

Interim Ministry Resources

Chapter 12 Heritage

Lay Activity Controversy (4)

Lay Activity Controversy

While studying at [Luther Seminary](#) in St. Paul, MN, I wrote a paper on “The Lay Activity Controversy among Norwegian Lutherans in America,” which was later published by the [Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly](#) in VOL. 55, NO. 4 WINTER 1982 ISSN 0010-5260.

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The Lay-Activity Controversy Among Norwegian Lutherans in America
Henry Eyster Jacobs, Confessional Pennsylvania-German Lutheran
The Collegium Fratrum
Some CYCOM Observations
The Meandering of an Historian

COVER: Baptism of Tiffany Marie Martin at Milwaukee's historical Trinity. Adults, l. to r., sponsors James and Carol Rakowiecki, Pastor Michael Rogers, elder Jeffrey Reep, parents Linda and Alvin Martin. Story on page 190.

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The Lay-Activity Controversy Among Norwegian Lutherans in America

Lowell Bolstad

The lay-activity question was a big tension among the Norwegian Lutherans in America from the time of the arrival of the first pastor among the immigrants, J. W. C. Dietrichson, in 1844, to the time of the union of Norwegian Lutheran forces in 1917, when the validity of lay activity was firmly agreed upon. When the Norwegian immigrants first came to this country in 1825, they came without regularly trained pastors from the state church of Norway.

The low-church people felt quite at ease meeting in homes with a layperson leading the service, although not having an ordained pastor to perform the baptisms, confirmations, communions, weddings, and funerals was a real hardship. Those immigrants of high-church leanings, of whom there were not many, were a little more uncomfortable in not being able to be a part of an established church with a regularly ordained pastor. When pastors trained in Norway did come to this country with their missionary zeal to put the frontier church in order, many of the immigrants had a difficult time

accepting the authoritarian system they had wanted to escape. There was, then, the beginning of resistance to this high-church emphasis with its power in the hands of the pastors.

This is a sketch of the start of the lay-activity controversy among Norwegian Lutherans in America. But in order to properly understand the deeper origins of this controversy, one must go back to the homeland of Norway to take a look at the state church there and the Hauge renewal movement within it.

The State Church

In the late 1700s and early 1800s, Lutheranism was the official religion of Norway, as it had been since the Reformation. The Lutheran Church was, of course, the state church, and in the strong social cleavage system of Norway the church was identified with the state. The church came to be seen as domineering and controlling. Lay people were more passive objects than active subjects in the life of the congregation. The Conventicle Act of 1741 was an example of how the state viewed the church and how the church looked at itself. This law prohibited lay preaching and the meeting of lay people without the presence of an official pastor. The use of this law by state and church officials against Hans

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Nielsen Hauge, the lay preacher, demonstrated how much these officials had at stake. They strongly desired to keep the status quo of the social system. Their fear was, not only that such a man as Hauge might somehow change the established ecclesiastical order, but that he might also create discontent within society, which could result in pressure for social and political transformations.¹

Clergy in Norway at this time were for the most part influenced by the thinking of the Enlightenment. Later, men from the Johnsonian orthodox-pietist school severely criticized them by contrasting them to the shining figure of Hauge. Actually there were many different religious viewpoints running from a rich Lutheranism to a pure rationalism.²

The Haugean Renewal

It was Hans Nielsen Hauge who served as the catalyst to touch off the renewal movement in Norway at the turn of the century. Having experienced a spiritual breakthrough, he was able to preach a living faith to many of the rest of his countrymen who had become increasingly frustrated with the dry formalism of the state church of Norway. He spoke a message that was able to catch the spiritual interest and excitement of large numbers of his fellow people. In traveling about the country, Hauge inspired others to follow in his footsteps to do lay ministry. In effect he set in motion the whole lay-activity movement in Norway. The movement Hauge started called into question the entire state church system and its suppression of the laity. For the most part the laymen had always retained their pietism-orthodoxy even though the clergy had

been influenced more by rationalism. Now they realized they did not have to depend on the pastors of the state church for the development of their spiritual life. Lay members of the church could gather together in fellowship for mutual strength and encouragement. It is to Hauge's credit that these lay people did not leave the church but stayed and worked within it. With their stress on piety and Lutheran confessionality, they brought about a renewal of the church life of Norway.

Hauge was most important for mobilizing the laity.³ As mentioned earlier, this lay movement was met by stiff opposition from the state church. With this came the lay-activity controversy, which in turn came to America 50 years later.

The Emergency Principle

One more development in Norway was influential in the controversy in America, Professor Gisle Johnson's "emergency principle." Johnson combined a spirit of both pietism and orthodoxy. He supported lay activities and was loyal to Lutheran confessionality. Between the latter two there was a point of contention: Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession. This stated that no one could preach unless "rightly called" (*rite vocatus*).⁴ The ban against preaching by laity had been overturned in civil law in 1842, but the problem was still present in the ecclesiastical order because of Article XIV.

Johnson chose to evade the difficulty by coming up with his "emergency principle." In the event that there was a great need for people to do ministry because of a lack of ordained pastors, Johnson proposed that it be considered legitimate for

laity to be given some of the responsibilities. Needless to say, there was considerable discussion regarding this principle in Norway. The high-church clergy continually emphasized that it was not legitimate to preach without a license.⁵ The use of this "emergency principle" by many of the lay leaders in America to make legitimate their activity also provoked considerable argument.

The Frontier

The religious atmosphere on the frontier in America was much different from what the immigrants were used to in their homeland. As mentioned earlier, the church in Norway was supported and often controlled by the state. There people had known the stability and continuity of the established church. There had been a regular activity of organized church life with opportunity to meet in informal fellowships. But in America the situation was altogether different. The immigrants could not rely on a state-supported institution. They had to supply the support themselves. If the church was going to make it, the immigrants would have to take the initiative and maintain it with perseverance.⁶

From 1825 until 1843 the immigrants had no ordained pastors among them. The first group of immigrants had come from sections of Norway where the Hauge movement had been the strongest. These people had been accustomed to meeting for church services in homes while living in Norway. It was quite natural for them to continue this practice when they came to the new country. Leaders in the Fox River, Jefferson Prairie, and Muskego areas of Wisconsin were from the Haugean mold, and it was from these centers that lay activities began and

expanded. The church of Norway displayed an indifference to these immigrants by not sending any ordained ministers. Therefore the settlers met in various homes of the area. Someone would read a sermon, or else a lay preacher would give his own sermon. Others would then contribute with testimonies and prayer.⁷

Laurence Larson includes a chapter entitled "The Lay Preacher in Pioneer Times" in his book, *The Changing West*, which helps to give a feel for the situation of lay preaching on the frontier. Although his reminiscences are from his childhood days in the 1870s in Iowa, the picture he gives is representative of the period with which we are dealing. Larson speaks of his days on the farm as long and lonely because of hard work and few visitors. When the itinerant preachers, whom the farmers called "laymen," came to have meetings, it was a special event.

In most respects these visiting laymen resembled the farmers whom we saw from day to day. Their hands were calloused and discolored. Their faces looked as if they had never had a close acquaintance with the edge of a razor; nor was it likely professional barbers had ever touched their heads. They moved about with a heavy stride like men who had long known the meaning of unremitting toil. Sometimes the visitor would go into the farmyard or the field to assist his host with his daily task, and it was soon made clear that his hand had not lost its cunning. But the labor was often retarded as much as it was promoted; for the visitor liked to talk, and he could not long refrain from this delightful occupation.⁸

At the meetings these visiting lay-

men often spoke with such energy and forcefulness that the farmers frequently said that they were better than some of the clergymen, who also passed through occasionally. Also, the speech and dress of these laymen were quite different from those of the clergy. There was no pretense of correct syntax, and the speaker's district in Norway could often be identified from his dialect. The clothes he wore were most often not much better than those of the farmers. This, too, was a contrast to the clergymen, who came in large black coats that looked expensive.

These lay preachers had not been trained for the ordained ministry. But this did not dampen the settlers' appreciation, enthusiasm, and support for them. The settlers believed that the lay ministers could have a call that was just as legitimate as that of any of the church officials, a call that was considered holy because it came from the Spirit. The fact that these laymen were not well versed in the finer points of religious thinking did not bother the advocates of lay ministry since the latter believed that the former concentrated on what was really important, the individual's salvation. Furthermore, these advocates were undaunted by the criticisms of scoffers who said the lay preachers had only one sermon in their repertoire. The charge was quite often correct, for the lay preachers continually spoke the words of John the Baptist, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Those asleep in sin it was the desire of the laymen to awaken and to get them to repent.¹⁰

Lay preaching was part of the frontier spirit of the times. During these times of settling the lands and expanding westward, there was a

need for lay preachers. When the area was not populated enough to have a church, and the regular clergy were not always able to make the rounds, the lay preacher was welcomed and appreciated by the religious settlers. These laymen wholeheartedly agreed with the attitude of rough and ready individualism prevalent during the frontier days. Self-reliance and independence characterized both the lay preachers and the frontier settlers. At times this resulted in contention within communities, but overall the lay preachers helped to keep the religious life of the frontier alive at a time when there were few clergy and churches.¹¹

Ole Olson Hettletvedt was the first lay preacher among the Norwegian immigrants. Having preached while on the sloop coming over to this country, he continued his lay ministry until his death in 1849. A mild-mannered and sincere Christian, he traveled to Illinois, Wisconsin, and Iowa to preach in the Norwegian settlements. Having been a school teacher in Norway, he was somewhat educated. In the Fox River settlement he was the first lay preacher to gather the settlers together for worship services. Like most of the others in the first wave of immigrants to this country, he was of the Haugean tradition, and, as could be expected, carried on the services in Haugean custom. In addition to being a lay preacher, he was employed by the American Bible Society and served as their agent throughout all of his travels. Other laymen among the frontier settlements, besides Hettletvedt, included Endre and Herman Osmundson Aaragerbö, Kleng Skaar, Even Heg, Björn Hatlestad, Aslak Aae, Peder Asbjörnson Mehus, and John Brakestad.¹²

Probably the greatest of the lay preachers was Elling Eielsen. Born in 1804, he was 35 years old when he came to America. Having come to know the trades of carpenter and blacksmith in Norway, he gave up this work after his conversion experience in order to go about witnessing. Like Hauge he traveled across Norway with his simple message. He was frequently jeered and ridiculed and occasionally tossed into prison. But he was a determined man and continued in his work. His sermons were directly from the Scriptures with quotations from hymns and illustrations from life added in with his admonitions to the faithful.

It is quite understandable that Eielsen was distrustful of the established clergy because they often had been the ones who were responsible for his ill-treatment. Likewise Eielsen was averse to the symbols connected with the office of the regular clergy, namely vestments, rituals, and academic training. When Eielsen came to America, he preached at Fox River and then proceeded to visit other settlements. His message was a call to repentance, a turning away from the worldliness of drinking, dancing, and the like and a turning to Christianity and the Lutheran doctrines.¹³

O. M. Norlie in his book *History of the Norwegian People in America* gives a list of the accomplishments of Eielsen in his work in America:

He established congregations. He organized the first Norwegian synod in America. He was the first Norwegian to publish books in America. He was the first home mission superintendent. He helped to found three higher schools—Lisbon Seminary, Lisbon, Ill.; Eielsen Seminary, Cam-

bridge, Wisc.; Hauge College and Eielsen Seminary, Chicago, Ill. He advocated doing mission work among the American Indians, . . . His greatest influence is perhaps in this, that he got the Norwegian people to start doing definite congregational work and, by his uncompromising attitude in favor of lay preaching and conversion, he kept the extreme high churchmen from becoming too much like the state church.¹⁴

The sacrifices of Hettletvedt, Eielsen, and other lay preachers were understood and appreciated by many as genuine acts of love in a time of need. But it eventually became evident that the lay ministry in itself was not sufficient. The laymen could preach, but they lacked the fullness of the message of the Gospel that the trained clergy could provide. The laymen baptized, but they did this most often in emergency situations, after which a regular pastor confirmed the baptism. A couple could be married at the justice of the peace, but it was unsatisfying in that it lacked the blessing of the church. In the midst of the hardships of the frontier life, the comfort and assurance derived from participation in the Lord's Supper was sorely missed because there were no pastors to administer it. Then, too, the practice of burying the dead was made even more unpleasant when there were no pastors to administer the last rites and to comfort the sorrowing. Also, even though the lay pastors won the respect of the settlers, they somehow lacked the dignity that the office itself could bring in the eyes of the people. Finally, these lay preachers quite often lacked the breadth of wisdom and understanding in relating pastorally to the settlers. There was, then, the desire of the settlers to

have regularly ordained and called pastors in order to conduct services consistently, to provide leadership and guidance to the members of the church, and to relate pastorally with the people at both the critical points in their lives and in the everyday affairs of living.¹⁵

This transition from complete reliance on lay meetings and lay preaching came in 1843 with the arrival in America at Muskego, Wisconsin, of Claus Clausen. Having studied theology in Denmark, he was called to Muskego to teach Lutheran fundamentals. But at Muskego the settlers asked him to consider ordination. When he agreed to it, he was made a regular pastor after having been examined by the Rev. L. T. E. Krause of Kansas. Following Clausen was the Rev. J. W. C. Dietrichson, a well-schooled clergyman, who came from Norway in 1844.

Controversy in America

As mentioned at the very beginning, it was with the arrival of J. W. C. Dietrichson in America in 1844 that the lay-activity controversy began. With his emphasis on order and ritual, Dietrichson was the symbol of the state church of Norway, from which so many were hoping to escape. Together with this, although the settlers desired regular pastors, they still reacted against the patronizing attitude of a minister from the mother church presuming to restore order among the lost children. Chief among the opponents to this way of thinking of church government was Elling Eielsen. Eielsen, then, was the symbol of the Haugean spirit transplanted to America, while Dietrichson was the symbol of the state church transplanted from

Norway. Therefore, the conflict between the Haugeans and the state church on lay activity at the turn of the century was transplanted to America 40 to 50 years later. The two synods which represented the poles of the controversy were more or less reflections of these two men. The Eielsen and Hauge synods were actively influenced by Eielsen, and the Norwegian Synod was originally advocated by Dietrichson. In the discussion of the controversy, some more of the differences should become apparent.

The Newspaper Feud

During the first half of the decade of the 1850s, three main newspapers emerged in the conflict between those of a high-church tendency and those of a more low-church tendency. The *Maanedstidende* was originally announced in late 1850 by the Revs. A. C. Preus, C. L. Clausen, and H. A. Stub and first published in March of 1851. Of the three clergy, C. L. Clausen was also persuaded by the Press Association, the organization publishing the *Maanedstidende* and religious books, to be the editor of another paper put out by the Association, *Emigranten*. Clausen reluctantly agreed to their request but resigned after a short time, after which there were a number of other editors. *Maanedstidende* was regarded as more or less the official organ of the Norwegian Synod, while *Emigranten* was its unofficial publication. Set over against these two papers in the feud was *Kirketidende*, owned by Ole Andrewson after 1853, edited by P. Anerson and J. Hatlestad, and backed by the Franckean Synod and the Northern Illinois Synod. Elling Eielsen relied on oral transmission

since he had no publication. He could only watch from the sidelines as his three former supporters carried on the debate with the *Emigranten* and the *Maanedstidende*.¹⁶

The *Kirketidende* carried on an unrelenting attack on the pastors of the Norwegian Synod. An appeal in the February 23, 1852, issue was indicative of the character of the assaults on the pastors:

O ye Haugeans and other Norwegian brethren who at the present time have the least solicitude for the eternal welfare of your souls! Ye have emigrated from Norway, and have set your feet on the noble soil of human freedom—America—do ye still wish with downcast eyes to permit yourself to be led by blind and inexperienced shepherds of souls? Do ye still wish to follow in the heels of the natural-minded, puffed-up, proud, haughty, lazy, and stingy Norwegian State Church pastors? Assuredly ye are indifferent to your souls' and your offsprings' welfare!¹⁷

The Synod men responded vigorously to such attacks in their own papers, *Maanedstidende* and *Emigranten*.

Jefferson Prairie

The Conference at Jefferson Prairie June 21, 1852, was the result of Eielsen's initiative to become somewhat more friendly with the pastors in that area of Wisconsin. Having lost the valuable support of Anderson, Andrewson, and others, Eielsen and his followers decided to try to come to more peaceful terms with the Norwegian pastors. No formal union was accomplished between the two bodies, but a resolution was reached to the effect that both sides agreed to try to refrain from engaging in conduct agreed on

as unchristian and detrimental to the cause of maintaining peace.¹⁸

Spring Prairie

The two Preuses, Revs. H. A. Preus and A. C. Preus, met with Rev. P. A. Rasmussen and Elling Eielsen on June 5, 1855, in an effort to come to some agreement on doctrinal issues that had been the subjects of hot debates in spite of the previous conference's resolution to cool the conflict. Rasmussen, who served as the spokesman for the Eielsen group, charged the Synod with using a "the" instead of an "a" before "church" in the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed. To this the Preuses replied that both articles had been used from the earliest Christian times in regard to the church. Rasmussen was then questioned in regard to paragraph two of the Old Constitution as to whether it is right to "believe the church" or "believe in the church," to which he had to concede to Rev. A. C. Preus that "believe the church" was more satisfactory. Rasmussen objected to the distinctions between "communion of Saints" and "holy Christian church," to which the Preuses conceded that the distinctions were not crucial or necessary.¹⁹ The Preuses were happy at what they saw to be genuine attempts by Eielsen's group to come to closer union with the Synod by trying to work out some of the differences. But they were much surprised to find out later that Rasmussen had written a pamphlet on the conference in which he took a more radical stance on the issues discussed and in which he also played up those points where he succeeded in getting the Preuses to concede. The latter, in turn, made a heated response. Again, whatever gains seemed possible because of the con-

ference were wiped out by the personality clashes of the prominent figures following the conference.

Split

As a result, the Synod proposed to break off relations with Eielsen's group. At the same time they purposed to do battle with Eielsen and company and, if possible, to cause a split between Eielsen and Rasmussen. This they succeeded in doing as Rasmussen had to defend himself on two fronts—against the Synod men for the above-mentioned reasons, and against the Eielsen company, who were not willing to accept the concessions he had made at the conference. Particularly crucial in the debate was the point on lay activity. Rasmussen had been willing to admit that lay activity should be diminished, while Eielsen was totally unwilling even to consider anything of the kind. So it was that the two men parted company at a meeting in Primrose, Wisconsin, in June 1856, with Eielsen becoming even more committed to his Old Constitution and Rasmussen standing between the two camps of the Norwegian Synod and Eielsen's company.²⁰

Rock Prairie

It was at the Conference in Rock Prairie in October 1858 that Rasmussen was able to meet with the Norwegian Synod men and to discuss the differences which had driven them apart after the Conference at Spring Prairie. Both sides admitted to many of the errors and misrepresentations they had made in the course of the heated debate and indicated their willingness to try to reach agreement once again on certain doctrinal matters. Agreements were reached on the definition of the

church, the doctrine concerning the Word of God, A. C. Preus's declaration concerning fellowship with those who preach conversion after death, and the question of Rasmussen's orthodoxy in light of his association with Eielsen, since the latter's constitution was judged to be un-Lutheran in parts. But the point of disagreement that still remained was the question of lay activity. Rasmussen and his partner, Thalberg, were found to be orthodox in all respects except in the matter of prayer, teaching, and exhortation by laymen in public activities, where they were still considered to be in error by the Synod men. Rasmussen and Thalberg held to the validity of these activities by laymen, whereas the Synod men, together with A. C. Craemer and C. F. W. Walther from the Missouri Synod, contended that such activities were un-Lutheran, contrary to the Word of God, and in violation of Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession. This latter matter was considered reason enough for postponing a decision by the Synod men on the recognition of Pastors Rasmussen and Thalberg.²¹

Missourian Influence

During the Rock Prairie Conference, the Synod men came to see that they had a great deal in common with the Missourians. Besides agreeing, to a large extent, on points of doctrine, they were of like mind concerning the lay-activity question. The Missourians, Walther and Craemer, had never known anything like the pietistic movement among lay people in the Norwegian Lutheran experience. For them the question was a matter that could be solved by referring to the Augsburg Confession and the Bible. The Mis-

sourians were of great help to the Synod men in arguing their side at the Rock Prairie Conference, also at the Chicago Conference in 1860, and at the Holden Conference in 1862. In addition to the above, Synod men relied on material put out by Missouri men for use as ammunition in the hottest battles of the newspaper feud in 1859.²²

Chicago

Neither side had been able or willing to come to a resolution on the lay-activity question in the previous conferences. Therefore it came down to the Chicago Conference to work out an agreement on this sticky issue still dividing the two parties. With Rev. P. A. Rasmussen were John N. Fjeld and Nils Amlund. On the other side were Revs. A. C. Preus, H. A. Preus, Magelssen, Brandt, Larson, Brodahl, C. L. Clausen, and J. A. Ottesen. Professor Esbjörn, and Revs. Carlsen, Norelius, Jacobsen, Hasselquist, and Hatlestad, from the Augustana Synod, were invited to be unofficial members of the conference. Professor A. C. Craemer, a Missourian, was made an advisory member.²³ Although these men were deadlocked at the end of the proceedings of this conference, the Chicago Conference and the Holden Conference, which followed it two years later, were the two most crucial conferences of the whole lay-activity controversy.

Pastor Rasmussen began the conference by stating that his position had not changed since Rock Prairie and that he still held to the validity of lay ministry on the basis of the universal priesthood of believers, Christian brotherly love, and the practice in the early Christian church.²⁴ Little disagreement broke

out in regard to the first reason. But concerning the second, the Synod men responded with a case that split the conference and resulted in a lack of consensus. Rasmussen held in the second reason that laymen should be allowed to meet together for fellowship and mutual edification. But the Synod men replied that the prayer in such a meeting is in behalf of all. Therefore, the person praying would be elevated to the position of a leader or teacher because of praying in behalf of others and because of praying for admonition to others. Rasmussen responded that prayer was a gift rather than a matter of study. But the Synod men held that prayer came as a result of thinking on the Word and therefore required a person who had been regularly trained, examined, and called in order to make sure that the leader prayed aright.²⁵

Holden

With the two sides in a stalemate for two years, the greatest Lutheran figure in America of that day, Dr. C. F. W. Walther, was called in to help propose a settlement. This he did by making a presentation divided into three parts: (1) spiritual priesthood of believers, (2) special priesthood, (3) emergency priesthood.²⁶ Arguing persuasively from Scripture, he stated, first of all, that all Christians have been called to be spiritual priests. Every Christian has the responsibility of looking out for the spiritual well-being of others. But, he went on to say, for the best welfare of the church as a whole certain individuals have been trained, examined, and called to be leaders and teachers in the church. Their primary vocation was to look after the spiritual well-being of the whole

church. They were entrusted with a special office and commissioned to take care of special duties. This was to ensure that the work of the church would go on with a certain amount of continuity and fluency. In order to protect the authority of this office, it was right, Walther declared, that no layman should arrogate the position of that office to himself. To do so, he maintained, would be a sin. But Walther was willing to reckon with special situations, and because of this he came up with the third category, that of the emergency priesthood. In such cases where an actual need existed, Walther stated, it would be acceptable to appoint a layman to assume the responsibilities normally entrusted to a pastor. But the work was to be done in order. To these suggestions the two sides could agree. Revs. P. A. Rasmussen, Nils Amund, and John N. Fjeld joined the Norwegian Synod, while Rev. H. L. Thalberg continued to work independently up to 1887. He left for Norway in 1890.²⁷

The historical review ends here. A very brief consideration of three topics pertaining to the lay-activity question should be added: the resolution concerning lay activity in the 1917 constitution, the victory of the lay-activity movement in Norway, and the impact of the lay-activity movement on Norwegian Lutheranism in America through today.

Lay Activity Affirmed

Other activities and controversies took the spotlight following the lay-activity controversy of the 1850s and early 1860s. These included the building of schools, the slavery issue, the election controversy, and the union movement. The lay-activity

question remained a tension among Norwegian Lutherans in America, but it no longer retained the prominence of before. When Lutheran forces merged in 1917 to form the United Norwegian Lutheran Church in America, they agreed in the Opgjör Settlement on the lay-activity question.

Concerning the movement, which among us is generally known by the name of lay preaching, we declare that we feel assured that it has been a great good for our church and our people, and we believe that it ought to be warmly recommended and encouraged among us. This movement, in its true character, we do not regard in any way as an interference with the regularly established ministry of the church, and therefore not in conflict with Art. XIV of the Augsburg Confession. When this movement occurs in well-organized congregations, it ought, so far as possible, to be brought into connection with the regular evangelistic work of the congregation.²⁸

Vindication in Norway

Whereas the original advocate of lay ministry, Hans Nielsen Hauge, had been persecuted and even jailed for his activity, later exponents of lay activity succeeded in gaining a legitimacy for the practice in Norway. In 1842 the Conventicle Act was annulled. Then, in the 1880s, the practice of lay ministry came to be recognized as valid ministry in the church, and Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession was not regarded as binding any longer. Jakob Sverdrup succeeded in 1888 in getting a royal decree allowing laymen to preach in the churches, but not from the pulpits yet. Then, in 1913, the Storting overturned an earlier legal provision which had not permit-

ted lay people to preach at the Sunday morning services. The *Lutherstiftelsen* became *Det Norske Lutherske Indremissionsselskab* in 1891 and in the process gave up its "Emergency Principle." The statutes of the organization, composed in 1893, stated its intention to work closely with the regular clergy in its activity. This was quite remarkable for a prominent lay organization no longer to regard itself in opposition to the established clergy but in cooperation with them in the work that could be shared. In the middle of the 1890s many of the Christian organizations underwent swift expansion. Soon the character of these organizations changed from their original spontaneity to more permanent, established organizations with their own schools, papers, and methods of raising money.²⁹

Impact on Norwegian Lutheranism in America

What follows are a few considerations on the impact of the lay movement on Norwegian Lutheranism. These, by no means, are intended to provide an exhaustive analysis of cause and effect, but to give a few observations which might serve as the basis for further thought and discussion. The two small independent synods still in existence are very

much a product of the earlier lay movement. In fact, lay activity is the backbone of these synods, the United Lutheran Brethren and the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. In the larger American Lutheran Church (ALC), as the pastor image has diminished, so has the tension over the lay-activity question. Today lay activities are taken for granted. Lay people frequently do the mission work and other outreach work of the church. They also occupy parish positions, teaching jobs, and offices of the church. Also, the lay-activity controversy has resulted in a more democratic clergy. The ALC does have weaker synods and stronger congregational autonomy, and the pastors are held accountable to their parishes. Then, too, the high church of the Norwegian Lutherans in America is relatively low when compared with the high church of other Lutherans. Indeed, there is a lingering suspicion among some in the ALC against ritual, vestments, and high-church services. One final observation is that a combination of pietism and orthodoxy seems to characterize the spiritual makeup of many in the ALC. Much of the strong stress on personal piety, together with a solid orthodoxy, can be traced to the earlier influence of the lay movement.

Notes

1. E. Clifford Nelson and Eugene L. Fevold, *The Lutheran Church Among Norwegian-Americans* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1960), I, 19.
2. Elinar Molland, *Church Life in Norway, 1800-1950*, trans. Harris Kaasa (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1957), pp. 20-21.
3. Nelson and Fevold, p. 21.
4. Molland, p. 52.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
6. J. C. K. Preus, T. F. Gullixson, and E. C. Reinertson, *Norsemen Found a Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1953), pp. 25-26.
7. Norris Olson, *Culture Sage of the Early Norwegian Lutherans of Wisconsin*, unpublished book (Menomonie, Wisconsin, 1957), p. 47.
8. Laurence M. Larson, *The Changing West and Other Essays* (Northfield, Minnesota: The Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1937), pp. 147-148.

9. Ibid., p. 148.
10. Ibid., p. 148.
11. Ibid., p. 169.
12. Rasmus Anderson, *The First Chapter of Norwegian Immigration* (published by the author, Madison, Wisconsin, 1896), pp. 409-410.
13. O. M. Norlie, *History of the Norwegian People in America* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1925), pp. 193-195.
14. Ibid., p. 195.
15. J. Magnus Rohne, *Norwegian-American Lutheranism up to 1872* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1926), pp. 54-55.
16. Ibid., pp. 139-140.
17. Ibid., p. 141.
18. J. A. Bergh, *History of the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America*, trans. J. A. Lavik, unpublished book, p. 122.
19. Rohne, p. 149.
20. Ibid., p. 153.
21. Bergh, p. 145.
22. Rohne, pp. 162-164.
23. Bergh, p. 151.
24. Ibid., p. 151.
25. Bergh, pp. 152, and Rohne, pp. 168-173.
26. Rohne, p. 174.
27. Ibid., pp. 175-179.
28. O. N. Nelson, ed., *History of the Scandinavians and Successful Scandinavians in the United States* (Minneapolis: O. N. Nelson, 1917), I, 240-241.
29. Molland, pp. 93-102.