of time, and to do this in an inventive manner. They used expressions obviously inspired by a notion of “mythical, primordial time”, and especially by the symbols and rhetoric of the New Testament. These expressions are directed towards the contemporary situation of the auditors in a brutal way. At the same time, this way of speaking is oriented towards future. They talk about things and events to come, or not to come, dependent of the public reaction to their act and speech. And that they acted intentionally and consciously, is demonstrated by their explanations during the trials. In the courtroom, they directed a grand scale play which according to their opinion was about something quite else than the town judge was able to administrate.

These parallel dimensions of time are probably also the background of another specific trait of the visionary discourse of Tobias Jacobsen, namely what could be called *ambiguity of language*. It is interesting to notice how they in their speeches predominantly use different linguistic and symbolic nuances where the variability and ambiguity opens up both criticism of contemporary society, references to “mythical, primordial time” and prophecy on future events. This conscious use of ambiguity is explicit in the confrontation between visionary discourse and juridical argumentation and perspectives. Here, in the courtroom, light is thrown on the acute conflict – we would still prefer to call it a system conflict – resulting from the meeting between visionary and public discourse. This system or discourse conflict also made it almost impossible to handle the accused properly and in relevant ways. What specially influenced their legal sentences, was for the most part accusations of public disorder and lese-majesty and less blasphemy and contempt of public servants.

The most important subjective reference for all the visionary statements, on the other hand, was “experience”, or to be more specific: the experience of divine inspiration and securing that the visionaries had taken part of. This inspiration installed in them a direct authority to act and speak in order to communicate a new religious message. Nothing else, be it church theology, clergy sermons or law and justice, could compete with this “experience”. The experience was, individually seen, rooted in singular events where inspiration was communicated, but the fundamental reference was that the acting and speaking visionaries were placed in “mythical time”. They had, in contrast to all their enemies, recognized the inner meaning of the Bible, and they literally lived in it, too.

This recognition of the inner religious meaning of the Holy Scriptures consisted, in short, of the thesis that the true believer was without sin and lived with divine power in his or her soul. This implied some kind of “transhistorical perspective”, by which the visionaries saw themselves unified with Christ and sharing his power. An excellent example of this way of thinking, is an episode on the Glemmen chapel churchyard, where the local teacher, Mogens Guttormsen, once said to Tobias Jacobsen: “You must be mad!” And Jacobsen replied: “Mad? Would I ever be mad, the son of Joseph and Mary?” A parallel is the incident where master Jensen and the Larsen brothers declared that they were Christ on earth. Such statements combine the “transhistorical perspective” with the strategy of provocation, as the meaning was – according to master Jensen’s explanation – that both they and all other truly converted Christians “had received the spirit of Jesus Christ in their hearts and thus belong to God in every way and are equal to him in all respects”. This was the implication of Jensen’s newspaper advertisement in April, 1852, and the invitation to all readers: “Try us, see for yourself if we are not reborn men without sin!”

In the centre of all this, it is possible to identify a coherent narrative about the creation and formation of the visionary preachers’ identity, that is: according to biblical ideals and divine inspiration. This narrative is put in contrast to all kinds of “traditionalism”, which here is represented by the contemporary order of church and society; neither clergymen nor judges, not even the King himself had authority on behalf of the *status quo*. This perspective, a narrative like this, must have given the



visionaries a starting point for all their strategies. As true Christians, they were free from sin, and God himself was speaking and acting through them – “every man that I have purified, he is pure, and he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous”. (cf. I. John 3,3/7). As unified with Christ they controlled the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, the right to bind and loose sins (St. Matthew 16,19). They were the proper clergy, since “their salt is more powerful than that dirt [!] thrown by Dean Arup on those places unjustly called holy places”.

All these techniques and variations of discourse seem to have satisfied the visionaries’ wish both to provoke, to speak symbolically according to their message and to penetrate the three different dimensions of time that were implicated in their understanding of themselves and of religion. It’s beyond doubt that these traits are characteristic of the act and speech represented by the visionaries in Fredrikstad. By means of these elements of discourse they tried to “break their way through” discourses in the public sphere. It should also be considered, however, if these traits are characteristic of visionary speech as such. At least, there are several parallel elements in other Scandinavian ecstatic and visionary movements during the first half of the 19th century.

## NARRATIVE AND ACTION

The incidents described here may still seem spectacular and little notable. To some observers, it might also appear to be evident that the concerned persons were mentally disturbed to a degree that makes them of little historical relevance. This judgement is probably both onesided and wrong. The phenomenological connexion between the behaviour of the visionaries in Fredrikstad and other movements at the same time, both in Norway and abroad, is too strong to be accidental. The question of madness or not is of minor importance compared with the question of historical contextualization of the persons and the events.

That the events in Fredrikstad in 1852 both are part of a wider, historical context and could be perspectivated by means of such a context, is quite clear. As mentioned earlier, there have been historians who tried to broaden the picture. For instance, the events have been described as part of the “religious uprising” of the 1850’s, or as a part of the growing workers’ movement and social protest in the same period. Another possible context could be 19th century popular modernity. The visionary movement could be seen as an early expression of popular modernity, or as the opposite, that is: a popular protest against modernity. This kind of contextualization will define the actual events as more than trivial or spectacular, and be a contribution to giving them historical and cultural meaning and significance beyond the local circumstances.

Of course, this kind of contextualization establishes a theoretical distance between the few actors of this case, and the explanatory references their words and deeds are given. The references are illustrative and illuminating, but they are not fully satisfactory to the complexity of individual and group actions. And as part of a

folkloristic analysis, this complexity is an important aspect of the object of study. My attempt at analyzing the events, therefore, has been to take a closer look on the dynamic and complex aspects of the visionary expressions. This is not an analysis that excludes contextualization or historical perspectivation, but it gives the possibility of getting close to individuals and variations, and of focussing the relation between speech and act in history.

One important point here, of course, is the question of source material: Tobias Jacobsen et consortes have not left behind much more than a newspaper advertisement and a number of statements and dictated speeches in the court journal in Fredrikstad. But these texts are very closely related to their actions: They said what they did, and did what they said. What they did and said was, in its turn, related to an implicate narrative not only of their own religious lives, but of visionary experience and authority as such, of past, present and future times. Accordingly, the very speech of the visionaries was in a way both their strategy and their action.

Thus, the visionary message and the visionary action can be described as a way of speaking, as a technique of discourse, but it is also possible to analyse it as a narrative. With all its nuances, ambiguity and variability the visionary discourse could be seen as a rather coherent narrative with the following structure: God has, by means of special, often punctual experiences, installed in a little group of believers recognition of the proper construction and order of the world, of the right human values and norms. It is the duty of this little group to communicate their message even if they risk ridicule, discreditation and religious or legal punishment. According to their divine experience, the visionaries are given a special authority and confidence that make them obedient to their own mission, and they are granted a special divine protection and guaranteed a blessed future. Those who reject and refuse their message, will, on the other hand, be unmasked and lose all their fortune in this world.

Analysed in this way, as a narrative about the human world, the structure of the narrative is open. The result of the visionary experiment is not given once and for all, and both positive listeners and hostile opponents have the possibility of changing their position. Likewise, the visionaries themselves can either win – or disappear.

In this specific case, the available sources have displayed the ambiguous discourse and open narrative structure of the visionary act and speech, and thus its potential of motivating action has also been demonstrated. Many scholars have, in different ways, posed the question of the inner meaning of this kind of popular cultural phenomena.<sup>14</sup> One of the most important issues, then, is the relationship between the cultural expressions in the religious sphere and the actual, primary events. Taking a closer look at the visionary discourse and narrative in the middle of the 19th century, would probably give possibilities of approaching an answer. At that time, social and cultural costs and sanctions connected with popular protests against contemporary society were so great that the alternative message would have had to

<sup>14</sup> Recent books in Scandinavia are e.g. Peter ARONSSON (1990: 68ff). Tom ERICSSON-Börje HARNESK (1994).

be resistant at a high level, and it also had to be the carrier of motivation for radical action.

The visionary message as it has been described in this article, seems to have been sufficient motivation for action and to have given opportunities of compensating for social declassation and legitimizing uprising. The acting visionaries have regarded both elements as important. But is this sufficient as an explanation? A more detailed investigation shows, in fact, that the visionaries in Fredrikstad actually *were* socially declassed at the beginning of the 1850's, and that their motives for social assertion thus were evident for other reasons than ideology or religious views. Dr. Herman Wedel Major made a point out of this fact in his examination of Tobias Jacobsen's mental state, and suggested that his social misery and misfortune could to a certain extent explain his actions. This was, however, not the destiny of Jacobsen alone. In the late 1840's, he was made economically responsible for missing goods belonging to others, but transported in his ship, and the town judge passed a sentence on him that resulted in economical ruin in 1849. His house and furniture were sold, and all that was left was his little boat. This happened at the same time as his religious conversion influenced by O. P. Petersen. During the trial in 1852, it was also underlined that Jacobsen some years earlier had been put to prison for three months in Sweden, and twice had been fined in Fredrikstad for illegal trade of liquor. Shipmaster Johan Andreas Jensen also turns out to have been in court several times before he acted in the courtroom as a visionary. In 1844, he was sentenced to prison by the High Court for fraud, and around 1850 he had a long conflict with a solicitor on defamation. Jensen had to apply the authorities for *beneficium pauper-tatis*, which he was not granted, and he was unable to pay the fines he was sentenced to, so his family had to be granted parish relief during his arrest, trial and one year in prison. Master Svend Peter Larsen, one of Jacobsen's stepsons, also had his conflicts with the law. In the cities of Egersund and Mandal he had been fined for illegal commerce, and parallel with the events in Fredrikstad he was sentenced to pay his debts to a merchant in another part of the country.<sup>15</sup> The central actors in the visionary events, then, were without fortune, had lost their social and economical positions, but still felt deeply misunderstood, badly rejected and unjustly treated by authorities and individuals.

A short, but important glimpse of their sentiments is given to us by another legal examination than the ones referred to this far.<sup>16</sup> It took place in June, 1852, had nothing directly to do with the religious controversies, but the acting parts were much the same. Shipmaster Jensen had accused a merchant in Fredrikstad, *Fritz Schübeler*, of bad and contemptful treatment. During the examination the background becomes clearer. Jensen had little money, and owed Schübeler a smaller sum for bread and other necessities. In order to pay some of his debts, Jensen had given Schübeler an irresistible offer: He, "a man of absolute truth and conviction", meant

<sup>15</sup> See the Source *Fredrikstad byfogdarkiv*: Forhørsprotokoll 4, 1850: 17/12; Domsprotokoll 1, 1852: 12/5, 1853: 9/2

<sup>16</sup> See the Source *Fredrikstad byfogdarkiv*: Forhørsprotokoll 4, 1852: 17/6–18/6.

himself to be able to uncover Schübeler's maid and tell the merchant if she had stolen from him or not. Jensen's career as a soothsayer came to a sudden end: Schübeler didn't have the smallest interest in the offered services, and told Jensen to pay his debts immediately. Jensen's reaction to this was very aggressive. He had threatened and shouted at the merchant, and accused him of having got his money in unjust and immoral ways. Hadn't this fat and self-confident man been poor until he married a rich, elderly widow some years ago? This accusation did Jensen repeat during the legal examination, and he went even further in attacking both Schübeler and another merchant, as he attributed to them "the plan of assassinating their fellow men by withholding from them their justified income". Master Jensen at the same occasion showed himself to be very jealous of his honour and very proud of his profession as a sailor. At the same time, he felt persecuted and unappreciated by the merchants, who were "led by the spirit of Satan". Tobias Jacobsen supported "brother Jensen" the best he could: These merchants have misbelieved and contempted me, too, he said. "Among them I was reckoned to be a commoner", I was "among the rabble of mankind to them", Jacobsen declared with pathos in court.

The message of the visions, then, must have given the little group a new social basis taking its members to realize the ideal that they most eagerly communicated in public, namely the radical change of the present order in church and courtroom. They extensively used all the possibilities in these two arenas, but never accepted the negative reactions or sentences. They wanted to establish a dialogue with the public, but at the same time they discriminated and marginalized themselves in the eyes of their audience.

By utilizing the many possibilities on the urban scene, they also managed to give a special effect to the variability and ambiguity of their discourse and message. That this was conscious and intended, Tobias Jacobsen demonstrated in one of his many dictates to the court journal: "But whereunto shall I liken this disbelieving generation? We have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; I liken them with children, as the Lord has said in his word." (cf. St. Matthew 11,16).

In the mouth of Jacobsen, this saying displays how he and the others wanted to demonstrate publicly their new identity and authority given to them as visionaries. As "men of absolute truth and conviction" they were in a position to reveal falseness and immorality wherever it was, as shown in the conflict between Jensen and Schübeler. And even if the actual events took place in the little town of Fredrikstad, the visionaries in fact had universal aims; it was a question of "the whole world", as it was put in the newspaper advertisement by master Jensen. And just in the same way as they wanted their acts and deeds "to come public to the whole world so that everyone could wake up", they imagined that their enemies consisted of a world-wide network of clergymen defending their unjust power ("the writings go from minister to minister all over the country"). That they in fact obtained much publicity, is evident, even outside Norway. Jacobsen, Jensen and Svend Peter Larsen were sailors with their own ships, and by travelling and meeting people in harbours all over Scandinavia, they made their message and the events in Fredrikstad known. Svend

Peter Larsen, for instance, in 1852–53 sailed with his ship to Denmark, and this trip probably made the Mormon mission in Denmark and Sweden interested in the religious uprising in southeastern Norway. Another important factor is that newspapers not only in Fredrikstad, but also in the capital, wrote about what happened.

My intention by pointing at these elements of the historical context, is to suggest the dimensions of motivation inherent in the visionary discourse or narrative. Of course, in this case we have only had the opportunity of studying one specific case, but the events in Fredrikstad 1852–53 also might contribute to an explanation of the rather extreme expressions found in several other popular religious protest movements in the 1840's and 1850's. Perhaps it is of less importance to look for wide contemporary effects of these movements, since they all rather quickly were both marginalized and criminalized. More interesting, then, is it to go further into the question of the relation between the characteristics of the message, the discourse and the narrative on the one side, and the potential for motivating human action on the other.

As a conclusion, it should perhaps be suggested that a detailed study of a “visionary uprising” in a small Norwegian town in the 1850's is capable of illustrating and illuminating the question of the characteristic traits of the visionary speech, of different possibilities of analyzing this kind of speech and of its social and cultural context.

The main title chosen for this article – “...till his enemies be made his footstool” – is a reference to the Holy Scripture (probably to Hebrews 10,13) used by Tobias Jacobsen during one of the legal examinations in June, 1852. The district judge of Tune, under whose jurisdiction the Glemmen chapel was situated, tried to find out more about how Jacobsen had showed his contempt for the clergy and the service. He then was told by Jacobsen that he, the judge, was the servant of the preacher, who was expecting that “his enemy be made his footstool”. Jacobsen was explicitly referring to the special identity of the visionary rebel, his special mission and special authority, and the context of the verse from the Bible (as quoted at the beginning of this article) shows how Jacobsen simultaneously put himself in the position of both the minister and of Christ. Jacobsen was living in “mythological times”, acting in present times, and expecting the future. All this made it possible for him to place his enemies as “his footstool” – and act. Even if the visionary experience in this case was very verbal, it was also directed towards action. Along with the speeches and dictates went physical actions. These actions took some of them to prison, others were taken to mental hospital or put in the hands of the poor-law inspector, but for some the steps brought them to America, to the place where Utopia was transformed to reality – Salt Lake City, Utah.

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The primary sources are located in the State Regional Archives (Statsarkivet) in Oslo.

*Fredrikstad byfogdarkiv*: Forhørsprotokoll, Domsprotokoll

*Fredrikstad prestearkiv*: Kopibok, Brev

*Tune sorenskriverarkiv*: Ekstraretsprotokoll, Tingbok

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