

THE CHURCH IN A NEW LAND
First Steps Taken by Norwegian-American Lutherans
in Clarifying Their Doctrine
of Church and Ministry

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THE CHURCH IN A NEW LAND

There is a process of change that people go through as they enter a new situation. Especially when one is leaving all that he has known to enter a totally new environment is this evident. The Norwegian immigrants to America encountered such a change. This change required a great deal of re-thinking about things that they had taken for granted. One such thing was the Church. They had grown up in an environment where they considered the Church to be an institution rather than the assembly of believers throughout the world. Thus "the Church" and personal piety were largely, even if subconsciously, divorced from each other in the minds on most Norwegians.

The new situation in which the immigrants placed themselves would force them to re-evaluate this idea. This re-evaluation came with much friction and over many steps. The scope of this paper is inadequate to examine the entire process of re-evaluation that went on. The 1840's, however, provide us with a valuable view of the first steps in that re-evaluation.

I. Background

A. Immigrant Roots

The immigrants came from a land that had traditionally had great stability. Much of this had its roots in the geographic make-up of Norway. The high mountains and deep valleys had made travel difficult, thus nurturing somewhat isolated groups of people, each with strong local leadership and only loose ties to central government. This led to a strong

inclination toward rugged individualism. This trait exhibited itself throughout the history of Norway.

The Vikings established democratic systems in their colonies as a natural way of life. Early Christian missionaries were originally repulsed by Vikings who were offended by the message of love and submission that so conflicted with their brand of individualism. Even after the conversion of Norway the rugged individualism of the Norwegians lived on ways that the clergy simply gave up on trying to control. J. Magnus Rohne in his book, Norwegian-American Lutheranism up to 1872, points out, "The hard-working native, whose crops fail because of short summers, and whose land can be tilled only in patches by hand, requiring the labor of himself and his wife as well... had no choice... but to enter, with all the physical resources he had developed, into the unequal contest with nature and his social environment. Little wonder, then, that, when he forgot his hard lot in a 'social good time,' he was as violent in his hilarity as he was in his work."¹

Hunting knives were carried everywhere, to church included, and drunkenness and fights were part of most "social good times," including celebrations of baptisms, weddings and funerals. This was only intensified by 1816 laws aimed at building a liquor industry in Norway. The laws legalized home distillation of liquor and banned the importation of liquor. Sadly, the law backfired with grave social consequences. Liquor consumption increased four-fold as many farmers turned toward crops suitable

for distilling. Many formerly hard-working Norwegian farmers literally drank their crops and were ruined. Some of these sought to escape their ruin in America in later years.

Yet the tendency toward throwing themselves into their "social good times" should not obscure their piety. The Norwegian people were at the same time a deeply religious people. Rohne quotes a writing which states, "

"The Norse people are a religious people, and have always held on to the old, discarding the new. As far back as history relates and the Saga goes, there has always been a belief in the future state. This would be more true in such an unhospitable clime than in warmer zones, where life may offer solace. In this cold, dark Northland, people find so little sunshine in their earthly habitations, which is a continual struggle for bread, (sic) that they feel there must be something beyond the grave, where the good can be rewarded and where evil can be justly punished. The inhabitants to this day believe in fatalism. The waterfalls are so high, the mountains so terrific, the storms blow with such a fury, the long dreary winters crush out everything, life itself - all this seems to point to inevitable necessity. 'So far and no farther' runs the maxim: 'God hath so ordained,' 'It should so happen,' 'Man plans but the creator rules.'"²

Perhaps it was such an outlook that justified in their minds the existence of such extremes of hilarity that would follow the most deeply sacred events in their lives. Perhaps that fatalism was a blind spot that kept them from seeing the inconsistency between their actions and their faith. For despite this inconsistency religion ran deep in the Norwegian heart. This feeling welling up from the testimony of nature embraced Christianity and held fast to it. While continental Europe, and even the University of Copenhagen, which supplied

the pastors for Norwegian churches were sliding into rationalism in the mid-to-late-1700's. The Norwegians remained strongly orthodox from bishops to laity.³ Furthermore, the Norwegians passed on from parents to children a deep respect for the church and everything connected with it.

With the advent of improved transportation, however, changes were sure to enter into Norway and disturb the stability that was so much a part of how people viewed their world. Norway found itself drawn more and more into world politics in the late 1700's. Traditional alliances shifted and people began to display an increased interest in the outside world. They were especially interested in the experiments in democracy that were being conducted in America and France. Democracy never had been all that foreign to Norwegians. As stated earlier, the Vikings had established democratic forms of governments in their colonies. Never had Norway developed, strictly speaking, an aristocracy. In the late 1700's and early 1800's, however, a self-styled aristocracy had arisen to affect the mannerism of an upper class. The civil servants had come to look down upon the rural dwellers and had gradually been consolidating their power against this majority of the citizenry. Early on the rural population took little to no notice of this trend because of their general lack of interest in doings outside of their own valley. As interest grew in things across the ocean, however, interest also grew in their own government. Seeing the pretensions of aristocracy that

the class of civil servants was adopting, resentment grew among the rural class. A new constitution was adopted, giving more say to the rural population, but the city dwellers still exercised the greatest power. Their growing tendency to centralize power in themselves and shift a larger and larger proportion of the taxes to the rural class, spurred the rural class on to increased interest in democracy. The rural class began to exercise more of their rights and in 1836 actually gained a majority in the Norwegian legislature and also gained a firm control of their local governments.

This growing desire for democracy roughly paralleled the development of Haugeanism in the late 1700's and early 1800's. Actually the development of desire for democracy and the development of Haugeanism can be seen as the same impulse as it grew in different spheres of life. The pastors actually were civil servants and thus were party to much of the same feelings of superiority over their congregations that other local civil servants were developing over the rural members of their communities. Although the ministers had remained orthodox despite the growing rationalism on the continent, they had, to a large degree, grown complacent, contenting themselves to preach their sermons on Sundays and otherwise nurture an attitude that placed them apart from and above their congregations. This attitude began to arouse the inner feelings of the rural population, who took their Christianity more personally than it appeared that their

pastors, with their businesslike manner, were taking it.

Into this spiritual situation stepped Hans Nielsen Hauge. Hauge had been born in 1771 and had nearly drowned at the age of 13. This experience left a deep impression on him as he often pondered whether he would have been prepared for eternity had he not narrowly escaped. He finally found peace for his troubled soul in an intensive study of the Bible, but long after that was troubled with the thought that there were many others who did not have that peace that he had. He began travelling from town to town, preaching a message exposing the sins both of the farmers and of the clergy, and comforting repentent hearts with the message of God's unfailing love. Even though he encouraged people to remain in the Norwegian State Church, he was strongly opposed by that church as usurping its authority and was eventually arrested.

His message, however, fanned the flame of the faith that flourished in the Norwegian heart and attracted many ardent supporters. The hard-working Norwegian farmers identified far more easily with the industrious Hauge than they did with the seemingly unconcerned pastors. His personal appeal to the individual's relationship with God touched them far more deeply than the pastors' businesslike administration of Word and Sacrament.

Despite the fact that many Norwegians felt that their pastors were not feeding them adequately in the Word of God, Hauge's

followers were by no means ignorant of the Bible. Although the compulsory education legislation passed in 1739 had not been completely successful in wiping out illiteracy in Norway, the literacy rate in Norway in the late 1700's and early 1800's was surprisingly high for the times. This high rate of literacy made it possible for people to receive nourishment from the Scriptures and various devotional books on their own.

Foremost among the devotional books popular in Norway was Pontoppidan's "Truth Unto Godliness," an exposition of Luther's Small Catechism that was found in almost every Norwegian home. It was written from the point of view of Pietism, which looked at Christianity from the point of view of the lifestyle of the Christian and often applied rules and regulations for Christian conduct that went beyond what Scriptures said about a given matter. Growing up with "Truth Unto Godliness" revered only slightly less than the Bible, the religious mind of the laity was geared toward this viewpoint of Pietism with its overly strict view of Christian life. The people found Hauge's stress on repentance and living in the New Life to be more tangible to them than the orthodox, yet professionally elevated expositions of God's Word that the pastors offered.

As has been stated, Hauge and his followers never intended this movement ever to be an alternate church. Hauge remained loyal to the State Church and encouraged his followers to remain in it. He intended that his preaching and the preaching

of his followers be something merely supplementary to the ministrations of the State Church. Never did the Haugeans attempt to usurp the functions of administering the sacraments, nor did they set up opposition churches (with the possible exceptions that we will deal with later). Attending the established church and making use of the sacraments as administered by the established church was of great importance to the Haugeans. Their meetings were held for the benefit of those who simply wanted additional edification to what the established church offered. Thus, even though many lay preachers arose out of Haugeanism, the followers of Hauge continued to look to the organized State Church as being "The Church."

Hauge's influence was not entirely limited to those who were interested in the condition of their souls, though. Hauge's persecution by the State Church through the arm of the government made him a focal point around which all manner of dissidents chose to rally. People who were dissatisfied with the government, with the State Church, with Lutheranism and even with religion in general took their places in the ranks of Hauge's followers simply because Haugeanism and the Quakerism that had established a foothold in Stavanger were the only alternatives to any of those things available to dissidents. As a matter of fact, so unused was the Norwegian mind to thinking of any type of religious pluralism that the Quakers were called Haugeans by many people.

Although many leading Haugeans were bothered by laws hampering their activities, the Haugean movement was largely peaceful. The Quakers, however, found the going a bit more

difficult. Rohne states that a Captain Dietrichson, whose son we shall meet later in a key role in later Norwegian-American Lutheranism, was in charge of quieting disturbances stemming from friction between Quakers and officials in Stavanger, a task which we are told he carried out in a very cold and authoritative manner.⁴

It is important to note that conditions did improve over what they had been at the beginning of the 19th century. Due largely to the efforts of the professors at the newly-formed University at Christiania, the Norwegian pastors began to adopt more of an attitude of being shepherds caring for their flocks than of being businessmen disposing of their business. In the late 1830's Grudtvigianism, a theological viewpoint that placed the worship life of the church as being a higher authority than Scripture, grew in popularity among Norwegian clergy, especially among those who were attending the University at that time. Although Grudtvig and his followers were in error in their low opinion of Scripture, it played an important role in healing the breach that had developed to a certain degree between the clergy and the laity. With its emphasis on the people being an important part of the institution, it helped to soften the hard feelings that had grown up toward the clergy.

Politically also the conditions improved. The growing political power of the rural class climaxed in 1836 when its representatives gained control of the legislature.

The balance of power, however, quickly swung the other way. Once the representatives of the rural class were clearly in the majority, it became clear that their views were far more radical than those of those who had elected them. These representatives proposed legislation designed to limit the authority of the clergy so drastically that the rural class, which had still retained its deep respect for the clergy despite its dissatisfaction with the way they had carried out their offices in the early 1800's, was shocked. They voted these radical representatives out of office in the next election.

It is thus useful to picture the Norwegian attitude toward the Church and Ministry according to three eras. The early 1800's saw an underlying respect for the established church, but general resentment toward the establishment and toward the clergy. The people were tending to view the Christian Church in view of the establishment, although they were beginning to exercise some of the functions that that establishment had been exercising. The 1820's and early 1830's reached the climax of this dissatisfaction as the rural class was enjoying the increasing political clout that they were finding themselves to have. Anti-clerical feelings reached their height as the improvements that the University was encouraging were only beginning to manifest themselves. In the late 1830's and through the 1840's the deeply rooted respect for the clergy that had been dormant began to reassert itself. There was still some suspicion toward ministers, but overall

the sentiment was very much favorable toward the established church and the clergy.

It is important to bear in mind these three periods because they help us in understanding some of the conflicts that take place later. Generally speaking people often solidified their thinking in one of these periods and thus carried with them the perception of the established church that they had formed when their thinking solidified. Thus there was a great deal of conflict which appears to have taken place simply because certain people had their perceptions frozen back in an earlier period and were unable to deal with the situation as it had developed in later periods. Thus the time in which a person emigrated often played a very significant role in the way that they viewed the situation in America.

B. Frontier Influences

As the immigrants came over to America they were totally unprepared for the religious pluralism that they found here. Since they had grown up in an environment where there existed basically only one denomination, they were at a loss as to how to choose spiritual leaders for themselves out of the many varieties of leaders in America. They had been unconcerned at the prospect of leaving their church behind because they were confident of preserving their faith in the same way they had supplemented it in Norway: through the lay meetings that had been so much a part of their Haugean

tradition.

Haugeanism, however, had some severe weaknesses that were magnified by the conditions in America. Its chief weakness was in the fact that it had tended to draw a distinction between the church and personal piety. Thus people, as they emigrated, felt little need of providing for their spiritual needs by making provision for any type of organized church, they felt that their spiritual needs would not extend beyond their practice of piety in their everyday life and the lay meetings to which they were accustomed. The second weakness grew out of the first. With the division created between organized worship and individual piety, many people relegated the doctrinal aspect of religion to the realm of the clergy and divorced it from the realm of life that they felt responsible for. Thus, upon entering America, they were ill-prepared to sort through the multitude of sects that were clamoring for them to join.

Thus many of the early immigrants readily joined one or the other of the many sects that enticed them. In Haugeanism they had been taught that their responsibility in Christianity was to lead a pious life. Thus they were quite willing to join any group that could display an outwardly pious lifestyle. As long as the sect claimed to worship the one, true God, made respectful statements about Christ and taught the importance of outward piety, many Norwegians were content, despite the Biblical injunctions to test the teachings of their leaders. Even where immigrants were concerned about

the teachings of the sects, they found themselves ill-equipped to cut through the confusion sown by the sects. Gustav Unonius, a Swedish immigrant who had been ordained in the Episcopalian Church won many Norwegian immigrants by asserting that there was absolutely no difference in doctrine between the Episcopalian and Lutheran churches.

To be fair, not all of the Norwegians who joined various sects did so out of ignorance. Many, especially of the early immigrants, did so because they harbored animosity against the Lutheran Church because of the Haugean controversy back home. Recall that many who had allied themselves with the Haugeans back in Norway had done so not out of conviction, but because it was the most available form of protest against the status quo available. Many of the early immigrants, in fact, joined no group at all, but, in the democratic spirit of America, rejected all religion. One Norwegian who had visited one of the first Norwegian settlements describes this attitude.

"Religion means nothing to them whatsoever; they have abandoned its principles completely, and they even leave their children unbaptized and bring them up in deep ignorance."⁵

One of the first Norwegian ministers to come to America, J. W. W. Dietrichson wrote about the sad situation of another early settlement that he visited and showed the overall confusion that abounded:

"The visit showed all too well what happens to the churchly interests of the unfortunate immigrants when there is no one from the church of the fatherland to guide them. Our dear countrymen, these holy baptized members of the Church of Norway, are with few exceptions scattered among a variety of sects here,

Some are Presbyterians, others Methodists, Baptists, Ellingians, Quakers and Mormons." ⁶

The immigrants had not given adequate attention beforehand to the matter of just how they would preserve their Lutheran teachings. If it was just a matter of oversight, as it undoubtedly was for many of those who had never had to concern themselves with the "churchly" side of their religion before, they were soon forced to give thought to this matter as they made their way in a new land. Life was hard for the immigrants. Cholera and malaria made almost yearly visits to the Norwegian settlements until they realized that their way of getting water in Norway, namely by taking it from swift mountain streams, was not adaptable to America, where they had been drawing their water from low-lying swamps. Furthermore, the process of starting from scratch was a difficult one, requiring that the immigrants be building their home, clearing their land, planting their crops and working for neighbors in order to earn money for necessities all at once. Besides this they faced discrimination from many Americans who sought to build their own self-importance by looking down on those who were not "as American" as they were.

As a result, some of the immigrants were disillusioned with America and pined away for their homeland. These difficulties, however, led many of the immigrants to approach their hardships in a much more constructive way than they had approached their emigration. They turned their attention to God and sought his comfort. They began to desire something more than the lay services that they had been holding. They

began to sense the feeling described by a Norwegian official who visited America in 1847: "Many a person who never has experienced the influence of religion in a thickly populated, civilized country, learns to appreciate, out here in his loneliness, how deep an influence religion exerts upon the soul of man." ⁷ Although the diaries of early Norwegian immigrants refer regularly to private meditation on God's Word, and although they reveal that the immigrants regularly joined together to worship by reading Scripture and reading from books of sermons, those immigrants who had left Norway during that final period of restored respect for organized religion desired that they once again have organized religion. They had lay leaders baptize their babies, but they desired the blessing of an ordained pastor on their sacraments. They wished to have their weddings officiated over by a shepherd of their souls instead of a justice of the peace. They wished to have their loved ones laid to rest with the solemnity of a church funeral, instead of just with a prayer.

This was something that their Haugean system of lay preaching could not provide for them. Thus they sought leaders who could fill this need.

II. Leaders

A. Elling Eielsen

Elling Eielsen attempted to fill this need as a lay minister. As a youth, Eielsen had gone through a period

of severe depression because of what he considered to be extreme excesses. He spent this period in a careful study of Pontoppidan's "Truth Unto Godliness." He broke out of this depression with an earnest desire to spare others the pain that his sins had caused him. He joined the ranks of the Haugeans, but found himself opposed there too, because ~~of~~ his overly forceful attacks on the clergy. He felt that they were neglecting their responsibility to educate the people in morality and as such were the epitome of wickedness. He sought persecution by authorities in Norway and Denmark as a vindication of his preaching, on the idea that any true follower of Christ would be persecuted. At the time that he left for America at the urging of wealthy Drammen businessman Tollof Bache, he was on the verge of being ostracized by the very Haugean movement that he had embraced.

Tollef Bache encouraged Eielsen to go to America and serve the emigrants over here, among whom was Bache's son, Soren Bache, who was a prominent member of the Muskego colony. Eielsen traveled to America with Soren Bache, who was returning to Muskego from a visit to his father. Once in America, they parted paths, Bache returning to Muskego and Eielsen going on to Illinois and the Fox River settlement there. There he found a loyal following among the strong anti-clerical element there and built a cabin which also served as a meeting house. Eielsen was not content to remain there, however, as he desired to minister to the needs of the Norwegian immigrants wherever they were. He walked many miles, both in his travels from settlement to settlement and in his quest of having

Pontoppidan's "Truth Unto Godliness" published both in English and Norwegian. He first visited Muskego in 1839, two years after his arrival in America, and later settled there, taking a Muskego woman as his wife in 1843. He did not find the Muskego settlement as amenable to his lay ministry as he had found Fox River to be, though. The Muskego settlement was a later settlement with a greater respect for the clergy than was the early Fox River settlement. Most of the settlers in the Fox River settlement had left Norway at the height of the ill-feelings between clergy and laity. The Muskego settlement had been established during the period of regained respect for the clergy.

Thus the Muskego settlement found Eielsen's constant attacks on ordained ministers (in a land where the people were feeling a decided desire for the ordained ministers that they lacked) offensive. He served a small number of the Muskego settlers, but largely found the settlement cold to him.

Eielsen's teachings were actually closer to those of the Quakers than they were to the Lutheran Confessions. He decried any sign of order in the church as being antithetical to the working of the Holy Spirit. He defended the idea that whoever felt an "inner call" to preach should preach without regard to fitness to preach or any other elements of order prescribed in Scripture. He taught an exclusionary concept of the church that proclaimed that only those who were "ours" (namely, his followers) would be saved. He taught conversion

in a very un-Lutheran manner and generally over-emphasized the subjective aspect of Christianity to the exclusion of the objective comfort that Christianity provides. Dietrichson evaluates Eielsen in this way:

"After he has been preaching, Elling proceeds to ask one, then another in the audience, 'How do you feel now? Did you feel the spirit (sic) working in you?' In this respect he sounds like the Methodists, who regard conversion as something that can come about in the twinkling of an eye. He accuses the old Lutheran church as we have it in our fatherland of being papistic and false, and proclaims that a new church in harmony with the union principle in Prussia has established itself in America, which, not only in ritual but also in doctrine, is created after the Reformed style; this, he maintains, is the legitimate church."

Although Eielsen did not attack the sacraments, his emphasis on subjunctive feeling relegated them to being something superfluous. In fact, when followers of Eielsen administered the sacraments, they, at times, treated them in such a casual way that their administration verged on sacrilege.

His demeanor also left much to be desired. He saw himself as always right and saw disagreement with his opinion on any matter as being a proof of the other person's defective faith. He was inflexible and negative in his preaching. His zeal was not so much for bringing the comfort of the gospel as it was for sparing others from the pain of their sins. Unfortunately, he provides a prime example of a person whose thinking solidified and never again was open to re-evaluation. He railed against the clergy because they had been of no help to him when he had gone through his period of depression. Even though the clergy later changed for the better and even though clergy was completely absent from the Norwegian settlements

during the first six years of his work in America, he continued to use his anti-clerical attack as a major theme of his preaching. His thinking was so set that he simply was unable to perceive any changes in the situation. He spent his life preaching to the concerns that he had experienced as if all people had gone through exactly the same experiences, and held himself up as the standard to which each person was to conform in manner of life, in faith and in thought, in order to be a "true Christian."

Despite his weaknesses, though, Eielsen was deeply loved by his followers. His love for children and their love for him is especially noted. Despite his stubbornness, he was always willing to undergo great sacrifice for his followers and for those who had not heard the gospel.

His personality, to a large degree, blunted the effect that he had on the development of a proper understanding of the doctrine of Church and Ministry. The fact that he carried the Haugean emphasis on the priesthood of all believers into America deserves credit, but the fact that he carried out this emphasis in such a radical way robbed it of the positive influence that it could have had. He recognized clearly that the Church was not made up of the externals that surround the visible organization, but his demand that Christians avoid any such externals, became in itself an external that belied what measure of good there was in his preaching.

B. Clausen

Claus Laurits Clausen was the son of a Danish trader. He was inclined toward self-doubts and was sensitive to emotional stress. From childhood into adulthood he would frequently work himself into prolonged illnesses when faced with stress. Although well-built of stature, he never did enjoy good health, which necessitated several times when he had to withdraw from his duties as pastor in order to regain his health.

He grew up without any great interest in the church, due largely to his local pastor, who was not an example to follow by any standard that one might wish to measure him by. Although he was a good student otherwise, Clausen had difficulties with the doctrinal studies he received in the schools as he was not inclined toward the precise thinking that is necessary for a theologian. He began to receive private tutoring in theology after repentance over a large gambling debt that he had incurred while in law school had focused his mind on his spiritual needs.

During this period of private tutoring he developed a strong attachment to Grundtvigianism. He saw in this what he felt was a healthy interest in people that he had not felt from the pastor of his childhood years.

His tutoring was interrupted by tuberculosis, though, and his doctor prescribed plenty of fresh air and exercise to assist him in his recovery. Thus he chose to take a walking tour of Norway where he hoped to meet some of

the leaders of the Haugean movement, of which he desired to learn more. During this trip he made quite a favorable impression on the Haugean leaders and especially on Tollef Bache. Bache encouraged him to go to America to accept a call for a teacher that the Muskego congregation had just extended. Although Clausen had had plans to serve as a missionary's assistant in Africa after his return from Norway, Clausen was so impressed by the formal document that Bache showed him that he changed his plans and made preparation for America.

This incident points out an important point about Clausen. He was very impressed with the formalities surrounding the church, to the point that he was at times influenced against his will by appeals to formality and order. Clausen and his bride spent their last few weeks in Denmark steeping themselves in lectures by Grundtvigian teachers, including sermons by Grundtvig himself.

Once in America, Clausen sought out Lutheran families to stay with on their trip to Muskego. One such family in Buffalo introduced them to Rev. J. A. A. Grabau, who conducted a lengthy meeting with Clausen in which he filled Clausen in on his view of the situation in Muskego and urged him, among other things to seek ordination immediately. For this purpose Grabau gave Clausen a letter of introduction to another Buffalo Synod pastor just outside of Milwaukee, Rev. Krause. Considering that this meeting took place just as the controversy between Grabau and Walther over the doctrine of Church and Ministry was reaching its height, one might wish that there

was more information available about what transpired at this meeting. It appears that it had little immediate effect on Clausen's approach to the doctrine of Church and Ministry, but may have returned to mind once Clausen also had the influence of Dietrichson around him.

When Clausen arrived in Muskego, he found a difficult situation facing him. Although Eielsen had managed to alienate most of the settlement, he had some very vocal followers among the Muskegoans. The Mormons and Methodists had also made some inroads into the settlement and Unonius was seeking a foothold for the Episcopalians. The leaders of the Muskego settlement also urged him to seek ordination. Although Clausen had enquired while in Norway about what would be necessary for him to be ordained after he had served in Muskego as a teacher for a while, he had great doubts about his ability to handle the situation in Muskego and wanted instead to serve as a teacher as he had been called originally. Once again, it took a formal call signed by 69 of the settlers to persuade him.

After a thorough examination by Rev. Krause of Freistadt, Clausen was ordained on October 18, 1843. He missed out on being the first Norwegian Lutheran pastor in the United States only because Eielsen, aware of Clausen's plans had hastily gotten ordination fifteen days earlier. Apparently Eielsen wished to head off any sentiment among the Norwegians that he was somehow inferior to Clausen. There was strong

sentiment even among Eielsen's followers favoring having ordained ministers to administer the sacraments. Thus in one move, Eielsen was able to satisfy his followers, avoid any losses that might occur from there now being an ordained pastor among the Norwegians and even strengthen his anti-clerical attack. He would now be able to point to the fact that ordination had not changed his abilities in any way and thus "prove" that ordination was of no effect.

The troubles in Muskego, on the other hand, were not solved merely by Clausen's ordination. Many of the people doubted whether his ordination was valid because it had been administered by a pastor instead of by a bishop, as was the custom in the Norwegian State Church. Unonius used this to cast further doubt on Clausen's right to serve as a minister. Clausen himself doubted the validity of his ordination, seeking review of the procedures both by Lutheran Synods in the area and the State Church in Norway. Despite the fact that each review supported the fact that he had a valid call, Clausen continued to doubt.

There also was a certain degree of hesitency on the part of the congregation to accept him for reasons other than his ordination. He made a favorable impression on the people, but he had another disadvantage working against him. The people had grown up accustomed to having their pastors supplied by the "upper class" from which all of the government officials were derived. Clausen was the son of a merchant and thus not from the class that they expected pastors to be from. Thus

certain of the earlier settlers who had left Norway earlier in the healing process between the clergy and the laity were suspicious of Clausen's motives. They suspected him of using his position as minister to set himself up as an aristocrat over them. Soren Bache records his own watchfulness of Clausen in his diary:

"On the Sundays since his ordination when he conducted services he also administered Holy Communion, and on those occasions I noticed that he did not follow exactly the forms we used at home. When promising absolution he asked the questions which the minister in Norway put to the candidates for confirmation: 'Dost thou renounce the devil and all his nature and all his works?' Instantly I thought, 'Perhaps little by little you will introduce changes. If that is the case you will soon find out how long you will continue as pastor here.'"⁹

From these initial misgivings of a few the spirit of watchfulness sought out further faults in this first pastor they had ever had of their class. Bache later records:

"I also have reason to believe that he leans toward Catholicism. As evidence of this I can cite an incident that just occurs to me. Last winter he and Johansen were discussing religious sects. In the course of the conversation Johansen said he felt that the Greeks had the truest Christian form of worship as far as outward forms were concerned. To this Clausen replied that if he should change faith he would join the Roman Catholic church, which had retained the Word in its purity from the very beginning."¹⁰

From the listing of minor faults and unguarded statements that Bache collected and stored up in his heart he reached a very damning conclusion: that Clausen was not fit to be a pastor nor possibly even a Christian. He expounds his final conclusion about Clausen in section of his diary that also is quite illuminating in showing what effect

Haugeanisms tendency to divorce doctrine from life had on the mind of the settlers:

"A minister of the Gospel whould be an example to others of the harmony between life and doctrine. It is better to have no minister at all than to have one who prefers power and grandeur to humility and meekness. Even without a pastor. a man can live according to the Word of God. He may not comprehend everything, but that part of the Bible which essential unto salvation is clear enough. As for the rest, why should one brood over it when God alone is the one who can give the true interpretation? Different men explain these matters according to their lights, but all may be equally far from the truth. The behavior of Dietrichson and Clausen... is rather aristocratic.... To be sure, in a well-ordered congregation there must be some kind of authority in accordance with the Word of God; but this authority must not smack of Romanism."¹¹

It must be pointed out first of all that the first year of Clausen's ministry in Muskego was peaceful. The suspicions of Bache and those few others who were suspicious of Clausen remained private until Clausen, under the influence of Dietrichson, instituted wide-spread changes in the way the congregation was run. Secondly, the record left by other of the early settlers in Muskego bears little resemblance to Bache's evaluation of Clausen. The records of Clausen's tireless ministrations of plague-infested settlers, often taking them into his own home to make their last days more comfortable and thus exposing himself to greater risk, the record of his wife serving as teacher for the children of the congregation without once asking for pay, the record of Clausen hard physical labor and great financial sacrifice in order to build churches in the places where he served certainly do not resemble Bache's picture of a presumptuous,

self-seeking tyrant.

As stated, the situation between Clausen and the congregation was very good with a few exceptions until Dietrichson arrived. Impressed with the fact that Dietrichson had the training that Clausen lacked and also projected the self-assurance that Clausen wished he had, Clausen agreed to establish greater order in the congregation along the lines of the Norwegian State church. This brought all of the discontent in the Muskego congregation to the surface. Clausen required that they re-enroll in the congregation, pledging themselves to abide by the order of the Norwegian State Church. This struck a harsh chord in the hearts of many of the settlers, as some of the practices of the State Church (such as kneeling before the pastor and confessing one's sins when one wished to announce for Communion) struck them as being too aristocratic for their new, democratic home. Clausen attempted to carry out this new order of church life, but those who feared that Clausen's actions were a prelude to setting himself up as an aristocrat as the clergy in Norway had been eventually made it too difficult for Clausen to continue in Muskego. During all this time, Clausen continued to serve even those who were undermining his authority. Bache tells of Clausen's faithful ministrations at the funeral of one of his chief opponents. It is telling to see that Bache, despite his dislike of Clausen, had no criticism of the way Clausen comforted his opponents at this time when they had lost one of their dearest friends.

Although Clausen had a number of weaknesses (his Grundtvigian leanings and his tendency to avoid precise theological thinking placed him in difficulties throughout his career in the ministry) he had a very important effect on the church life of the Norwegians in America. In short-term effects, Clausen provided for the immigrants an ordained minister that they had so desired. On top of this, he had been a pastor with a real heart for his people. He worked tirelessly in every way that he could to improve the conditions of his people, both physically and in works of Christian service to those who had needs. Yet his most important contribution was in the change of thinking that his ministry forced on the people. Although neither he nor the people realized it at the time, the fact that he was a "commoner" just like them did a great deal to change their concept of the ministry. In him they were forced to see the ministry as a position that was available to anyone, not just to a privileged class. They were able to see that a man was a minister because of his call, not because of his social position. None of this occurred to them consciously, but it had an effect, nonetheless. While a certain amount of the resistance that Clausen encountered can be laid in others' causes (i.e. a misjudging of what elements of the Church Order could be carried over into America and an identification of Clausen's work with that of a man who was largely disliked by the Muskego congregation,

Dietrichson) one cause that should not be overlooked is the fact that Clausen's social status in Denmark and Norway ran totally against what the people had grown up expecting of a pastor. Some of the early suspicion of Clausen may well have been rooted subconsciously in a rejection of this new idea. Clausen felt the heat of opposition to this new idea, but the fact that he pioneered this concept significantly advanced the concept of the Norwegian immigrants in the matter of Church and Ministry from a pattern based on the way that the organized church had been set up in Norway to a more biblical concept which made no social distinction as to who could be a pastor.

C. Dietrichson

J. W. C. Dietrichson was born into a military family. He grew up in an atmosphere of harsh, strict discipline that caused him to develop a precise, military bearing which he carried over into his ministry. As with Clausen, he developed a strong attachment to Grundtvig, possibly because, as a marginal student, he appreciated its arguments against the heavy emphasis the universities placed on Latin.

As mentioned earlier, Dietrichson's father had dealt harshly with the religious unrest in Stavanger in the early 1800's, a fact that provided great difficulty for Dietrichson in his work of gathering together many of those same dissidents

and their children, who had since emigrated to America.

After his graduation, Dietrichson became involved in a number of teaching and prison ministry positions. While he was doing this, he also became involved in the Norwegian Missionary Society. There he met a fellow Grundtvigian, Peder Sorensen, who was concerned that the Haugeans were taking the foremost position in mission awareness. Sorensen was so concerned about sending out missionaries who would be sympathetic to Grundtvigianism that he offered to subsidize Dietrichson completely if Dietrichson would go to America and establish a permanent church organization there for the Norwegian immigrants. Dietrichson saw this as a call, convinced the church authorities to ordain him and set off for America to transplant the traditions of the church of his homeland, unchanged, to America. He strongly opposed emigration, because of a fierce loyalty to Norway, and stayed in America only long enough to organize congregations and assure himself that enough pastors would come over on a permanent basis to replace him.

His military bearing in the office of the ministry gained him many detractors, but it must also be mentioned that he had a great zeal for spreading the gospel and a deep concern for the people he was serving. His personality simply made it hard for others to see that concern. He did have a loyal following who supported him through all of the harrassments and lawsuits that dogged his ministry. He

provided a target for those who still held a grudge against the State Church of Norway and for those who simply did not wish to live their lives according to the will of God. He vehemently opposed the drunkenness that had become a habit to some who had abused the liberal home distillation regulations back in Norway. Yet he also provided for many the security of hearing the gospel preached in their native tongue according to the liturgical forms with which they had grown up. He had great skill in preaching and in conducting the services, so much so that a Norwegian visitor to America wrote back home:

"Americans who live near the Norwegian churches attend services at times despite the fact that they are not Lutherans and do not understand the language... Pastor Dietrichson conducts the services in such a beautiful and dignified manner that it will naturally make an impression even on a person who is not able to derive benefit from the actual meaning of the words."¹²

Dietrichson traveled wherever there were Norwegian immigrants and preached. Where there were indications that organizing a congregation was feasible, he set about to organize one. The manner in which he organized them implicitly recognized, however, the impossibility of fully reaching the goal that he had set for his work. He recognized that the attrition that Lutheranism had suffered among the Norwegians due to Eielsen and the other sects precluded organizing congregations with the assumption that anyone who had been born a Norwegian was automatically a member of those congregations as was the practice in the State Church. He formulated a set of four points which spelled out a pledge to the principles, order and discipline that had been present in

State Church and a warning that the practice of fellowship with other sects was incompatible with the practice of fellowship with the congregation which they were joining. He would announce these four points wherever there was interest in forming a congregation. He would then publically and privately discourage people from joining the congregation unless they sincerely desired to make themselves subject to those four points.

Dietrichson had a great deal of influence on the history of Norwegian Lutherans in America, but little on its doctrine. His Grundtvigianism was repudiated by the Norwegian-American theologians of the 1850's. He left behind a legacy of organizational accomplishments, though, in the many congregations he organized.

He also made some key decisions that affected the transition from a mentality that confused State Church organization with God's ordinance for the Church, and Ministry. Already mentioned is the recognition that one is not born into the Church, but rather is a member of the Church by virtue of faith, and is a member of the visible organization by virtue of confession. Dietrichson's stress on the importance of properly practicing fellowship could profitably be heard by many today. Also Dietrichson deserves credit for settling conclusively the question of the validity of Clausen's ordination. Dietrichson carefully taught the Norwegian settlers that the ministry is an office representative of the congregation and thus valid on the basis of the congregation's call rather than something bestowed from an ecclesiastical

hierarchy. Without this matter being cleared up, any permanent work that was not dependent on the State Church would have been impossible.

The development of the doctrine of Church and Ministry among Norwegian-Americans does not end here. There were many more key developments which followed these first years. As a matter of fact, the doctrine is still a major question today as three major Lutheran bodies, containing many of Norwegian descent, plan to merge into a body that can only do harm to this doctrine.

The years under consideration in this paper picture the Norwegian immigrants struggling with the question of what role tradition plays in the church. Eielsen reacted to the question so strongly that he threw out sound doctrine along with everything else he threw out. Clausen and Dietrichson failed to answer the question with any degree of success because of their leanings toward Grundtvigianism clouded their perception of the issue. Both tended to assign a more prominent role to tradition than it deserved. All three, however, paved the way for others to examine the matter more carefully. The doctrine of Church and Ministry was illuminated for the Norwegian Lutherans a little more clearly through the process of organizing in a new land.

FOOTNOTES

¹ J. Magnus Rohne, Norwegian-American Lutheranism up to 1872 (New York, The MacMillan Company, 1926) p. 3.

² Rohne, p. 8.

³ Rohne, pp. 7-8.

⁴ Rohne, p. 25.

⁵ Theodore C. Blegen, ed. Land of Their Choice: The Immigrants Write Home (Minneapolis, Minnesota, University of Minnesota Press, 1955) p. 81.

⁶ E. Clifford Nelson, ed. A Pioneer Churchman in Wisconsin 1844-1850 (New York, Published for Norwegian-American Historical Association by Twayne Publishers, 1973) p. 118.

⁷ Blegen, p. 210.

⁸ Nelson, p. 72.

⁹ Clarence A. Clausen and Andreas Elviken, eds. Chronicle of Old Muskego: The Diary of Soren Bache (Northfield, Minnesota, Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1951)

¹⁰ *ibid*, p. 138.

¹¹ *ibid*,

¹² Blegen, p. 211.

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