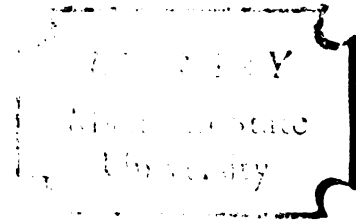


THE AMERICAN SCHOOL CONTROVERSY
AMONG THE NORWEGIAN-AMERICANS,
1845-1881

Thesis for the Degree of Ph. D.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
FRANK C. NELSEN
1968



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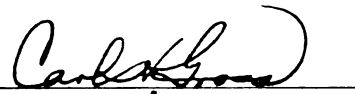
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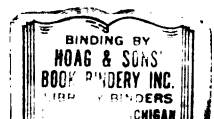
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ABSTRACT

THE AMERICAN SCHOOL CONTROVERSY AMONG THE NORWEGIAN-AMERICANS, 1845-1881

By

Frank C. Nelsen

The purpose of this dissertation was to trace the controversy over the American school among the Norwegian-Americans, primarily the Lutherans of the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the lay leadership associated with it.

Although the primary purpose of the dissertation was to examine the controversy over the schools, an attempt was made to show that opposition to the American common school was not confined to the Norwegian immigrants alone. There were native born Americans who opposed the common school for various reasons. In addition to looking briefly at the opposition of some Americans to the common school, four ethnic immigrant groups were traced: the Germans, Irish, Dutch, and Swedes. These were examined with regard to their attitude toward the American school and their efforts to establish their own schools. Like the Norwegians the four ethnic groups feared "Americanization" and advocated and

practiced perpetuation of their culture, language, and faith, becoming increasingly nationalistic in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Although the native American believed in the "melting pot" myth, the immigrants did not. The immigrant appreciated greatly new economic opportunity in America, but he did not reject his culture or nation of origin and accept rapid assimilation into American society.

When it came to the question of the role of the American school, the leadership of the Norwegian Synod opposed the common school and the attempt of the lay leadership to promote "true popular education" among the Norwegian-American immigrants and to place Scandinavian Lutheran professors in secular American colleges and universities. The plan of the Scandinavian Lutheran Educational Society was opposed by the Synod so that assimilation would be slowed and the Lutheran children saved from a loss of orthodox Lutheran faith in the secular American colleges and universities.

Although the majority of Norwegian Lutheran groups supported the American school, the Norwegian Synod did not. At the Synod meeting at Manitowoc, Wisconsin, in 1866 the American school was labeled as "heathen" and "religionless," and the Synod was called upon to build its own religious schools so that it would not be necessary for Norwegians to send their children to the American public school.

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The plan of the Synod was strongly opposed by capable lay leaders, such as, John A. Johnson, Knud Langeland, and Rasmus B. Anderson who repeatedly pointed out that it would be an expensive undertaking. However, opposition was not purely financial, for men like Anderson saw the American common school as the "chief cornerstone of the Republic," and thought it treason not to support the American school.

To Anderson and others of the lay leadership the real issue was the question of avoiding among the Norwegians a cultural isolation which would prevent the Norwegians from entering fully into American society.

The laymen contended that there could be a cultural pluralism which would allow the Norwegian to attend the American school, share in American social life, and still appreciate his Norwegian heritage.

The American school has not always appreciated the culture of ethnic minorities, and it was no different for the Norwegian immigrant, for he, too, often felt the censure of the native American. However, the Norwegian, in spite of the limitations of the American school, rejected the Norwegian Synod's plan for a religious school system and accepted and supported the American school.

THE AMERICAN SCHOOL CONTROVERSY AMONG THE
NORWEGIAN-AMERICANS, 1845-1881

By

Frank C. Nelsen

A THESIS

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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1968

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addition to his helpful comments, also aided in the dissertation proposal. While at Northfield, Miss Buelah Folkedahl, Archivist of the Norwegian-American Historical Association, gave me daily help and suggestions of materials.

I wish also to thank the staff of the Michigan State University library for their assistance on many occasions and also the staff of the University of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Historical Society, both at Madison, Wisconsin.

A special word of appreciation must go to my sister, Mrs. Gustav F. Johnson of Rochester, New York, who spent countless hours in translating the documents from Norwegian to English. Without her help this dissertation would not have been possible.

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Expressions of appreciation would be incomplete without an expression of gratitude to my wife, Lois, who encouraged me from the beginning of my graduate study. Not only was she a wife and mother but taught school during the time of dissertation research. Her comments and criticism of the manuscript have been of invaluable help.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For some time the study of Norwegian immigration, language, and culture has been of special interest to me. As a young boy I emigrated with the other members of my family from a small coastal town in the Southeastern region of Norway to a Yankee community in Massachusetts. It was in this Massachusetts community that I came to know the meaning and feelings that go with "acculturation" and the struggle of trying to learn a new language in a strange land. Learning in the rural two room schoolhouse was not an easy task for a boy being reared in a bilingual environment. It would seem now, from the vantage point of many years, that the school teachers and administrators had little understanding of a child struggling with a second language and a second culture. In this sense, my experience was not too unlike the Norwegian child in the American school of some sixty years before.

It is because of my immigrant past, my continued interest in Norwegian immigrant history, and a knowledge of the language that I became interested in the problem of the

nature of the relationship between the Norwegian immigrant and the American public school system.

The Problem

The Norwegians were similar to the other ethnic groups who came to America in the nineteenth century. An attempt has been made in Chapter Two to show that all ethnic groups faced common problems of acculturation. For the most part the various nationalities were not too ready to take on the ways and values of the dominant American society. This dissertation has traced four ethnic groups and related briefly the attitudes and actions taken regarding the public school by immigrant Irish, Germans, Dutch, and Swedes. The problems faced by these groups were similar to those of the Norwegians. However, the struggle over the role of the American school seemed the most intense among the Norwegians.

Although the majority of Norwegians supported the American common school, there was an influential minority largely within the powerful Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Synod who opposed the local district school and the entire American school system from the common school to the university. The Norwegian Synod came to formulate a philosophy of education and established their own parochial school system. However, these plans were strongly opposed by a group of capable and intelligent lay leaders who insisted that the Norwegians make use of the public school, and by

doing so, could be good Norwegians and also loyal citizens of their adopted country.

This dissertation will trace and interpret the American school controversy during a thirty-six year period in the middle of the nineteenth century in primarily four states, Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota. The controversy is restricted to these four states because migration had not reached the Dakota Territory to any significant extent when the school question was a crucial one in the communities of the Norwegian-Americans. The focus of the dissertation is in Chapter Four, "The Controversy over the American School among the Norwegian Americans," which traces the internal struggle between the ministerial leadership of the Norwegian Synod and the opposition of the lay leadership.

It must also be stated that although other questions such as slavery and election were debated during the time of the school controversy, there can be little question but that the latter was an important issue in the Norwegian-American communities.

A Review of the Literature

This dissertation includes in both Chapter Two, "Four Ethnic Immigrant Groups and Their Educational Thought and Practice," and Chapter Three, "Reasons for Emigration, the Social and Cultural Conditions, and the Theological Controversies in the Norwegian-American Communities," a large

number of secondary sources as well as articles from the Norwegian-American Studies and Records of the Norwegian-American Historical Association. In addition, new primary sources were used in both of these chapters.

In a review of the literature on the American school controversy itself there are two sources which deal with it in chapters in books. Laurence Larson's chapter entitled, "Professor Anderson and the Yankee School," in his book, The Changing West, was the first comprehensive study and still an excellent review of the American school controversy. Larson's book was published in 1937. Theodore Blegen, the dean of Norwegian-American historians, has a comprehensive chapter entitled, "The Common School," in his book, Norwegian Migration to America: The American Transition. Blegen's book was published in 1940. Recently, Walter H. Beck has included in his book, Lutheran Elementary Schools in the United States, a fine chapter, "Education in the Scandinavian Synods," first published in 1939 with a second edition appearing in 1965. This chapter includes to some degree the school controversy among the Norwegian-American Lutherans. In addition, there is Nicholas Tavuchis' book, Pastors and Immigrants: The Role of a Religious Elite in the Absorption of Norwegian Immigrants. Tavuchis' work, appearing in 1965, is perceptive and is essentially an examination of the role of the elitist clergy of the Norwegian Synod. He has used a

sociological model to examine this elite. Tavuchis has used for his sources, for the most part, Larson and Blegen.

Method of Procedure

As already mentioned work has been done on the American school controversy among the Norwegian-Americans, and this dissertation has drawn upon the work of both Larson and Blegen. However, much new primary source material has been used. Although Larson and Blegen often mentioned a particular source, space did not permit them to deal with it in detail. In addition, documents not used by either one of these investigators have been used in Chapter Four. Some of these documents have been given a more detailed examination.

The documentary-historical method was used for sources in all chapters of the dissertation with the exception of Chapter One, "Introduction," and Chapter Five, "An Evaluation of Norwegian-American Culture and the American School Problem." These documents were secured in the Norwegian-American Historical Association library at St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota, and at the Koren Library on the campus of Luther College, Decorah, Iowa. At the Norwegian-American Historical Association materials from both the Synodalberetning and the Kirkelig maanedstidende were copied using the Xerox process. At the Koren Library both the Skandinaven and the Fædrelandet og emigranten which had recently been placed on microfilm were first

scanned on a reader, and then the articles dealing with the school question and related materials were copied by the use of the 3M Electro-conductive process. By this method and the Xerox method it was possible to duplicate a large number of documents for study which could not have been done by hand copying. By the copying process it was feasible to duplicate a large number of documents on both the cultural life of the Norwegians and on the American School controversy from both the Skandinaven and Fædrelandet og emigranten, two of the leading Norwegian newspapers of the time.

Some eighty-three Skandinaven articles, July, 1866-January, 1880, and forty-four Fædrelandet og emigranten, February, 1869-May, 1882, were translated in their entirety from Dano-Norwegian to English first on recording tape and then transcribed. In addition, pertinent sections from Synodalberetning, October, 1859-June, 1877, and Kirkelig maanedstidende, December, 1876-October, 1881, were translated. The documents were then coded and indexed topically. The result was that there was much more material translated than could be used in this study. However, the articles varied from excellent to the mediocre.

It should be pointed out that the Decorah Republican, May, 1860-May, 1877, was read for background information from the American point of view of the Norwegians in the Decorah, Iowa, settlement and also the location of Luther

College. Much of the primary material from the Decorah Republican was used in Chapter Three.

In summary, it is hoped that these primary documents will add to the knowledge already discussed by other investigators and will add to and supplement work already done in the field of Norwegian-American history.

CHAPTER II

FOUR ETHNIC IMMIGRANT GROUPS AND THEIR EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT AND PRACTICE

The controversy over the place of the American common school among the Norwegian-Americans was largely within the old Norwegian Lutheran Synod. There were many Norwegian immigrants, however, who did not agree with the opposition view taken by the leaders of the Norwegian Lutheran Synod on the common school question. As the educational history of the nineteenth century indicates, the Norwegians were by no means the only ethnic immigrant group to debate the common school question. Nor can the controversy over the worth of the common school be relegated only to the immigrant minorities, for many of the old stock Americans also opposed the Common School Movement. Religious leaders like Matthew Hale Smith, for example, opposed Horace Mann for promoting a state law in Massachusetts which would forbid the teaching of sectarian religion in the public schools. Although Mann believed that the Bible should be read daily in the schools without comment, he was denounced by The Reverend Smith in a sermon entitled, "The Ark of God on a New Cart." In this sermon he accused Mann of promoting

nonsectarian religious instruction which was "godless" and "corrupting" to the minds of children. According to Smith, education could have meaning only if orthodox Protestant doctrines were taught in the schools.¹

Horace Mann's experience in leading the fight for free public schools was perhaps to a lesser degree true of all the leaders of the Common School Movement. In the light of the hostile attitudes toward the common school by a large segment of the American public it is of little wonder that ethnic groups from Europe should have some rather definite ideas and attitudes about the worth of American public education. The American opponents of the common school had been reared in an atmosphere of democracy and political freedom which was often not the case in the immigrant who came to America not only to seek a better standard of living for himself, but for his children as well.

To the student of this period of American educational history it is clear that the arguments of the "Yankees" for and against the common school were given considerable attention in the new immigrant settlements, and these same arguments were hotly debated in their churches, societies,

¹For an interesting account of this controversy see Louise Hall Tharp, Until Victory: Horace Mann and Mary Peabody (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1953), pp. 205, 206. For a more detailed account of this period of Horace Mann's life see B. A. Hinsdale's chapter entitled, "The Controversy with Religious Sectaries," in his book, Horace Mann and the Common School Revival in the United States (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), pp. 210-232.

newspapers, and other publications. The immigrant often rationalized these sometimes bitter disputes by pointing out that if the Americans had not resolved the conflict over the common schools, the newly arrived immigrant could hardly be expected to have done so.

In this chapter there will be an examination of four ethnic groups: the Germans, Irish, Dutch, and Swedes.¹ The question may be raised as to the necessity of giving a description of the culture of the immigrant. It must be remembered that the immigrant who came to America did so with established attitudes about himself, his homeland, his religion, and his culture. He was an individual deeply concerned about his total value system and whether or not it would be possible to maintain these values in the United States. In the nineteenth century the fear of "Americanization" haunted the immigrant, and the popular opinion that the immigrant came fully expecting to be assimilated into American society is a myth and not supported by historical evidence. Because of the fear of losing his identity in America, he often labored with almost fanatical zeal against the American common school and sought to perpetuate his

¹A brief survey has been made of four ethnic groups. They have been examined as to the following: their European origin, political situation, religion, causes for immigration, degree of nationalism, view of culture and language, process of acculturation, views on the American common school, and whether or not they institutionalized their educational philosophy and practice.

manner of life by a system of education, language, culture, and religion. Therefore, to divorce the immigrant's cultural views from the kind of school system he established might be descriptive but not interpretive.

The Germans

The Germans came to America in the early Colonial period and settled in such great numbers in Pennsylvania that Benjamin Franklin feared that the Germans would so dominate the colony that the English language and English culture would be lost. Franklin wrote on one occasion, "Unless the stream of importation could be turned from this to other colonies . . . they will soon (so) outnumber us that all the advantages we will have, will in my opinion, not be able to preserve our language."¹ Franklin's pessimism, however, proved to be unfounded as the English language became firmly established in Pennsylvania and in the other colonies as well.

Most of the Germans who came to the United States prior to the Civil War did so for economic reasons. As with other immigrant groups the promise of a higher standard of living in the United States was always attractive. In

¹Jared Sparks, The Works of Benjamin Franklin (Chicago: T. MacConn, 1882), Vol. VIII, pp. 71-73, as cited in Carl H. Gross and Charles C. Chandler, The History of American Education Through Readings (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1964), p. 19.

addition, the political situation in Germany provided impetus for emigration. The conservative reaction against liberalism and the spirit of the French Revolution that set in after Napoleon's defeat was felt throughout Europe. With the end of Napoleon came the age of Metternich, and during this period "every effort was made to stamp out the last sparks of liberalism and democracy."¹

The numerous revolutions which flared in Europe during 1848 and 1849 were repressed and the dream of the German liberal for a unified, democratic Germany was not to be realized. With the failure of the abortive revolution in Germany many of the leaders fled to America, "many became distinguished German-Americans, providing an intellectual and political leadership for the German-American farming and working classes. . . . Many a German farmer in the West was a 'latin farmer', who was more familiar with Virgil than with guiding a plow through a furrow in prairie soil."²

There were without question many of this type of German immigrant, but there were also many who emigrated for religious and economic reasons as well. The Germans were one of the largest ethnic groups to emigrate and America still feels the impact of the Forty-eighters, German

¹Carl Wittke, We Who Built America (2d ed. rev.; Cleveland: The Press of Western Reserve University, 1964), p. 188.

²Ibid., p. 188.

Catholics, and the Saxons or Lutherans. All of these groups within the German immigrant community shared in the support of "das Deutschtum" or German culture, but each of them had their particular interpretation of it and its importance to them as a group. Almost without exception the German who came as an immigrant believed that German culture was far superior to American culture. The Forty-eighters in particular looked upon German culture as being enriched by a thousand years of intellectual achievement, and this culture which had produced a Goethe, Schiller, and Hegel was not to be compared with a youthful, immature American society. They were quite certain that "German ways and culture . . . would in any case find acceptance in America because of their marked superiority over all others."¹ It was not enough for the German to simply bring his spade, ax, and ploughshare to America, for in addition to these he must bring his German culture. Theodor Lemke expressed the view that

. . . during the first stages of the German emigration, the leading urge was for the emigrant to throw off as soon as he could his racial consciousness and in the course of time to undergo a complete transformation. But now he came to realize the worth and the influence of Deutschtum, and not only has he ceased to deny his origin, but this influence has unmistakably begun to mould the nature of the American people.²

¹John A. Hawgood, The Tragedy of German-America (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1940), p. 270.

²Ibid., p. 273.

The process of acculturation, if not scientifically defined as we know it today, was a process which the Germans realized and feared. There was general agreement among all German groups that isolation was the key to a thwarting of the acculturational process. In retrospect one must admit that they were remarkably successful for a long time in avoiding what they termed, "Americanization." But the price of being a hyphenated German-American was also to be costly. They had to face repeatedly the attacks of the nativists who did not take kindly to their desire to maintain their German customs and folkways.

The German immigrant had a different view of what he and other Germans could do in America. Most ethnic groups saw America in terms of freedom from various kinds of oppression in the land of their origin. Germans, on the other hand, who came to America "between 1855 and 1915 lived not in the United States, but in German America, and lived and wrote for German America, in very many cases, rather than for the United States of America."¹ The Germans seemed to have had a pan-German view and saw the United States not as a separate nation state. If the Germans did recognize the sovereignty of America, they did so intellectually but rejected it emotionally. All Germans of the nineteenth century coming to America insisted on separation which would make possible the

¹Ibid., p. xviii.

creation of "German communities as islands in a sea of Americanism."¹

This intense desire to preserve German culture was to be found in a mixture of reasons. "In some the political desire for German colonies was uppermost; in others the social need for the free exercise of German habits and thought; in yet others the economic advantage that would be given to Germany by providing her with fresh avenues of foreign trade."²

Perhaps the desire to preserve German culture was due in part to American society in the nineteenth century. For one thing, the German found the American Sabbath completely incomprehensible. The deep strand of puritanism in the Yankee seemed antithetical to his professed love of freedom and liberty. The German saw no love of freedom in the legalism of the American Sabbath. Consequently, the German could not understand the nativist's desire for legislation that would prohibit the use of Sunday as they had been accustomed to it in Germany. The frequent clashes between Germans and Americans on Sundays after the Germans had celebrated in their traditional manner with drinking, singing, and dancing was reported in great detail by the newspapers. Furthermore, the emphasis of the American nativist on

¹Ibid., p. xiv.

²Ibid., p. xv.

prohibition caused friction between the German and American. The establishment of German beer gardens where they could drink their beer and enjoy the "fruit of the vine" was looked upon by Yankee mothers with horror and fear. Between 1853 and 1855 the native born American fought hard to put prohibition laws on the Statute books of every state in the Union. The Germans resisted the "Maine Laws" and the prohibition movement along with the folk style of the Americans who were so boorish that they celebrated the Fourth of July with parades, patriotic speeches, and lemonade. The native American did not take kindly to the German's criticism of their principal patriotic holiday nor of their culture.

Before the Civil War an astute observer, F. L. Olmstead, noted the difference between the Germans and Americans, "The manners and ideals of the Texans and the Germans are hopelessly divergent. They make little acquaintance, observing one another partly with unfeigned curiosity, often tempered with mutual contempt."¹ Here were a people caught in the conflict of having an intense desire to preserve their style of life in a nation which had its own developing culture. It must be remembered that this was a period of time when Americans were swept by an intense national spirit after the victory of General Andrew Jackson over the British at New Orleans in 1815. The rising spirit of American

¹Ibid., pp. 41-42.

nationalism looked with disdain upon the German who sought by every possible means to maintain German social life in the United States.

For their struggle against acculturation the Germans had an arsenal of weapons. The habit of settling in isolated settlements of their own creation in both rural and urban areas was one of these. Another formidable weapon was the German language. The use of German inhibited social interaction between the German and the American and between other ethnic groups for that matter. The use of German as an isolator was remarkably successful not only for the first generation German immigrant but for several generations. In fact, at the end of the nineteenth century "the German language was still as extensively used as ever in the churches and schools of German communities, and many of these communities, especially when comparatively isolated, still preserved a remarkably German appearance in an American world."¹

All of the major German groups who came to the United States in the nineteenth century had their own reason for preserving "das Deutschtum" and particularly the German language. The Forty-eighters and the editors of the German-American press sought to preserve the German culture and German language in America. The Roman Catholics saw the function of the language as that of "preserving the faith." The German religious leaders understood this well.

¹Ibid., p. 283.

The German emigrant to the United States had been brought up . . . on the tradition that 'there is no better or higher culture than German, and the practice of religion by a German must be the best of the world.' German priests understood this and knew that many of the German emigrants felt that if they could not practice their faith in the German way when they came to America, then they would not practice their faith at all. This was why the mother tongue was stressed, the vareins encouraged, and the traditions fostered. All were kept together by the mother tongue.¹

From the very first the Germans who came to America established their own churches and parishes. This had been the practice of the Catholic missionary priest from the earliest times, and these churches were strong defenders of the German language and traditions. The reason for doing so was the fear that "loss of language meant loss of faith, and traditions. . . . The German did not claim that German was the language of his faith, but that it was the best means for keeping the faith."² The Catholic church leaders believed that the German Catholic would be protected from the zealous Methodist or Baptist who sought to convert him to his religious belief. As long as the German knew no English he would remain a faithful Catholic. Thus the German Catholic leadership held more and more to the view "that language saves faith." This view of language and coupled with prohibitions against marrying outside of the Catholic

¹Colman J. Barry, The Catholic Church and German Americans (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1952), p. 9.

²Ibid., p. 9.

Church and marrying a non-German, were also effective means of maintaining the faith and language.

One of the most ambitious schemes for the preservation of German culture in America during the nineteenth century was the vision of many Germans of building a "New Germany" or possibly "New Germanies" in the United States. In 1847, F. Löhner expressed this idea when he wrote,

Germans can remain German in America; they will mingle and intermarry with non-Germans and adopt their ways, but they can still remain essentially German. They can plant the vine on the hills and drink its wine with happy song and dance, they can have German schools and Universities, German literature and art, German science and philosophy, German courts and assemblies--in short, they can form a German state in which the German language is as much the popular and official language as the English is now, and in which the German spirit rules.¹

A beginning of this vision was attempted in Texas in the middle 1840's when thousands of Germans immigrated, invading the Indian country of the South-western part of the territory. Other of these New Germanies were St. Haziana, Wisconsin, Frankenmuth, Michigan, and Hermann, Missouri. Hermann remained a completely German city until World War I which "served to hasten the process of disintegration, though not to complete it by any means."²

While the Germans were by every means possible struggling to maintain their culture in a strange land, the

¹Hawgood, p. 101.

²Ibid., p. 121.

nativist American was not idle in his reaction to the German immigrant's attempt to establish islands of German culture throughout the land. The Native American Party and later the American Protective Association were organizations of native born Americans who opposed the plans of the Germans. The Native American Party, popularly known as the "Know Nothings" was active in 1835 and was formally established in St. Louis by 1840. The newspapers of the 1840's and 1850's were filled with the native born's criticism of the immigrant. This criticism was not, however, confined to the Germans, for all immigrants felt the hostility of the nativist to a greater or lesser degree. To the nativist the immigrant

. . . was impoverished, worked for less, drove down wages, and lowered the standard of living. He came from the lowest class of society; he was a jailbird. He continued to speak "Dutch" and was clannish. Still worse, however, he sometimes voted illegally; and when he voted, legally or otherwise, he somehow seemed to vote the wrong way, that is, against the "Natives," with surprising regularity. In fact, he was an undemocratic individual, unsuited for absorption into the United States, incapable of understanding American politics, and certainly unfit to hold public office.¹

It was the contention of the nativist that the European who had received his education in a down-trodden country could not assume responsibility in a free nation like America. In addition, the German was an immigrant and often a Roman Catholic, and this compounded the evil making for a hellish combination.

¹Walter O. Forster, Zion on the Mississippi (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), p. 274.

The nativists organized a number of societies which produced a prolific number of publications.

These societies and their publications, focusing attention as they did on foreign immigration and its dangers, played a prominent part in creating the anti-Catholic, anti-foreign sentiment upon which the Know-Nothing party was nurtured. They convinced many workingmen that their prosperity depended on restricted immigration.¹

Furthermore, the Know-Nothing Party called for lengthened residence in the United States before the immigrant could vote. Some called for a period of twenty-one years ostensibly because this was thought to be the minimum time necessary for the immigrant to learn about American political institutions and to correct the abuse of making a citizen of the immigrant the same day as he landed. There were many immigrants who disembarked in the morning and who were United States citizens by nightfall.

It was largely the Forty-eighters who defended the Germans against the attacks of the nativists. These "refugees from the revolutions" of 1848 and 1849 were a mixed multitude of atheists, humanists, deists, and pantheists, but almost all of them agreed that German culture was superior to American culture and must be maintained. On most issues the Germans and the Americans were in total disagreement. There was one issue they agreed upon, however, and that was the lowly status of the Irish whom they saw as,

¹Ray Allen Billington, The Protestant Crusade (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938), p. 338.

"Consumers of potatoes, promiscuous begetters of children, 'splay-footed bog trotters', and willing tools of priests and corrupt politicians."¹ There were numerous occasions when the nativists promoted fighting between the Irish and the Germans.

At the turn of the century there was every indication that the German was winning the battle for his language and culture. However, what he did not see was the possibility of international conflict between the United States and Germany. With the coming of World War I every vestige of a New Germany within the United States was shattered.

All three German groups institutionalized their educational thought and practice within their school systems. Among the German Roman Catholics education was supremely important. From the predominantly German city of Milwaukee a German Catholic priest wrote in 1852 to the archbishop of Vienna, Austria, "The German Catholic schools are the crying need in this country, because German children, if Anglicised, by some strange fate, generally become alienated from Catholic life."² However, church leaders did not allow much "anglicising" to go on as the first elementary school had been established in 1844.

¹Carl Wittke, Refugees of Revolution (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1952), p. 182.

²Hawgood, p. 40.

Although the native born Roman Catholic did not like the "image" the Roman Catholic Church was receiving because of the European Catholic's strange ways and manners, it seemed to the liberal American Catholic that all the careful work that had gone into making the Church respectable to the Protestant majority was eroded by each shipload of European Catholics who landed in East Coast ports. However, not all native born Roman Catholic leaders felt this way about the immigrant. Bishop Edmund Dunne of Peoria, Illinois, was an exception. He expressed a love for the German parish school.

I especially rejoice at the good parochial schools in German parishes. I cannot encourage you Germans enough to teach your children as much German as possible; for a German who values his language lightly, as a rule abandons his religion without thinking. Hold to your language, and I will make it a point to see that there will be instruction in German conversation in the parish schools.¹

The Roman Catholic German sided with the conservative wing of the nineteenth century American Catholic Church and continued to build German speaking parochial schools with the blessing of the First Plenary Council in 1852.

The Lutheran Saxons who settled in Missouri were also instrumental in establishing schools. These Lutherans emigrated from Saxony in 1835 under the leadership of the Reverend Martin Stephen. The Saxons, as they were called, settled first in Perry County one hundred miles south of St. Louis.

¹Barry, p. 252.

Soon after arriving Stephen organized the Gesellschaft into an episcopacy which resulted for a time in a virtual dictatorship in both the secular and spiritual areas. However, on May 30, 1839, Stephen was expelled from the colony because of "sins of fornication and adultery . . . and of prodigal maladministration of the property of others."¹ Stephen was ferried across the river to Illinois and remained there for the rest of his life.

Stephen's expulsion left the Colony in a state of confusion. C. F. W. Walther, who was to become the outstanding leader of this group of immigrant Germans, asked the crucial question in a letter to his brother-in-law in St. Louis, "Are our congregations Christian, Lutheran congregations, or are they mobs or sects? Do they have authority to issue a call or to excommunicate? Are we pastors or are we not? Are our calls valid? Should we not be back in Germany?"² The debate as to their spiritual status raged for two years and finally the issue was resolved in a debate between Marbach and Walther April 15-20, 1841. Walther won the

¹Forster, "Sentence of Deposition Pronounced upon Stephen," p. 418. Stelthorn takes somewhat of a different view when he gives the reason for Stephen's expulsion to be for "misconduct and mismanagement." He adds, "There is still much in this sad episode that needs to be explained. Perhaps the full truth of the matter will never be known." August C. Stelthorn, Schools of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963), pp. 45-46.

²Stelthorn, p. 46.

day with the clarity of his theological arguments. Walther's case was built on the Word of God, Luther's writings, and the Lutheran Confessions. The Missouri Synod of the Lutheran Church to this day has not departed from the basic position stated by Walther during the debates in April of 1841.

From its very conception the Missouri Synod had established parish schools. The Missouri Synod's reason for doing so was that "they had unusually strong doctrinal convictions to perpetuate through the youth and the generations to come."¹ Perhaps it was due in part to the confusion and uncertainty which characterized the early history of the Missouri Synod that orthodoxy and education became so important to the Saxon Lutherans. A church could only be organized if the immigrants would agree to establish a parish school at the same time. In the early years, the pastor had sole responsibility for the instruction in the parish school four days a week, preaching, and carrying on his pastoral care the remainder of the week. He was later replaced by a teacher who became also the church organist and choirmaster.

The question of the German language was crucial with the Missouri Synod Lutherans as with other immigrant groups. The early leaders believed that the German language must be continued in the home, school, and church. The German-American Lutheran believed that the German "had such a rich

¹Ibid., p. 66.

treasure of religious literature in the German language, and, because of the ongoing German immigration, such a large mission field among German Americans, that it was for them a sacred obligation to see that the transition would be gradual."¹ But the Lutherans like the other ethnic groups were to find that the transition to American culture and the English language was not to be gradual, despite their intentions otherwise.

In the state of Wisconsin the German Lutherans, as well as other ethnic groups, were faced with the Bennett Law which was enacted in the spring of 1889 and called for compulsory education. However, the heart of the Bennett Law was section 5 which stated: "No school shall be regarded as a school under this act unless there shall be taught therein, as part of the elementary education of children, reading, writing, arithmetic, and United States history in the English language."² When the Missouri Synod met in their Triennial session in 1890 the official declaration of the Synod made it clear that they were opposed to the Bennett Law and a similar law in Illinois and were "therefore conscience bound to combat each and every law which is directed, or may be

¹Stellhorn, p. 111.

²Laws of Wisconsin Related to Common Schools Including Free High Schools; Also Those Relating to Normal Schools and the University: Under the direction of Jesse B. Thayer, Madison, Wisconsin, 1890, Chapter 519, p. 74.

used, to the detriment and damage of Lutheran parochial schools, which are effective means of extending and perpetuating the Kingdom of God."¹

In the spring elections of 1891 the Norwegians joined Germans in leaving the ranks of the Republican Party and voting for the Democratic candidates who had promised repeal if elected. "The legislature immediately repealed the obnoxious law and thereby started another campaign on the part of Republicans to have it reenacted."² The Republican papers of the State retaliated with vehement attacks on Germans and other groups who had worked for repeal. The editor of The Wausau Torch of Liberty called the German Lutheran church leaders "enemies of free schools; enemies to them because they are a menace to any system of schools not free . . .,"³ The Appleton Post's editor wrote, "The issues involved in the campaign just closed touch too closely the life of this nation to quietly submit to the pressure upon its throat of alien ecclesiastics."⁴ The editor of the Spencer Tribune writing about the defeat of the Republican Party to keep the Bennett Law stated, "The defeat of this

¹Walter H. Beck, Lutheran Elementary Schools in the United States (2d ed. rev.; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965), p. 236.

²Ibid., p. 243.

³Ibid., p. 243.

⁴Ibid., p. 243.

campaign is but temporary; for the principle upon which the victory was won is false to the very spirit of Americanism, and the bulldozing, domineering interferences of any Church will not long be tolerated in this or any other State by the voters."¹

The Germans and their allies were remarkably successful in prohibiting laws similar to the Bennett Law from being enacted for the remainder of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. However, with the entrance of the United States into World War I came a change of direction in the German speaking communities which no law backed by the strongest nativist sentiment could enforce. When America entered the war against Germany it meant the end of the German language in the schools of the Missouri Synod and, in some cases, actual persecution of German-Lutherans.²

The Forty-eighters also institutionalized their educational thought and practice. These Germans were refugees from orthodox theology as well as refugees from revolution

¹Ibid., p. 244.

²"The Lutheran School at Lincoln, Mo., was burned to the ground on Oct. 4, 1918. The one at Schumm, Ohio, was blown up with dynamite on Oct. 20. Some pastors and teachers had to flee for their lives. To protect themselves against assault by a mob of a neighboring town, the men of the Lutheran church at Steeleville, Ill., brought their shotguns and rifles along to church services and stacked them in the back of the church auditorium. . . . At Bremen, Ill., a pastor of the General Council and his wife were severely beaten by a mob which had come in 18 cars." Stellinghorn, p. 314.

and because they were liberals they supported the American common school, a school they considered "uncontaminated by theology or sectarianism."¹ The Turnverein or popularly known as Turner schools were a distinct contribution of the Forty-eighters. These schools developed in Germany during the dark days of Napoleon's domination of Prussia and stressed physical education. For many years these schools provided the physical education instructors for public schools.

The works of Pestalozzi were largely introduced to America through the schools established by the Forty-eighters. They also developed textbooks and instructional methods based on this new theory of education. In addition, Mrs. Carl Schurz, the wife of the most famous of the Forty-eighters, established the first kindergarten in Watertown, Wisconsin, in 1856.

A contrast can be made among the schools of the Forty-eighters, the German Catholic, and Lutherans. "German schools established by Forty-eighters after the middle of the last century had a cosmopolitan character and objective that went far beyond a desire to perpetuate a national German culture in the United States."² On the other hand, the German religious schools by their nature were doctrinaire.

¹Wittke, Refugees of Revolution, p. 304.

²Ibid., p. 301.

Two of the best known schools of the Forty-eighters were F. Knapp's "German and English Institute" founded in Baltimore in 1853 and Peter Engelmann's Schulverein in Milwaukee. These were excellent schools. Engelmann's school in Milwaukee had a widespread influence. "Its pedagogical methods influenced the Milwaukee public schools, and its curriculum included physical education and manual training, singing and drawing, and emphasized rational methods of pedagogy instead of mere learning by rote."¹

Of all the Germans the Forty-eighters saw more clearly than other German groups that "Americanization" of the German-American would eventually come. Also they saw the contribution they as Germans could make to American society. Their lack of opposition to the American common school made acculturation into American society easier for them than it was for the other German groups.

The Irish

The Irish came to America during colonial times and this westward movement of the Irish was not to cease until America received a generous infusion of Gaelic culture. Between 1714 and 1720, according to one estimate, fifty-four ships arrived in Boston laden with Irish immigrants. The Irish had by 1720 become so profuse in Boston that the

¹Ibid., p. 303.

Massachusetts General Court ordered that "certain Irish families recently arrived from Ireland be warned to move off."¹ The Irish showed a strong desire to leave the green shores of Ireland for the United States which they often considered an extension of the Emerald Isle. The only comparison the Irish made was that America had greater physical blessings than Ireland. The Atlantic Ocean that separated the two nations did not hinder the Irish immigrant from nurturing his strong clan ties. He regularly sent money to his family of origin, and in many cases it was the regular contribution of the immigrant Irish son or daughter that paid the rent and provided the food for those remaining in Ireland. In addition, the Irish immigrant was not content leaving his family in Ireland, but made every effort to bring his clan to the United States.

The story of the Irish immigrant would be incomplete without reference to the Great Famine which gripped Ireland from 1845 to 1851. Although the Irish have been associated with the potato famine, it should be remembered that the famine affected a number of European countries and was a principal factor in motivating emigration in all of the countries. The potato disease, now known as Phytophthora infestans, a fungus infection, had been noticed in the Belgian province of Liège in 1843 but did not receive much

¹A. J. Reilly as quoted in F. J. Brown and J. S. Roucek, One America (New York: Prentice Hall, 1946), p. 45.

attention because the damage was slight. This was but an ominous sign of what was ahead. The springs and summers of the potato famine were unusually wet and the fungus spread from France eastward to Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, England, and finally to Ireland. The people driven by the pangs of hunger walked the roads eating whatever the human body could tolerate. Not uncommon during the worst of the famine was the eating of dogs and mustard weed. It is little wonder that with this kind of diet starvation took its toll and over one million died, many by starvation and others by malnutrition and related diseases.

The hope of the Irish was in America and boatload after boatload of Irish came to the large cities of the United States settling in shanty towns in Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, St. Louis, New York, and Brooklyn. In leaving Ireland a radical change developed in the habit of the Irish. A people who had lived so close to the earth did not choose an agricultural life in the United States. Only some 20% of the immigrant Irish became engaged in agriculture. There were probably some good reasons why the Irish did not settle on the land. In the first place, the Irish were poverty stricken when they landed in eastern ports and unlike other immigrant groups they could not afford the transportation costs to other parts of the country.

Prisoners of poverty, they were confined to the cities in which they landed or to those of the interior, on rivers, canals, and railways, where

work was available. They had not been prepared by the potato culture of Ireland for the hard ways of the frontier; nor had it provided them with the capital and skills with which to take over the land the Yankees left behind.¹

Archbishop John Hughes has often been blamed for the Irish settling in the large cities in shanty ghettos. Without question Hughes did express the desire that the Irish should settle in the cities, but it must also be said that

the idea of lonely forests and prairies was not always attractive to a people of so sociable a disposition, and it is not to be wondered that Irish priests felt little inclination to live in parts of the country where farms were usually far apart. Therefore, not much pressure on the part of ecclesiastical authorities was needed to urbanize the Irish immigrant.²

The Irish, who had suffered such privation in the Great Famine, could not easily forget what they had experienced on the land in Ireland and they were determined not to allow it to happen again in America.

An attempt was made to persuade the Irish to leave the Irish shanty towns of the urban areas for the farms of the West. Bishop John Lancaster Spalding, a progressive, and one of the outstanding Catholic leaders of his day led the crusade in 1878 to relocate the Irish in colonies in the Middle West.

¹Thomas N. Brown, Irish-American Nationalism, 1870-1890 (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott Company, 1966), p. 18.

²Theodore Maynard, The Catholic Church and the American Idea (New York: Appelton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1953), p. 119.

With unflagging enthusiasm he traveled over the East and West and by inspiring lectures aroused interest and support; he wrote a volume to popularize the movement, and took an active part in the work of organization and administration. Eastern bishops, however, were not easily convinced that it was a mistake to keep Irish immigrants in urban centers.¹

A few Irish colonies were started in Nebraska, Minnesota, and Arkansas but without much success.

The Irish did not find a ready acceptance by the native born American or by other immigrant groups for that matter. Although the majority could speak English, many "were illiterate and thousands knew no English."² But for those who knew English it did not always work in their behalf, as one might think it would.

Their possession of the English language gave them advantages, denied other immigrants, but at the same time it brought them more directly and abrasively into contact with American culture. Out of the contact would emerge that fierce nationalism which would in the 1880's send Irish-American dynamiters, land reformers, and political agitators moving stormily across the Atlantic in the hope of changing the face and mind of Ireland.³

The Yankee came to know the Irish quite well, and the more he saw and heard "Paddy" the more he disliked him. The nativist American, particularly before the Civil War, dreamed of a country freed from the evils of alcohol but

¹Merle Curti, The Social Ideas of American Educators (Revised edition; Patterson, New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams, and Company, 1961), p. 362.

²Carl Wittke, We Who Built America, p. 131.

³Brown, p. 19.

soon realized that "Paddy" would not be his ally in the struggle against the demon rum. "Unfortunately, the drink evil, already acute in Ireland, became a positive menace in America. Large numbers of Irish rushed into the saloon business. Whiskey often was a part of the contract by which Irish laborers were employed in construction gangs."¹ An Irish immigrant wrote to his family in Ireland, "Give my very kind love to Father, and tell him if he was here he could soon kill himself by drinking, if he thought proper."² The American disliked, in addition to Irish intemperance, the brawling and the adroitness with which the Irish learned to play the American game of politics. The Irish made little effort to conform to the mores of American society for they realized that they were viewed with a great deal of suspicion anyway. Therefore, they were not quick to surrender their manner of life. The Irish played power politics in the shanty towns in the big cities and their love of power did not hasten the acculturational process, nor endear them to the Yankees. "Nothing strikes the historian of the American Irish so forcibly as their desire to wield power. As churchmen, nationalists, and politicians, they were possessed

¹Wittke, We Who Built America, p. 135.

²Quoted in Marcus L. Hansen, "Immigration and Puritanism," in Norwegian-American Studies and Records, Vol. IX (Northfield: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1936), p. 11.

by the need to bend others to their will."¹ Perhaps this is not so difficult to understand in the light of England's long history of oppression of the Irish. But what seems incongruous to the power politics of the Irish is the symbol of Ireland which was a weeping woman and a broken harp. In the Democratic Party the Irish found a haven and Tammany Hall and Irish became synonymous. Irish political power in 1880 was sufficient to elect William R. Grace, the first Irish mayor of New York.

A characteristic, not only of the newly arrived Irish but of several generations of Irishmen, was their intense loyalty to Irish nationalism. The Irish did not lose their intense concern with the nationalistic aspiration of the Emerald Isle nor did they lose their hatred of the English by crossing the Atlantic. If anything their animosity grew more bitter. These sentiments were expressed in numerous organizations like the Fenians, the Clan na Gael or United Brotherhood, and the Irish National League. These organizations planned grandiose invasions of Canada and Ireland from the United States. Most of their plans were abortive and most of their fighting was among themselves.

As a by-product of this Irish sense of nationalism came a concomitant interest in the Irish language. In the 1870's Phil-Celtic societies were founded in many parts of

¹Brown, p. 133.

the country. "Enthusiasts were delighted to discover that the scattered Irish were learning in the United States the language they had the 'misfortune not to have learned at home'."¹ The Pan-Celtic society advanced the cause of the Irish language and insisted that the Celtic language and the publication of Celtic literature was to "vindicate the character of the Irish as a race from the foul slanders heaped upon them for centuries by English or Anglo-Saxon writers."² The Irish in America used the "Celtic Myth" to create a sense of pride of Irish origin which in turn would fire the spark of nationalism.

More important than the revival of the Irish language was Irish Catholicism. Irish immigrants were almost entirely Catholic, and the term "Irish Catholic" was to become an expression of disdain by the majority of native Americans. The Know Nothing Party directed its most bitter and hostile attacks against the Irish. American Catholics not of Irish origins found it difficult to resist the ready identification of Catholic with Irish. Many of them were distressed by the appearance of the ragged Irish as were the nativists.³ But Irish nationalism and Irish Catholicism were inextricably tied together.

¹Brown, p. 33.

²Irish Nation (New York), April 15, 1882, as cited in Brown, p. 34.

³Brown, p. 35.

To the Catholic mind the fabled troubles of Ireland were part of a great religious drama, a long martyrdom permitted by God in order to spread His Word. Aware that the emigrating Irish were carrying Catholicism everywhere throughout the English speaking world, many churchmen saw in that tattered figure an arm of the Lord and in the famines that sent him forth the 'mysterious logic of God'.¹

To the nativist the invasion of America by the Irish was anything but the logic of God. It was the illogical immigration laws which encouraged rather than restricted immigration.

The American Roman Catholic church in the nineteenth century saw an emergence of progressive Catholicism in the United States. For the most part the Irish Catholic gave his allegiance to the conservative wing of the Church. The leadership of the conservatives was to a large extent dominated by the Irish hierarchy of the state of New York, such men as John Cardinal McCloskey, Archbishop Michael Corrigan, and Bishop Bernard McQuaid of Rochester. The leadership of the progressive or liberal wing were for the most part native born Americans, such leaders as James Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore, Archbishop John Ireland of St. Paul, and Father Isaac Hecker. Gibbon had been a bishop in North Carolina, and as bishop of Baltimore Gibbons was the recognized leader of American Catholicism. Although John Ireland was born in Ireland he came to the United States as a small boy and fell immediately in love with America. Ireland

¹Ibid., p. 36.

served as a chaplain in the Union Army and became a staunch and faithful Republican and prohibitionist. Perhaps these facts alone account for his acceptance by many native Americans in a day when Roman Catholicism was unpopular. Father Isaac Hecker, founder of the Missionary Society of St. Paul the Apostle, had been converted to Catholicism and spent the rest of his life in attempting to convert his fellow Americans to the Roman Catholic faith. Father Hecker, as a progressive, became an issue of the progressive conservative debate both in the United States and France.

To a remarkable degree the conservative wing of the American Catholic Church was identified with the Irish. It has already been noted that the New York hierarchy was both conservative and Irish, and it remains essentially so to the present time. It was in New York that the conservatives first won control, and they have never relinquished it.

The progressive-conservative debate in the latter half of the nineteenth century could not be kept from the public, and it was reported faithfully in the Protestant papers. The conservatives criticized Cardinal Gibbons on one occasion for praising President Grover Cleveland for proclaiming a Thanksgiving Day. The conservatives took the position that Thanksgiving was nothing but "a damnable Puritanical substitution for Christmas."¹ Gibbons' liberal

¹ John Tracy Ellis, The Life of James Cardinal Gibbons (2 vols.; Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1952), Vol. 11, p. 6.

leanings led him to support the Knights of Labor, and other liberal movements.

The Third Plenary Council began in Cardinal Gibbons' diocese of Baltimore on November 10, 1884. This was to be the first meeting of its kind in twenty years, and Roman Catholic clergy were to attend from the North and South to discuss problems of the Church. It was not of little significance that progressive Gibbons' diocese should have been chosen by the Holy See for this important Council thus recognizing the liberal wing of the American Catholic Church. Cardinal Gibbons had invited Bishop Ireland to address the Council and Ireland spoke on the topic, "A Catholic Church and Civil Society." The main thrust of his address was that he could see no conflict between the ideals of America and the Church who had been the guardian of political and personal liberties through history.

The most important discussion however that took place at the Third Plenary Council was the school question. At The First Plenary Council in 1852 the Bishops had been exhorted "to see that schools be established in connection with all churches in their dioceses."¹ In 1864 Pope Pius IX had issued a promulgation which made it impossible for Catholics to be absolved in the Sacrament of Penance if they

¹William E. Drake, The American School in Transition (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1955), pp. 269-270.

did not make use of the local parochial school and continued to send them to the public school. It was the work of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore to clarify whatever doubt the Catholics had on the school question. The result was that "at this time, an explicit obligation was imposed upon all Catholic parishes to provide parochial schools."¹

To a significant degree it was the question of the role of the common school which divided the progressive and conservative wings of the Catholic Church. The conservative Irish clergy strongly opposed the American custom of having laymen as trustees of church property, Protestant Bible reading in the common school, and favored public funds for their parochial schools. These kinds of attitudes and activities were countered by the nativists who opposed "Catholic attempts to drive the Bible from the schoolroom or secure a share of educational funds."² To the nativist the Roman Catholic attack on these basic institutions of American culture were viewed as a Romanish plot to destroy Protestantism and make America a Catholic nation. Bishop John Hughes preached an inflammatory sermon in St. Patrick's Cathedral in November, 1850, which was widely reported in the newspapers. Bishop Hughes in this sermon, entitled, "The Decline of Protestantism and Its Causes," said that "Pagan and

¹Ibid., p. 270.

²Billington, p. 294.

Protestant nations were both crumbling before the force of Rome . . . and would continue to do so until all the world was under the spiritual rule of the Holy Mother Church."¹

It is of little wonder that this kind of preaching fanned the fires of anti-Catholicism in many parts of the country and did harm to the acculturation of the Irish-Catholics into American society.

The conservative Irish clergy opposed the common school and its basic principle that fundamental education was necessary for the citizens in a democracy like America. Father James Conway was representative of the Irish clergy when he wrote, "We do not plead for illiteracy . . . but we are unable to perceive any great ignominy or serious inconvenience to a State in the fact that some of its colliers and ploughmen and cowboys and dairymaids are not able to read the morning paper."² This sentiment was in direct opposition to the common school philosophy and resented by the nativists.

By the end of the nineteenth century Roman Catholic parents were finding the tax supported common school very attractive, and in spite of the declaration of the Third Plenary Council in 1884 Catholic parents were still sending

¹Ibid., pp. 290, 291.

²"The Rights and Duties of Family and State," ACQR, 9 (January, 1884), pp. 121-125, as cited in Robert D. Cross, The Emergence of Liberal Catholicism in America (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 131.

their children to the public school. The leaders of the progressive wing of the Church continued to support the common school. Of these leaders Bishop Ireland was the most outspoken. "Ireland shocked Catholic supporters of Catholic education by granting the right and obligation of the State to educate and suggesting that parochial school was an unnecessary burden and should be abolished."¹ This kind of nativistic talk was opposed strongly by the Irish conservative wing. The charge was often made that the public schools were "godless" and not a fit place to educate Catholic children. Zachariah Montgomery using rather poignant language said that the public school certainly did not prevent immoral behavior but rather would mix the innocent Catholic child with the "crime-steeped progeny of the low and vile . . . children whose infant eyes have already grown familiar with obscene signs, lewd pictures and lecherous behavior; children whose ears hear vile oaths, blasphemous language and words revolting to modesty are as ordinary habits of speech."² Montgomery continued to attack the common school by showing by the means of statistics that since the beginning of the common school all types of social

¹Thomas T. McAvoy, The Great Crisis in American Catholic History, 1895-1900 (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1957), p. 71.

²"Contemplated Educational Alliance Between Church and State," AER, 7 (November, 1892), 349, as cited in Cross, p. 136.

ills such as syphilis, insanity, and poverty had increased in proportion to the growth of the common school. Father Conway implied that communists and socialists could only come out of a school which did not have religious teaching.¹ The general consensus was that the graduates of the common school would be "educated black guards, rotten to the core, and capable of refined criminality of every kind."²

The progressives within the Catholic Church did not remain idle while the Irish conservatives attacked the American common school. Archbishop Ireland was invited to speak before the National Educational Association on July 10, 1890. In an emotional, enthusiastic speech he exclaimed, "Free schools! Blessed indeed is the nation whose values and hillsides they adorn, and blessed the generations upon whose souls are poured their treasures!"³ Although the Third Plenary Council had insisted that the parochial school be used by all Catholics, it would seem that Bishop Ireland did not fully accept the declaration of the Council. What is needed, said Ireland, "is to make the State School satisfactory to Catholic consciences, and use it."⁴ To those who

¹Cross, p. 136.

²Ibid., p. 136.

³John Tracy Ellis (ed.), Documents of American Catholic History (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1965), pp. 493-494.

⁴Ibid., p. 493.

had in fanatical language attacked the common school Ireland raised several questions about their charges,

Besides, have not bishops and priests gone too far in their denunciation of the State Schools? Have they not in their desire to protect the parish school, often belied, in their exaggerations of the evil, the State School? Have they not gone beyond the 'Apostolic Instruction' of 1875? Have they not needlessly brought upon us the odium of the country? Indeed, since our own schools are neither numerous enough nor efficient enough for our children, and many of these must attend the public school, have we not done immense harm to souls by our anathemas?¹

He goes on to refute those who criticized the public schools for their immorality, "They are not hot beds of vice; neither do they teach unbelief or Protestantism."²

Bishop Ireland, in spite of his love for the common school, nevertheless, had to contend with the rather clear directive of the Council. Bishop Ireland and his fellow progressives advocated a compromise known as the Poughkeepsie Plan. This Plan was developed by Father Patrick McSweeney who in 1873 rented out his parochial school to the local school board who paid him one dollar a year for its use. The Catholic religion was then to be taught after hours. It was this Plan which Bishop Ireland instituted under the direction of Father James Conry in Faribault, Minnesota. In a memorial in 1892 Ireland did not deny the decision of the Third Plenary Council nor of the necessity of providing

¹Ibid., p. 494.

²Ibid., p. 494.

Catholic education. One of Bishop Ireland's principal arguments, however, was that in frontier areas there had to be some accommodation to circumstances, and, "since it was physically impossible to create overnight an adequate parochial system, Catholics should not be deprived of the benefits of arrangements like that at Faribault."¹

There was a great deal of opposition to the Faribault Plan by both Protestants and Catholics. The Protestants were concerned that it might "romanize" the common school. Bishop McQuaid of Rochester said that this type of arrangement would make the classroom less Catholic. In spite of adverse opinion Bishop Ireland labored, on for his plan which he believed was generally acceptable in most Protestant areas. Bishop Ireland felt that Catholics, instead of alienating the Protestants, should cultivate their friendship.

The debate raged on with the Irish and often the German clergy opposing the position of Bishop Ireland and his fellow progressives. An appeal by the conservatives was made to Rome and in the summer of 1892 Leo XIII appointed as Apostolic Delegate Francesco Satolli, and one of his prime responsibilities was to settle the "school question" which was bitterly dividing the American hierarchy. There was no question from the very beginning, however, that Satolli was on the side of Bishop Ireland and the progressives. Satolli

¹Cross, p. 141.

addressed the Catholic Columbian Congress, September 4-9, 1893, with Bishop Ireland translating from Italian to English. The Apostolic Delegate sounded like an American progressive when he said warmly, "Go forward, in one hand bearing the book of Christian truth and in the other the Constitution of the United States."¹ Throughout Satolli's stay in America, the Apostolic Delegate, to the disappointment of the conservatives, repeatedly vindicated the progressive position. Bishop McQuaid and Archbishop Corrigan were particularly bitter over this, believing that Satolli was nothing but a tool of Bishop Ireland and the progressives. This was especially true after the Apostolic Delegate submitted his two proposals. The first dealt with the parochial school question and modified the decision of the Third Plenary Council and,

. . . seemed to carry out the principles set forth by Archbishop Ireland, insisting that Catholic schools be as good as public schools . . . forbidding pastors to refuse the sacraments to parents who did not send their children to Catholic schools, and allowing compromises such as Ireland had used, while insisting on education in the Catholic religion according to the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore.²

There is little question but that the progressive party won all the battles with the Irish-led conservatives over the school question. American Catholics could be good Catholics without engaging in bitter attacks against the

¹McAvoy, p. 114.

²Ibid., p. 110.

public schools. Yet one must admit that by-in-large the conservatives continued to build parochial and other types of Catholic educational institutions quite separate from American public education which makes the progressive victories of the nineteenth century somewhat hollow.

The Dutch

The Dutch settled early in America as colonial settlers who established themselves on the Island of Manhattan, the Hudson, and Delaware River valleys. These early colonists firmly imprinted their culture on these areas. So well had they preserved the Dutch language that when the immigrants came in the early nineteenth century they could communicate with the descendants of the original colonists although it was not without some degree of difficulty.

The motivating factor for Dutch emigration to America was, primarily, like other emigrant groups, economic. The devastating potato famine was also present in the Netherlands in 1845-1846. The lowly potato had become the main staple in the diet of the Hollanders in the years preceeding the Famine, and it was not uncommon for the poor not to eat pork or beef from one year to another. With the loss of the potato the food situation became grave, and starvation threatened the land.

The Netherlands had not shared in the Industrial Revolution which was taking place in neighboring countries.

"Economic stagnation characterized the life of the Dutch, and the burdensome taxation made conditions especially severe for the lower classes."¹ There was hardly an item which had not been taxed, including the basics of life such as fuel, meat, and grain. Without taxable industries as in neighboring nations the taxes fell heavily on the shoulders of the poor.

For many Hollanders the economic situation was intolerable, but for the religious Hollanders it was compounded by the attitude of the Dutch government toward those who opposed the prevailing views of the Dutch Reformed Church. Many of the emigrating Dutch were Seceders who took issue with the rationalistic clergy of the State Church. The Orthodox Reformed were subject to much oppressive legislation in the early nineteenth century. This legislation was passed to compel the Seceders to comply with the accepted religious practice of the Dutch Reformed Church. The Seceders, pietistic and orthodox as they were, viewed the State Church as having forsaken the standards of Reformed theology, the Belgic and Heidelberg Confessions, and the Canons of the Synod of Dordrecht.

The religious Dutch emigrants bound for America were fortunate to have, in the person of the Reverend Albertus C. Van Raalte, an outstanding leader. Van Raalte was largely

¹Henry S. Lucas, Netherlanders in America (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1955), p. 471.

responsible for establishing the Dutch colony in the Black Lake area of Western Michigan. Although he considered land for the establishment of the colony further west, he settled in Michigan and believed that the State had a great future. The first immigrants came February 9, 1848, in the dead of winter through much snow to what is now the city of Holland. The first winter was extremely hard, food was scarce, and the Yankees of the area made huge profits by selling potatoes for the inflated price of a dollar a bushel until the Hollander's money ran out.

But in spite of hardships the Kolonie made progress. The first immigrants who had come in the winter of 1848 were "followed by a later stream of immigrants . . . and within two years founded the Kolonie and its various communities--Holland, Graafschap, Groningen, Drenthe, Vriesland, Zeeland, Overisel, North Holland, and a settlement which was soon to be called Noordeloos."¹

Nationalism, among the Dutch who came to America in the early 1840's was at a low ebb. Perhaps the situation in the Netherlands at the time of their emigration accounted for the low degree of national identity. The still fresh memory of crop failure, oppressive taxation, and religious intolerance on the part of the government gave little reason for loyalty to the Fatherland. This lack of nationalism was

¹Ibid., p. 89.

noted by a number of travelers. One of these was the Reverend F. W. H. Hugenholtze who wrote,

One of my first and saddest discoveries in the New World is that there are Netherlanders here who act as if they were not Netherlanders at all, or at least would like to give the impression they could act as if they were not Netherlanders, people who speak as if they no longer understand Dutch,¹ and regard it as a kind of disgrace to speak it.¹

Although nationalism was admittedly weak among the early Dutch immigrants, it was to become increasingly stronger as the nineteenth century advanced. There were several factors which revived Dutch nationalism and a deeper affection for the Netherlands. In 1898 Wilhelmina was crowned queen and the events surrounding her coronation were eagerly followed in the Dutch language press. In addition, there was the person and work of Abraham Kuyper, a man who was to have a profound effect on Dutch national life as well as the Dutch immigrant in the United States. Abraham Kuyper was perhaps the greatest Dutch theologian, statesman, and scholar of the nineteenth century. According to Kuyper all of life should be undergirded by Pan-Calvinistic theology. Reformed theology was the key to a unifying system which sought to permeate politics, literature, science, law, theology, philosophy, and medicine. Out of Kuyper's thinking many attempts have been made by particularly the

¹Stemmen uit de Vrije Hollandsche Grmeente to Grand Rapids, Michigan, Jaargang 1886 (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1887), p. 33 as cited in Lucas, p. 594.

Christian Reformed to apply Calvin's principles to social problems.

The Dutch became increasingly nationalistic in the latter part of the nineteenth century. In addition to a sense of identity with the Netherland's new queen and the work of Kuyper was the emotional appeal of the Boer War. During the war leaders like Paul Kruger and C. H. Wessel toured the United States speaking to Dutch immigrants. On one occasion President Wessel of the Orange Free State visited Alton, Iowa. His mastery of the Dutch language and the power of his speech so excited two Dutch immigrant young men that they sailed for South Africa and enlisted in the Boer Army serving until the end of the War. In every Dutch community Dutch and Boer anthems were sung and large sums of money were raised for Boer refugees and for those imprisoned in British concentration camps.

By the end of the century the Hollander was more of a nationalist than those who first came as immigrants to the United States. He now considered his language, not as something to rid himself of as soon as he could; but rather as a tongue that must be preserved and maintained. The Dutchman at this time could hardly imagine listening to a Calvinistic sermon or discussing some fine point of Reformed theology in any language but that of Dutch. The English language could never be the proper vehicle for the expression of his faith. His Reformed faith and the Dutch language were both necessary,

for if he did not have the use of the language, there was the danger that the Hollander who had enjoyed the deep truths of the Reformed faith might embrace the shallow theology of the numerous Methodist or Baptist churches.

The fear of becoming Americanized and acculturated into American society was always present in the minds and conversations of the Dutch. One way to prevent this was to continue to use and teach the Dutch language. The Dutch press, although numerically small, promoted the Dutch language by stressing its importance and by printing long, widely read theological debates. Reverend Van Raalte had not taken this view when first coming to Michigan, for he insisted that the immigrant must come to learn English. Nevertheless, Van Raalte maintained, the new immigrant would do better if he can live in a Dutch settlement and study English. The Reverend Henrick Peter Scholte, an outstanding Dutch theologian, newspaper editor, and civic leader who founded the colony in Pella, Iowa, held the view that the "Dutch immigrant should participate fully in American life, but he was equally insistent that they should not forget their origins."¹

The Dutch were eager to become citizens of the United States. However, this did not mean that they wished to become Americanized, but they simply wanted to protect their

¹Pella Gazette, Feb. 1, 1855, as cited in Lucas, p. 589.

political interests. The Democratic Party was considered their best protection because of its more liberal views on immigration and shorter residency for citizenship. They mistrusted other parties including the newly formed Republican Party because of the element of "Know Nothingism" in it. But, during the Civil War the Republican Party received their full support largely because of the Republican's stand on the slavery issue.

The nativist had little love for the Dutch whom he described as a people content with "a small patch of ground planted with potatoes, a pot of beer, cowbarns attached to their houses, a pair of wooden shoes, and a pipe to smoke-- that is all they desire. Let us do justice in our own right by cutting off as soon as possible all immigration to our country. America is only for the Americans."¹ But on other issues the nativist and the Dutch were not as far apart as was the nativist with other immigrant groups. For one thing the Dutch were Sabbatarians and believed that Sunday or the Lord's Day should be devoted to attending church and meditation. This view of the Sabbath was popular with most Americans and therefore there was total agreement on this issue. The nativist also was active in promoting prohibition during the period of Dutch immigration. The Hollander was temperate, and intoxication was very uncommon indeed in

¹De Hollander, May 23, 1855, quoting the Cincinnati Times, as cited in Lucas, p. 547.

their settlements. These people who delighted in theological debate and church attendance were outstanding examples of sobriety, and the saloon with all of its evils was not found among them. They did not, however, agree with the nativist that prohibition was the answer,

. . . they had little faith in prohibition as a panacea for such ills as crime and immorality. Accordingly, De Hollander favored the measure only insofar as it might discourage drunkenness and did not conflict with Biblical teaching, a reservation arising from the fact that wine for sacramental purposes could not be sold under the terms of the proposed law.¹

Although they did not support the prohibition movement, they did practice temperance and observed the Sabbath, and at least on these two issues the nativist could find little fault with the Dutch.

The Dutch Reformed Church had been established with the first colonists from the Netherlands in the early seventeenth century. The older eastern church provided the immigrant with great assistance during the time they found it necessary to remain in the East before traveling to the settlements. It was not without good reason that Van Raalte promoted union between the eastern and western Reformed churches for "from the eastern churches came financial and other help which enabled the settlers on the prairies of the Midwest to survive in spite of grasshoppers, hail, windstorms, and drought."² The western Dutch also received aid

¹Lucas, p. 544.

²Ibid., p. 510.

to build churches, parsonages, and help in establishing Holland Academy, Hope College, and Western Theological Seminary.

But in spite of the generous assistance received from the union with the eastern church, not all was well in the Dutch community, for many Hollanders did not approve of union with the eastern Dutch Reformed Church. A minority group began seceding in 1857 and established the True Dutch Reformed Church which in 1890 changed its name to the Christian Reformed Church. Although relations have in latter years been cordial between the Reformed and Christian Reformed Churches, there is little indication that these two groups will reunite in the near future.

As already mentioned the language question particularly in the churches was a crucial one. There were many who believed that the only way the Reformed faith could be transmitted was through the Dutch language. One answer was to teach Dutch in the common school. Hermanus Doesburg, the editor of De Hollander suggested that in the Holland communities there be a combination of Dutch and English. He also felt that in a local school of this type not only would the Dutch language be taught but this kind of school "would prove beneficial by promoting the reading of the Bible and singing from the Psalter, and would be desirable from the standpoint of the state and society in general, as well as

of religion."¹ But Doesburg also recognized that the response of the Know Nothings to a school arrangement of this type would be hostile but was willing to risk the disapproval of this group for the sake of preserving the language.

The Dutch clergy were the most anxious to have the Dutch language and religion taught in the common schools. Dominie Wilhelmus H. Leeuwen wrote in 1880, "It is unfortunate that there are not more such schools in which our youth may be instructed in our mother tongue, which is indispensable for living among Dutch people, and that Dutch parents do not take a greater interest in such instruction."² In some of these schools both English and Dutch were used together. In other schools English was used during the regular school year and the Dutch language was used exclusively in the summer months. Most of the learning was done from black-board exercises, but Borstius' Question Book was used by the younger children and the Heidelberg Catechism with the older. The Dutch language was used to teach reading, writing, arithmetic, and vocal music. These Dutch common schools had a particular problem in getting qualified teachers capable of teaching equally well the Dutch and the English language. Nevertheless, "in 1880 instruction in Dutch was given in the district schools at Holland, Zeeland, Vriesland, Graafschap,

¹Ibid., p. 589.

²De Grondwet, Nov. 18, 1880, as cited in Lucas, p. 590.

Collendoorn, Muskegon, and Grand Haven."¹ There seems to be little condemnation of the public schools as was often the case in other ethnic communities. Perhaps the reason for this is that the Dutch settlements were colonies cut out of the forest where few Americans lived, if any. Therefore, from the beginning they had full control of the common school.

Yet in spite of the Hollanders' control of the district school which allowed them to teach their language and religion, the Christian Reformed determined to build Christian schools from its inception. The schools of the Christian Reformed, however, are not parochial schools but are controlled by the parents whose children attend these schools. Although the Dutch Reformed church traditionally supported the public school, Reverend Van Raalte early in the history of the Kolonie in Holland supported the establishment of congregational schools. On one occasion he wrote, "Whenever there is an overwhelming influence of unbelief and superstition it is emphatically a duty to establish congregational schools."² A congregational school was organized in Van Raalte's church in Holland in 1857 where he taught both girls and boys. Apparently the "Dominie" considered Holland as a place of overwhelming unbelief and superstition. But the congregation must have thought otherwise because he

¹Lucas, p. 590.

²Lucas, p. 601.

could not persuade them that there was a need for a school of this type, and it ceased operating in 1862.

In establishing Christian schools there is little doubt but that the Christian Reformed wished to teach their children the doctrines of their Church. Nevertheless, this is not the only reason for establishing these schools. There is some evidence to support the view that the main function of these schools was to perpetuate the Dutch language. "It is difficult to determine," says one writer, "just how far the desire to perpetuate the Dutch language entered into the support of the Christian schools. It was generally true, however, that the individuals most zealous in preserving the Dutch language and culture were also the most ardent supporters of the Christian schools."¹ But the Christian Reformed believed that isolation by the use of Dutch would preserve their faith and that the Hollander should not be ashamed of the language because it was also useful and necessary.

Although the teaching of religion and the language were important, these factors alone do not account for the establishment of these schools. The basic question raised by the Christian Reformed was, "Can the public schools be Christian?" The answer was that the public school even with a Christian influence including Bible reading and prayer

¹John Kromminga, The Christian Reformed Church (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1949), p. 94.

would not be Calvinistic. One writer asked the question of how far the Christian Reformed could go in cooperating with other Christians. He concluded, "May we never co-operate with them to the extent of giving up the Calvinistic interpretation of life that our Christian school founders sought so vigorously to impart to their children."¹

The Christian Reformed membership found much lacking in the common school. In the first place there was the wrong kind of pedagogy being practiced in the public school. But in addition to this there was the philosophical problem of teaching "mere ethical idealism"² which promoted a non-Theistic outlook on life. Later the specific criticism was to be that the public schools taught Darwinian evolution contrary to the Genesis account of creation.

However, not all Hollanders agreed that the public school was as bad as the Christian Reformed members thought it to be. The Mayor of Holland, Michigan, G. J. Diekema in 1895 spoke to a large group on the subject of the Christian school and implied that the Christian school movement was un-American in spirit. Mayor Diekema said, "The American flag flies over the public school. In the public school the child learns patriotism. The child does not remain German,

¹John Van Bruggen, "At the Crossroads," in the Christian Home and School Magazine, Vol. XXVI (July-August, 1947), p. 7, as cited in Kromminga, p. 139.

²Kromminga, p. 140.

Dutch, or Italian. They all become American."¹ The editor of De Grondwet insisted that the Christian schools in Western Michigan were of little value. He conceded that the parents had kept the public school as Christian in spirit as they could have done, but this was not the fault of the state which made little attempt to control education in the area but was the sole responsibility of the parents.

The turning point for Dutch culture in America as with other ethnic groups was the entrance of the United States in World War I. The transition to the English language was very rapid during and after the World War. In Iowa there was violence directed toward the Christian Reformed Church which continued to use the Dutch language in its services. The violence against the Dutch came after the governor of the state in a proclamation asked for the use of English exclusively in all public meetings. The result of the proclamation caused a number of attacks against the Dutch which brought English into the Christian school in a forceful manner. The Dutch were to learn that their faith could be expressed and practiced equally as well in English as in the Dutch language.

¹Ibid., p. 139.

The Swedes

Following the Dutch to the New World and to the Delaware River Valley, the Swedes founded a rival commercial company. This company had been chartered in 1626 by the great Swedish King Gustavus Adolphus, but because of his tragic death the first colonists did not sail for America until 1638. The Swedes build a fort near the present city of Wilmington, called it Fort Christina, and named their entire colony New Sweden. But for many reasons, the principal one being the rivalry with the more powerful Dutch, the colony was not successful.

Like other ethnic groups the great Swedish emigration took place in the nineteenth century and the motivating cause was economic. The potato famine did not by-pass Sweden, and in 1845 it was not uncommon to see farmers in rural areas take to the country roads walking with their families into more prosperous districts of the country to beg for food. The attitude of the Swedish government toward the suffering of the people was largely indifferent. It would take a great wave of emigration from Sweden before the conscience of the government was moved to remedy the situation which sent so many Swedes westward to America. Because of the exodus of Swedes from Sweden the nation was to make some major changes in the social and political life of the country.

One of the more serious social evils of the nineteenth century in Sweden was the large amount of alcohol distilled and consumed by the Swedes, "Drunkenness had become a national curse in Sweden. In 1830 there were over 170,000 distilleries in the country, not counting stills that produced for home consumption. It was estimated that the per capita consumption of intoxicating liquor was thirty-four quarts."¹ Everyone drank including the clergy who often were intemperate. One rather frank peasant from Dolsland is supposed to have said to his minister after a forceful Sunday morning sermon, "I thank you, Jerk, for the good sermon and it is the truth, that you always preach like a man; but it is too bad that sometimes you take a drop too much."² There were many Swedish immigrants who considered the clergy of the State Church of Sweden to be immoderate in their drinking habits. Moreover, the more pious Swedish immigrant viewed the upper class State Church minister as lacking true religion, proud, class conscious and arrogant, their sermons filled with rationalism rather than the simple Gospel.

It was largely the social and religious conditions which promoted the growth of the "Läsare" or "Readers"

¹Florence E. Janson, The Background of Swedish Immigration (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), p. 175.

²Ibid., p. 175.

movement in Sweden. The "Readers" were groups of people of the lower classes who came together in homes for the secret reading of the Bible. Revivalism in Sweden has been an important part of the religious life of the Swedish people, and those who favored revivalism opposed the rationalism of the State Church.

The reaction of the fundamentalists among the common people of Sweden asserted itself in sporadic religious revivals, influenced by pietism which had never been stamped out, in spite of the rigorous 'Conventicle placate'. In the early part of the nineteenth century numerous revival preachers appeared in various parts of the Kingdom.¹

Most of these preachers were ordinary men who were affected by a "preaching sickness" which they said compelled them to preach and conduct religious meetings wherever they could gather a group together.

These revivalist preachers, fundamentalist and pietistic in their religious convictions, stressed the need for personal salvation in opposition to the State Church which received its members through baptism and confirmation. In addition, they preached a puritanism which called for total abstinence from alcohol, dancing, and the theater. The clergy and those who went into the ministry in America were largely revivalists and pietists. However, relatively few of them left the Lutheran faith but rather placed the mark of pietism on the Swedish Lutheran Church in the United States.

¹Ibid., p. 170.

The Swedish State Church did not look with favor on the sects which developed out of the Läsare Movement, and in response the State Church began a policy of intolerance toward these religious minority groups. Although the economic factor was perhaps the principal motivation for emigration, the persecution of the State Church was an important one to many of the immigrants. The Baptists, for example, were singled out for persecution largely because of their views on infant baptism. One Provincial governor in 1850 forced a Baptist to baptize his newly born infant. The governor, reporting to the government, wrote, "Because he believed in baptism of adults only, but the child was upon my command properly baptized, by the parish pastor."¹ One of the best known Baptists, F. O. Nilson, was imprisoned and exiled in 1851 for preaching and practicing immersion in Sweden.

America became the hope for the pietistic as well as the nominally religious Swede. Thousands of "America Letters" came back to Sweden telling of a "New Canaan" where there was political and religious freedom. Wages, said the letters, were high, prices low, and free land was available in abundance. Some of these letters did not quite claim that money grew on trees in America but many Swedes came to almost believe it did. The "America Letters" in spite of frequent exaggeration were effective and a major cause in

¹Ibid., p. 194.

motivating more than one Swede to seek a better life in America.

The Swedes who emigrated in the early and middle of the nineteenth century arrived in the United States without a strong sense of Swedish nationalism. For the most part, the immigrants were farmers and common laborers from the poorer districts in Sweden who had received a meager education and lived in Sweden when the spirit of nationalism was low and when it was the custom to place value on things foreign and to criticize everything Swedish.¹

It is a curious fact that the children of a country with an honorable history and a high standing among the nations of the world should take little pride in their heritage and consider it an honor to be mistaken for Englishmen or Scotchmen. It is amusing, to say the least, to find men whose 'speech betrayeth' them anxious to disclaim their origin and to pretend that they have forgotten their native tongue.²

Perhaps it is not so strange that people who knew the meaning of crop failure, hunger, and religious persecution would reject the old and give their allegiance to a new nation which gave them economic and religious freedom. It was the uneducated Swede who emigrated leaving Sweden and Swedish culture behind him. Furthermore, the clergy who came were of the revivalist type who saw no reason to perpetuate Swedish society and culture, which they considered "worldly";

¹George M. Stephenson, The Religious Aspects of Swedish Immigration (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1932), p. 406.

²Ibid., p. 416.

but they did prize the Lutheran or Baptist faith and the Swedish language. The rest they were content to leave behind in Sweden.

The more secular minded Swede sought to become acculturated to American society as soon as possible. The sooner the Swede forgot Sweden and became American the better it would be for him.

At no time did the radicals among the immigrants take an interest in their countrymen from the cultural standpoint. They advised them to become Americanized at once, probably because things in Swedish in the new country were associated with a conservative, and, from their point of view, intolerant church.¹

Many Swedes followed the liberal notion of quick Americanization. They often took American names and disappeared into the mainstream of American society. It is generally agreed that no other foreign speaking immigrant became Americanized as quickly as did the Swedes. This is illustrated by the ambitious Swede who wrote in 1841, "I have read the biographies of Washington, John Adams, Samuel Adams, John Quincy Adams, Webster, John Hancock and others, and of Henry Clay, too, one of America's greatest speakers and at the present time a senator from Virginia."² Although this much-read Swede had Clay from Virginia rather than Kentucky, nevertheless it was a considerable accomplishment for an immigrant.

¹ Ibid., p. 417.

² Wittke, We Who Built America, p. 266.

The Yankee was continually amazed at the Swede's ability to learn to speak a form of English. The Swede had not been in America long before he changed the name of his homeland from "Sverige" to "Sveden," and he began to mix freely his Swedish with liberal doses of English. One of the amusing characteristics of the Swedish immigrant is that many of them after a few months in America claimed that they had forgotten how to speak and write the Swedish language. In Sweden the postal authorities could not deliver letters in so-called English, and the postmaster of Kristdala found it necessary to write to the Swedish newspaper Hemlandet in America asking the editor to advise his readers to use the Swedish language in addressing letters to people in Sweden.

In spite of the rapid Americanization of the more liberal minded Swedes, not all agreed that Swedes should become acculturated to American life so rapidly, nor did they see this as a beneficial development for the Swedish-American immigrant. The conservative minded clergy played a pre-dominant role in stressing the value of retaining the Swedish language. One of the pastors wrote, "If we are going to maintain our identity we must above all preserve our language."¹ There were many who firmly believed that Swedish should continue to be spoken and taught for many years in America. This was a different attitude from that held by the clergy before the Civil War. In the ante-bellum

¹Stephenson, p. 424.

period the ministers felt that the use of Swedish was a temporary phase which would not last beyond the time of the original immigrants. However, with the heavy immigration which came after the War the language question became a crucial one in the Swedish settlements and was the subject of a great deal of debate.

The clergy, conservative by nature, believed that the continued use of the Swedish language would save the Lutheran faith. There was fear on the part of the clergy that the Swedish immigrant would be lost to the American churches which "regarded the Swedish immigrants as semi-Catholics and therefore felt that they could proselyte with good conscience."¹ The clergy reasoned that cultural isolation in Swedish settlements using the Swedish language would prevent this from taking place. The means for accomplishing these ends was the establishment of a parochial school system. It was believed that the American common school promoted rapid Americanization and thus a difference between the parents and their children who attended the public school. The conservative Swedes felt that the American teacher did not take into consideration the background of the Swedish children and stressed that the United States was the greatest nation on earth.² Although nativistic Know Nothingism did not

¹Ibid., p. 196.

²Ibid., p. 425.

single out the Swedes for their most hostile attacks, there were nevertheless expressions of prejudice against the Swedes. The immigrant Swedish boy was inevitably called "Swede" and was considered a "greenhorn" by the Yankees.

The religious Swedes often characterized the common school as "godless" and "religionless." After all, the public school was without the familiar catechism of the schools in Sweden and purposely non-sectarian. The Swedish Augustana Lutheran Synod criticized the public schools for their lack of teaching religion. The Synod was criticized for their attacks on the public school and did not take lightly the criticism which was leveled against them for not supporting the common school and establishing their own parochial system. In a long letter to the editor of the St. Paul Press a leader of the Augustana Synod, the Reverend Erik Norelius, defended the Synod against an attack by an anonymous writer who would have people believe "that the Swedish Lutheran Church of America is an enemy to our public schools."¹ Norelius argued that the writer had taken the Theses discussed in a recent conference meeting held in Rock Island, Illinois, out of context. The position of the Augustana Synod, said Norelius, was the Ninth Thesis which said,

¹Erik Norelius, "The Swedish Lutheran Church and Our Public Schools," Skandinaven, May 14, 1874.

Church members can with a good conscience send their children to the public schools in order to receive instruction in secular branches as long as the Christian view of the world and Christian morals are acknowledged and maintained, but as soon as they know that there is taught contrary to such view and morals, and that the Bible is denied, they cannot send their children to such schools without committing a great sin.¹

Norelius contended that this "view as you will, readily perceive is not materially different from that which is held by other Protestant bodies, unless it be a little more strongly stated."² As for the Synod, Norelius maintained, they did not expect nor would they wish that the public schools be anything but secular institutions. There could be improvement in instruction, for from a "pedagogic point of view there is certainly much room for improvement."³ On the other hand, Norelius pointed out that "there is no reason why any person or any church on this account should become enemies to the public schools."⁴ But after making a statement of this nature, he goes on to say that Christians should be deeply concerned "with the degeneracy that threatens it in the present time."⁵ Norelius confessed that he saw little hope for the American common school.

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

I for one confess that I am not prepared to believe in the possibility of educating children in any proper sense of the word, according to a common programme in which the Christian and anti-Christian theories are united. Such a system would have the effect to convert our race into natural machines.¹

Therefore, argued Norelius, it was absolutely necessary for the Augustana Synod to "establish parish schools as fast as we can in order to meet a want which is not and cannot be met in the public schools."² However, he is careful to point out that the Synod schools should not be looked upon as being inimical to the public schools, but that the nature of the public school was that of non-sectarianism and this was not a proper place to educate Lutheran children.

The religious minded Swedes did establish their own schools. "Every congregation aspired to conduct a parochial school. Some of the larger congregations for a time competed with the public schools by employing a teacher for about nine months of the year, but these schools were few and were discontinued after a few years."³ The pattern for these "Swede" schools as they came to be called was that of a school held in a church basement during the summer months when the public school was not in session. As was expected most boys and girls did not appreciate these "schools" as

. . . many boys and girls raised in Swedish-American communities regretted that fate had endowed their

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Stephenson, pp. 330, 331.

parents with a bilingual speech when, shortly after the close of the public schools for the summer, the 'student' from Augustana or Gustavus Adolphus arrived on the scene to conduct parochial school.¹

The curriculum of these schools included catechism, Bible history, and reading, but the real purpose of the school was not only to teach religion but to teach Swedish to "Swede" boys and girls who were rapidly becoming Americanized. This was seen as a grave danger by the Swedish Augustana Lutheran Synod clergy who sincerely believed that a loss of language would soon result in non-church attendance, thus resulting in loss of faith or at least the Lutheran faith. This attitude of stressing Swedish and teaching the children of immigrant parents the Swedish language is quite different from the period before the Civil War in which it was fashionable to become Americanized as soon as possible. In 1854 the Immanuel Congregation in Chicago where Reverend Erik Norelius was pastor established a parish school where "English, United States history, and geography were taught."² The church leaders found out, however, that Swedish children learned English quickly enough, and that it was Swedish which needed to be taught and not English.

Needless to say, the Swedish school conducted on Saturdays and during the summer vacation months was anything

¹Ibid., p. 409.

²Ibid., p. 410.

but popular with Swedish children, and too often the children attending received little meaningful religious knowledge from these sessions in the Swedish schools.

Many Americanized children confessed in later years that their early training in memorization of Bible passages, folk songs, and Luther's Catechism in the Swedish language left them without any real understanding of the great doctrinal truths held by the Lutheran Church, nor indeed, with any deep appreciation for the Swedish they were compelled to learn.¹

Too often the leaders failed to realize that they were teaching a static Swedish filled with half century old cliches and cut off from the cultural life of Sweden which they had rejected. The Swedish child of pietistic parents often received a distorted picture of Sweden and Swedish cultural life. To the Swedish child English was the language of the playground and everyday life, Swedish was the "language of their prayers and other-worldly aspirations. Swedish was the language of salvation."² This divorced religion from everyday affairs and relegated it to Sunday morning church. Many an immigrant's son or daughter returning to Sweden was amazed to learn that not everyone in Sweden was a pietistic Christian as they had expected them to be.³ Nevertheless,

¹Everett Arden, Augustana Heritage: A History of the Augustana Lutheran Church (Rock Island, Illinois: The Augustana Press, 1963), p. 107.

²Stephenson, p. 424.

³This has been the experience of the writer of this dissertation with regard to the Norwegians.

in spite of some deleterious experiences with Swedish there often grew in the immigrant's sons and daughters a love for things Swedish. It is not uncommon at the present time for churches with a Swedish background to sing on occasions hymns in the Swedish language.

In spite of the strong support of the Lutheran clergy for a parochial system of schools in the Augustana Synod, it was not to last, chiefly because the Swedish layman was never convinced that the American public schools were as "godless" and "religionless" as their ministers had insisted. He was never willing to appropriate the large sums of money necessary to support parochial schools. It was not that the immigrant Swede could not afford to do so; he could do at least as well as if not better than most ethnic groups. But the Swede was never fully convinced that the parochial school was the answer to the school question. The demise of the Augustana Synod's school experiment is ample proof that his allegiance was to the American common school.

CHAPTER III

REASONS FOR EMIGRATION, THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONDITIONS AND THEOLOGICAL CONTROVERSIES IN THE NORWEGIAN-AMERICAN SETTLEMENTS

The purpose of this chapter is to trace the conditions which motivated large numbers of Norwegians to leave Norway for America and to examine the social and cultural conditions and theological controversies which formed the backdrop for the common school controversy among the Norwegians. In this chapter the writer will attempt to show that the school controversy was only one of the many issues which divided the Norwegian-American community; there were others. The genesis of some of these issues that caused division can be traced to Norway; others find their origin in America and the conditions that existed on the Frontier.

The causes of Norwegian emigration in the nineteenth century were not unlike the forces which motivated other people from Europe to sail westward to America. Although there are similarities to other nationalities there are also differences. The Hollander, for example, from the lowlands of Europe, came from quite a different type of physical

environment than did the Norwegian from the mountains of Norway. The Norwegian who came from the central valleys and deep fjords of Western Norway had lived in mountain shadows, and knew the meaning of social isolation. Some writers have commented on the melancholy nature of the Norwegian. If this is so, mountain shadows and social isolation would be a partial reason for this characteristic of personality.

For centuries Norwegian social structure had not changed. The bønder was the large land owner who had several husmaend or cotters living on his farm. Each of the cotters had a small plot of ground leased to him by the bønder. Although the cotters were generally well treated, hours were long and the work hard. In 1850 the cotters asked to have their hours of work reduced to eleven hours a day and the work week reduced to five days. Under the old system of working for the bønder six days a week, the cotter was forced to spend his Sunday working his own land. His wages from the bønder was a mere pittance; "the value of services beyond the stipulated arrangements might be placed as high as twelve pennies a day in summer, less than half that in winter."¹

Traditionally, the relationship of the bønder to the husmaend was paternal in nature. This had been changing,

¹Theodore C. Blegen, Norwegian Migration to America, 1825-1860 (Northfield: The Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1931), p. 7.

however, and the cotter began more and more to resent the demands upon his time and services. He could not become a land owner as the practice of primogeniture had been in effect since the Viking Age and there was little indication with the coming of the nineteenth century that these conditions would change.

Norway of the early nineteenth century was a country of isolated districts or bygders. Before the time of railroads and a road system each district developed its own culture, speech patterns, and traditions. The population was distributed unevenly throughout the rugged land, with the majority living on the coast and in the interior valleys, and approximately ten percent in the mountain districts.

Norway enjoyed a period of power during the romantic Viking Age, but her population was decimated,

when in the fourteenth century the Black Plague reduced her population to a few thousand. The Viking nation which had been feared and hated could no longer compete with the stronger states of Sweden and Denmark . . . finally losing what little independence she had feebly clung to, Norway became a province of Denmark. Until 1814 she was the Cinderella of the North.¹

Denmark had the misfortune of having been an ally of France during the Napoleonic Wars, and Denmark was forced to sever its ties with Norway. When the news reached Norway that she had been given to Sweden as a prize at the Treaty of Kiel, the Danish Prince Christian Frederick called for a

¹Leola N. Bergmann, Americans From Norway (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1950), p. 33.

Constitutional Convention. The Convention met at Eidsvold in April, 1814, for the express purpose of writing a Constitution--a highly dangerous venture for a country just surrendered into the hands of a powerful neighbor. Nevertheless, on May 17, 1814, the generally liberal Constitution was signed. Although Norway was unsuccessful in preventing union with Sweden, the Constitution was saved and Sweden proved to be reasonable, demanding only that the Swedish flag fly from Norwegian ships, and that Sweden manage the foreign affairs of the two countries.

This new political freedom in Norway was to affect the Norwegian who had been traditionally a lover of freedom in the bygders of Norway. He now saw self-government on a national scale. "The nationalism, which found new values in the culture that had been preserved by the bønder through centuries of foreign domination and which fanned into flame the genius of poets and artists, undoubtedly left its deep marks upon the spirit of the Norwegian immigrants of the nineteenth century."¹

But it was not only the poet and artist who was to place an indelible stamp upon the national character of the nineteenth century Norwegian, for one of the most remarkable men of the century was not a political leader but a lay preacher by the name of Hans Nielsen Hauge (1771-1824). Most Protestant nations have had their share of lay preachers,

¹Blegen, p. 16.

but Hauge was no ordinary lay preacher. Blegen has written about the Haugean movement, "This influential movement . . . had far-reaching ramifications in Norwegian life, not only along religious, but also along economic and political lines, and its marks appear to be stamped upon the Norwegian element in the United States today."¹

Hans Nielsen Hauge had little formal education but came from a devout home. At an early age he read pietistic writings and experienced a profound religious conversion. In 1796 Hauge began his preaching against the "rationalism" and "dead orthodoxy" of the Norwegian State Church. However, Hauge never broke from the Church and claimed to the end to be faithful to the doctrine and historic creeds of the Lutheran Church. For eight years he traveled to all parts of the country preaching principally to rural audiences in farm houses where often people used ladders and listened through windows to hear Hauge call for personal conversion and the necessity of a holy life.

Soon there were throughout the country "friends of Hauge." These were people who had been awakened through his revivalistic preaching and were to change the religious life of Norway and the Norwegian-Americans as well. The Haugean movement "did not question the validity of traditional Lutheranism. It accepted Lutheran teaching, creeds, and

¹Ibid., pp. 17, 18.

rituals. It spoke warmly of the 'pure word,' but urged that it must be living and not mechanical. The heart must embrace the truth, and the power of the Word must be exemplified in a God-controlled life. . . . Functionally, Pietism represented a reaction against the standardized scholastic and philosophical orthodoxy of Lutheranism."¹

The pietism which was to touch all of Europe came after the ruination and devastation of the Thirty Years War. The Peace of Westphalia, 1648, settled by military means the questions raised by the Protestant Reformation and the Roman Catholic Counter Reformation. It was under these conditions that pietism in Europe was to flourish.

In the midst of a social order sensitive to defeat and despair, it turned many toward an inwardness of emotionalism in religious experience. It placed special emphasis on purity of life, inward saintliness, prayers and missionary zeal. . . . The church must be a living church. It must insist that its members be 'born again.'²

Although Hans Nielsen Hauge's revivalistic preaching and the awakening which followed were profound, it would be a grave error to limit his influence to the religious sphere. Hauge effected a change in the very social structure of Norway. It must be remembered that "for something near 300 years up to 1814 Norway had been governed from Copenhagen

¹Magnus Nodtvedt, Rebirth of Norway's Peasantry (Tacoma, Washington: Pacific Lutheran University Press, 1965), p. 64.

²Ibid., p. 64.

virtually as a Danish colony."¹ The government was in the hands of the Danish official class who had been educated at the University of Copenhagen. However, there were some Norwegians who went to Denmark for their education and returned home to Norway more Danish than Norwegian. It was only in 1811 that the Norwegians were given permission to establish a university in Christiania.

Norway at the time of Hauge was a class conscious country;

. . . judges, bishops, and parochial clergy, medical officers of health (who in vast tracts of the country were the only available doctors), professors, head masters and teachers of secondary schools were all civil servants. Even the cabinet ministers of the new kingdom, owing their appointment and continuance in office to the Crown and, until 1884, to the Crown alone, having no seat in Parliament, were in effect the permanent secretaries of their respective departments.²

Thus the country was ruled by a powerful bureaucracy which received little opposition until Hans Nielsen Hauge began his work of arousing the bønder to oppose the oppression of the Establishment.

He became the champion and spokesman for Norway's 'bondestand' against the well ordered and class conscious bourgeoisie. He was first and foremost an evangelistic reformer, but in the course of his labors he easily became a political, social, and

¹Brian W. Downs, Modern Norwegian Literature, 1860-1918 (Cambridge: The University Press, 1966), p. 2.

²Ibid., p. 3.

economic innovator in the highest and best sense of the term.¹

Everywhere Hauge and his fellow lay preachers challenged the "bønder to rebuild their spiritual foundations and the result was an aroused and awakened people, a resurrection of the ancient passion for individual and social freedom dominant among the Norseman of the illustrious Viking Age."² The common man in Norway responded to Hauge's³ challenge and thus the Bønde was to become the subject of novels and poems and made him the hero of a romantic literature that was to play an important role both in Norway and in America. In addition, the ancient language of the bønde was discovered by men like Aasmund Olafsen Vinje and Ivar Andreas Aasen who discovered "landsmaal," a dialect "based on the parlances of the countryside, those of Western Norway in particular, eliminating such words and forms as had crept in from cultivated speech and reinforced by adaptations from

¹Nodtvedt, p. 217.

²Ibid., p. 219.

³Hauge was imprisoned in 1804 for violation of the Conventicle Acts of 1741 which forbid lay preaching. He was released for a time during the Napoleonic Wars when the British blockade of the Norwegian coast caused a severe salt shortage. Hauge had developed a process for making salt from sea water and was released to manufacture salt. He was returned, however, to prison for a long trial in which he was found guilty. He was released in 1814 broken in health. However, after his release from prison, he came to be accepted by many of his former enemies. The Haugeans who emigrated to America stressed lay activity and promoted the American common school.

medieval writings."¹ This was the beginning of the struggle over the language question. Should Norway's language be "Riksmaal," a Danish-Norwegian, or "Landsmaal"? The language question raged for more than a century and the echo of the controversy was to be heard in America as well.

It is apparent in a study of the causes for Norwegian emigration that the principal cause was economic. In 1870 a Swedish Norwegian Charge' d' affaires wrote, "It is impossible to travel in the West without reaching the conviction that the principal motive for immigration is fundamentally the hope of bettering the conditions of life."² There were other causes as well, and these have been cited by an historian of Norwegian immigration.³ The truth is that there were many who were hungry. Ole Munch Raeder was a jurist who was sent by the Norwegian government to study the legal system

¹Downs, p. 7.

²A. Lewenhaupt, "An Official Report on Norwegian and Swedish Immigration, 1870," Studies and Records, Vol. XIII (Northfield: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1943), p. 59.

³J. Magnus Rohne has written, "Dr. Flom summarizes the influences that have promoted Scandinavian emigration to the United States in the nineteenth century. The order of their importance is as follows: First, the prospect of material betterment and the love of a freer and more independent life. Secondly, letters from relatives and friends who had emigrated to the United States and visits of these again to their native country; fourth, religious persecution at home; fifth, church proselyting; sixth, political oppression; seventh, military service; and eight, the desire for adventure." J. Magnus Rohne, Norwegian American Lutheranism up to 1872 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1926), p. 18.

in America, not unlike Alexis de Tocqueville who was studying the prison system a decade before. Raeder described hunger in Norway,

Hunger is an enemy from which many of our highlanders in Norway never feel safe. . . . Just think what an impression it would make on a poor highlander's imagination to be told that some day he might eat wheat bread everyday and pork at least three times a week.¹

There was also a surplus of population which "throughout the Century was, no doubt, one of the major causes for the push to America."² It is an interesting fact that "at its peak the Norwegian emigration was exceeded in percentage of total population only by that from Ireland among all the European countries."³ The Irish immigrant too knew the meaning of hunger and emigrated to America primarily for economic betterment. The Norwegian was, in addition to being hungry a good part of the time, also debt-ridden without hope of ever having enough land to feed himself and his children an adequate diet. One writer has summed up the immigrants' motives as follows:

¹Gunner J. Malmin, America in the Forties: The Letters of Ole Munch Raeder (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press for N.A.H.A., 1929), p. 64.

²Bergmann, p. 42.

³Blegen, p. 22. Blegen continues, "In the years from 1881 to 1885 the Irish emigration totaled, per one thousand of population, 15.83, whereas the Norwegians totaled 11.05. The German was 3.82 and the English 5.71. In general Norway appears to have had, next to Ireland, the greatest emigration of the nineteenth century in proportion to its population." p. 22.

They left mainly because their life ration of land, bread, and meat was, compared with America's generous measure, too scant to satisfy them. But a variety of influences, coming from all directions, acted upon the potential emigrant. In most instances he himself was not aware of the larger forces. Sometimes these stimuli fused in him so that no single motive stood out; sometimes one particular thing, a letter from America or a crop failure might have set him in motion; but, psychologically, years of economic and social oppression had been preparing him for the break. It is hard to describe the tangle of motives and emotions that attended the momentous decision to turn one's back upon family, friends, and country, and to face a strange continent, a new life, and an unknown language.¹

Not only were physical conditions extremely difficult but there were social grievances. Many Norwegian emigrants left Norway with a great deal of bitterness in their hearts toward a government that would continue to allow an official class to prosper at the expense of the lower class. The poor were inferior, and the upper class delighted in reminding them of their status. Knud Langeland² described his experience before leaving for America:

¹Bergmann, p. 42.

²Knud Langeland was (1813-1888) an important leader of the Norwegian community. He was born in Norway in 1813 and in 1843 emigrated to the United States. He settled on a farm in Racine County, Wisconsin. He bought the first Norwegian language paper in America Nordlyset in 1849 and renamed it Democraten and edited this paper from 1849-1850. In 1866 Skandinaven was founded in Chicago. Langeland was editor of this paper from 1866-1872. He then edited Amerika from 1872-1873, and then was editor of Skandinaven again in 1873-1881. He was an early supporter of the Free Soil Party and later became an ardent Republican and a strong opponent of slavery. In addition, he took issue with the Norwegian Synod on their anti-common school stand and did all in his power to advance the American common school among the Norwegian-Americans.

What have I done, and what have these done, that there should be so great a difference between us? And when they then mocked me for my tattered clothes and laughingly pointed their fingers at me and cried, 'Look at him,' bowed under a heavy load, I walked with nose toward the ground. I was offended; I cried and swore.¹

The so-called "America Letters" played a predominant role in the history of Norwegian emigration. When the America Letters began to arrive in cities and in the rural areas of Norway from the vanguard of Norwegians who had journeyed Westward to America, it caused "America fever" which swept not unlike a disease throughout the hamlets and valleys of Norway.

It is difficult to exaggerate the intensity of early Norwegian interest in letters from immigrants in the New World. These 'America Letters' often were passed from family to family and community to community. Everywhere they spread information about America and stirred interest in the prospects of emigration.²

Often these letters contained money or tickets for the trip to America, and this was tangible proof that the glowing reports from America were not all idle talk.

It is from these America letters that we learn of the immigrant's thinking and feeling about America--travel, conditions, prices, and a multitude of other information and often misinformation. But underneath all of the content of

¹Knud Langeland, Nordmaendene in Amerika (Chicago: John Anderson & Company, 1888).

²Theodore C. Blegen (ed.), Land of Their Choice (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955), p. 18.

these letters there

. . . was an awareness that emigration was a choice between two worlds. In the letters immigrants wrote home, they told, from its initial chapters, the story of a decision and its consequences. For most of them there was no going home again, and this they knew. They wrote about the land of their choice. They reported a changed and changing way of life that would shape the lives of their children.¹

As the mass emigration movement began, although many in Norway saw no reason to oppose it, there were many who viewed it as a positive evil. Those who opposed were primarily the official class, "The movement was popular and unorganized, and was met by a general distrust among the cultured classes, who regarded it as a species of insanity and usually sought to discourage it."² The clergy were also in opposition and Bishop John Neumann in 1837 published a pamphlet entitled, "A Word of Admonition to the Peasants in the Dioceses of Bergen Who Desire to Emigrate." The Bishop of Bergen made clear the position of the clergy when he wrote, "Yes, the 'emigration frenzy,' that is precisely the word for this desire to emigrate to America which like a general epidemic has swept over large parts of our country. It is the most dangerous disease of our time, a bleeding of

¹Ibid., p. 4.

²Einar Haugen, "Language and Immigration," Studies and Records, Vol. X; 1938, p. 5.

our fatherland."¹ The Bishop of Bergen goes on to analyze the emigrant's thinking and explains that it is

. . . truly a frenzy because those whom it dominates will be guided neither by their own nor by other people's common sense. They ignore reasoning and examples and give up their present status for a still more ominous, uncertain, and dark future. They permit themselves to be driven by this frenzy into a whirlpool of unknown suffering.²

In addition to the opposition of the official class and the clergy there was also the opposition from great literary and patriotic figures such as, Henrik Wergeland and Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson. "Some of Norway's greatest poets adopted the view that emigration was dangerous to the country; that they wrote plays, novels, and articles to check the stream of immigrants; and that with emigration as a background they made the home parish and the fatherland seem exceptionally dear to all Norwegians."³

The Norwegian emigrant read the anti-emigration literature and many of the fainthearted decided against the move. The America Letters stressed the hardship and dangers and told of wrong decisions they had made. Many of these

¹Bishop John Neumann, For Arbeidsklasseni, February 6, 1843. Cf. Blegen, The "America Letters," (Oslo, 1928), as cited in Arne Odd Johnsen, "Bjørnson's Reaction to Emigration," Studies and Records, Vol. VI; 1931, p. 134.

²Ibid., pp. 134, 135.

³Ibid., p. 137.

letters were published in the newspapers.¹ But like a giant magnet America drew the immigrant, regardless of what was spoken or written against the evils of emigrating. Most of them had read and reread Ole Rynning's book, True Account of America, until it literally was worn out. Rynning was one of the early well educated pioneers to go to America where he died. Rynning's account is remarkably objective, and "so important an influence did Rynning's book have upon Norwegian emigration that an analysis of its contents is necessary to an understanding of the movement."²

The first large group of Norwegians to emigrate to America were from the city of Stavenger. Although there was a mixture of religious faiths abroad, the majority were Quakers under the leadership of Lars Larsen who had been converted to the Quaker faith while a prisoner aboard a British prison ship during the Napoleonic Wars. The Quakers had been mildly persecuted for their faith and in 1825 purchased a sloop called the Restoration. The trip across the Atlantic took fourteen weeks. When the tiny ship docked in New York harbor, the welcome by American port officials was anything

¹A letter to Bishop Neumann from Sjur J. Haaneim written at Middle Point, Illinois, April 22, 1839 . . . "I could tell a great deal about the Norwegians here, but I do not have enough space. I therefore request that you, Reverend Sir, instruct all my fellow brothers in Christ never to plan on coming over here. I assure them that they will regret it." Blegen, Land of Their Choice, pp. 50, 51.

²Billed-Magazin, 1:94, as cited in Blegen, Norwegian Migration to America, p. 95.

but friendly. The ship's owners were charged with violating a Federal law which allowed a ratio of two passengers to each five tons of ship. An enormous fine of \$13,150 was placed on the owners for this violation about which they were unaware. After much legal harassment President John Quincy Adams pardoned the "Sloopers," as they became affectionately known to Norwegian-Americans. Under the leadership of Cleng Peerson the Sloopers traveled to Kendall township, then called Murray, in Orleans County on the shores of Lake Ontario not far from the present city of Rochester, New York. In Orleans County a Yankee by the name of Joseph Fellows sold them land for five dollars an acre. They had no funds to pay for the land so Mr. Fellows agreed to ten annual installments. The land was heavily wooded, and the Sloopers grew discouraged to think that they had to clear for each family forty acres of timber before it could be farmed.¹

¹An interesting aspect of the Kendall settlement is that it might have been "communitarian." There was a financial need in the community and a letter was written to the Rappites community of Economy, eighteen miles below Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on the Ohio River asking for a loan of \$1,600 to buy 400 acres of land on or before the beginning of 1828. See Mario S. De Pillis, "Still More Light on the Kendall Colony: A Unique Sloop Letter," Studies and Records, Vol. XX; 1959, pp. 24-31. Ole Rynning had made the comment in 1838 that it was Peerson's dream of uniting all Norwegians into a community and having property in common. Rynning wrote, "His endeavor was then, and is still, to unite all Norwegians into one community owning all its property in common." Blegen, Land of Their Choice, p. 42.

It was not long before Cleng Peerson was back from Illinois spreading the good news that the Norwegian's paradise was on the prairies of the Middle West.¹ Several families moved west to the Fox River Valley in 1834. This was to become the first Norwegian settlement in the Midwest, thus a vanguard of thousands of Norwegians who were to make Northern Illinois, eastern Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota their home in the New World. It was not until the latter part of the nineteenth century that Norwegians settled in the Dakota Territory.

The second Norwegian settlement of even more importance than the somewhat factious and unstable settlement in the Fox River Valley was the settlement at Muskego Lake, Wisconsin, just southwest of the present city of Milwaukee. This became a "mother" settlement for a large number of settlements in the southern part of Wisconsin. The settlements were largely made by people from the same bygdelags or districts as in Norway. The immigrants represented a wide

¹Cleng Peerson was one of the most interesting of early Norwegian immigrants. "He has been described as a dreamer and dubbed the 'Peer Gynt on the Praires'--mainly on the basis of his fabled dream of Illinois as an Eden for Norwegian settlers. One day in Illinois, Peerson lay down under a tree, and, falling asleep, beheld the wild prairie transformed into a great fruitful garden with herds of fat cattle peacefully grazing between splendid fields of waving grain. This vision he took as a sign from God that the Fox River Valley was to be the Norwegian Land of Promise and he its Moses." Mario S. De Pillis, "Cleng Peerson and the Communitarian Background of Norwegian Immigration," Studies and Records, Vol. XXI; 1962, pp. 136, 137.

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range of cultural life.¹ Although the Americans considered everyone from Norway a Norwegian, the Norwegian, however, would not really feel at home unless he was with the people from his home district.

The Norwegian immigrant, as expected, had some definite views about the "land of his choice"--America. These views were often modified when he reached the United States; nevertheless he developed an image of America which was expressed in diaries, pamphlets, and books, but most often in the "America Letters." Addressed to family and friends in Norway they more often than not expressed openly the Norwegian's love for America. John Reinert Reiersen wrote, "I have learned to love the country to which I emigrated more sincerely than my old fatherland, of which I can never think with any heartfelt longings."² Reiersen goes on to point

¹Peter A. Munch, a sociologist, has written, "We know that the Norwegian nationality group was far from a homogeneous body. There were social differentiations and tensions, even conflicts, which sometimes split the group wide-open but mostly served to vitalize it in its struggle for status and social recognition within the American society. We know that there were loyalties within loyalties, sometimes conflicting, in half-joking, half-earnest combats; for example, the loyalty to the home valley or bygd, which produced differentiations that crystallized in the formation of the various bygdelags (societies). We know that there were class differences, carried over from Norway, but sometimes brought into acute conflicts in this country because they collided with the American belief in a classless society." Peter A. Munch, "History and Sociology," Studies and Records, Vol. XX; 1959, p. 52.

²J. R. Reiersen, At Four-Mile Prairie, Texas, To T. A. Gjestvang July 27, 1852. Blegen, Land of Their Choice, p. 364.

out that American institutions are the best. "I feel free and independent among a free people who are not chained down by any old class or caste systems; and I am very proud of belonging to a mighty nation, whose institutions will and must in time come to dominate the entire civilized world."¹ Gjert G. Hovland from Illinois had a large number of his letters published in the newspapers in Norway. His impression of America was expressed in picturesque language, "Norway cannot be compared to America any more than a desert can be compared with a garden in full bloom."² The people from the district of Voss, Norway, founded a correspondence society to encourage emigration and in one of their communications they wrote, "We recall with gladness the day we left the chill cliffs of Norway and praise the Lord whose wisdom guided us so that our lot has been to dwell in a land where liberty and freedom prevail, for here we can enjoy all the privileges to which men are rightfully entitled."³ Hans Barlien, a highly idealistic immigrant, saw America as a land of freedom of religion, "At last I can breathe freely. No one is here persecuted on account of his religious belief; anyone is permitted to worship God in his own way, as his conscience

¹Ibid., p. 364.

²Gjert G. Hovland, At Middle Point, Illinois, To a friend July 6, 1838, Blegen, Land of Their Choice, p. 45.

³From The Voss Correspondence Society of Chicago to "Friends in the Fatherland," May 1, 1849, Blegen, Land of Their Choice, p. 203.

dictates."¹ Barlien goes on to say that America is virtually free from crime. "Pickpockets, lawyers, unscrupulous creditors, a corrupt government, and vagabonds have lost all power to harm the people."²

But it would seem that above all of these considerations the one that stands out in all of their letters is that America is a land of opportunity. One America letter expressed this opportunity in the following words, "Every poor person who will work diligently and faithfully can become a well-to-do man here in a short time, and the rich man, on the other hand, has even better prospects, for he can work out his career with less drudgery and fewer burdens and thus have a much more peaceful life here than in Norway."³

If there was one reoccurring theme throughout the letters to Norway it was the immigrant's concern with land. America was the land of almost unlimited land. One can only imagine the thoughts that must have passed through the mind of the Norwegian cotter who saw for the first time the vastness of the prairies. The rich black soil of the Midwest prairie never ceased to impress him. In the early period of immigration prior to the Civil War he avoided the treeless

¹D. G. Ristad, "A Doctrinaire Idealist: Hans Barlien," Studies and Records, Vol. III; 1928, p. 17.

²Ibid., p. 17.

³Ole Knudsen Trovatten, At Vernon, Wisconsin, To Tollef Olsen Juve, June 28, 1842, Blegen, Land of Their Choice, p. 181.

prairies but later came to realize that prairie soil was not only fertile but did not need to be laboriously cleared; thus he could farm it after the sod-breaking teams of oxen had plowed the land. Land, whether it was high ground or marshy, was a topic the immigrants discussed constantly in the diaries and America letters. This is not strange when the right choice of land could mean either success or failure in the American venture.

Farmland had to be purchased, but too often the newly arrived immigrant did not have the money to buy land. Søren Bache wrote,

Apparently many of them set out for America with very little money, thinking that their troubles would be over as soon as they reached Havre or New York. But it turned out quite otherwise. Then their difficulty began in earnest, and those who still had some cash left when they reached the end of the journey had to support those poor creatures who were entirely penniless. Thus upon their arrival in America those who had some money were reduced to the same level as those who needed help.¹

Lars Larsen, the leader of the Sloopers, who lived in Rochester, New York, and who with his longsuffering wife provided generous aid to Norwegian immigrants wrote to a friend in Norway, "We, of course, do what we can for them all. I have gone around town looking for work for them, and

¹Clarence A. Clausen and Andreas Elviken (translators and editors), A Chronicle of Old Muskego: The Diary of Søren Bache, 1839-1847 (Northfield: N.A.H.A., 1951), p. 103.

Lars has taken many of them out into the country. We spare no pains to make them satisfied."¹

Conditions, no doubt, in the first half of the nineteenth century were difficult for the immigrants as the numerous America letters indicate, but conditions improved with the passing of time. Their correspondence was filled with a description of the food they had to eat and often with the waste they saw in America. One young woman wrote, "My greatest regret here is to see the super-abundance of food, much of which has to be thrown to the chickens and the swine, when I think of my dear ones in Bergen, who like so many others must at this time lack the necessities of life."²

Pork was the most abundant meat. Ole Munch Ræder commented, "There are no respectable homes out here in the West where pork is not served at least three times a day--morning, noon, and night. As with everything else that is typically American, this fondness for pork is most noticeable in the West."³ Ræder comments that pigs are not only found in the West, but when he arrived in New York he saw pigs

¹Martha Larsen, At Rochester, New York, To Elias Tastad October 11, 1837, Belgen, Land of Their Choice, p. 30.

²Jannicke Soehle to Johannes Soehle, September 28, 1847, as cited in Theodore C. Blegen (translator and editor), "Immigrant Women and the American Frontier," Studies and Records, Vol. V; 1930, p. 21.

³Malmin, p. 78.

walking down Broadway. With the addition of more meat and other improvement in basic foods the Norwegian continued to cook much as he did in Norway. "The food was all prepared in Norwegian style, and Norwegian dishes and manners prevailed for many years."¹

General economic conditions, comments on panics, the buying and selling of land, and operating costs and profits compared with Norway were of primary interest to the Norwegian immigrant farmer. The America letters describe in considerable detail the amount of wages for the type of work done. A maid working in a hotel wrote, "I have received a dollar a week for the first five weeks, and hereafter shall have \$1.25, and if I can stand it through the whole winter I shall get a dollar and a half a week."² It was often mentioned that a child could make more in America than a grown man in Norway. Usually the immigrant found it necessary to work for a time before he had the cash or credit to purchase his own farm. More often than not he was successful. As one immigrant wrote to a friend in candid language, "Despite the fact that I came here empty-handed and have also been sick, I have nevertheless acquired the following property: one cow, a year-old pig, one calf, two two-year-old oxen (which

¹Carlton C. Qualey, "A Typical Norwegian Settlement: Spring Grove, Minnesota," Studies and Records, Vol. IX; 1936, p. 61.

²Theodore C. Blegen (translator and editor), "Immigrant Women and the American Frontier," Studies and Records, Vol. V; 1930, p. 21.

are necessary to everyone for work), and forty acres of land, though I owe eighteen days of work on this land."¹

The immigrant was impressed with the amount of work expected for a day's wages in America. Wages were high, it was true, but a person was expected to produce an "honest day's work." One immigrant wrote, "Very likely there are many who set out in the belief that they will find here both wealth and ideal conditions, but alas, how bitterly are they disappointed in their expectations, here one must work, for here nothing may be had for nothing."² Another wrote,

What would be done in a week in Norway can be accomplished here in one day, with the same number of laborers. Furthermore, what in Norway would take a year can be done here in two months. You ask how this can be. We worked both hard and rapidly in Norway. Yes, but what is good and quick enough in Norway is not good and quick enough here.³

The Quaker, Lars Larsen, had predicted that the immigrant would face problems of staggering magnitude when he reached America. The correctness of this prediction is borne out by the written accounts of the immigrants' experience. One of the most severe problems the immigrant faced was that of sickness. Epidemics of cholera, typhus, typhoid fever,

¹Ole Knudsen Trovatten, At Vernon, Wisconsin, To Tellef Olsen Juve, Blegen, Land of Their Choice, p. 181.

²Brynjolf J. Hovde (translator and editor), "Chicago as Viewed by a Norwegian Immigrant in 1864," Studies and Records, Vol. III; 1928, p. 68.

³Carlton C. Qualey (translator and editor), "Seven America Letters to Valdres," Studies and Records, Vol. XXII; 1965, p. 150.

pneumonia, tuberculosis, and influenza took the lives of hundreds of immigrants. Many immigrants, weakened by a long voyage across the Atlantic in diseased ships, died soon after their arrival in America. Not only did many die soon after they came to one of the Norwegian settlements, but they brought with them disease which soon infected others in the region. An example of this is Muskego Lake, Wisconsin, which soon after it was settled became known as the "region of death." One of the settlers, John Everson Molee describes the summer of 1849 as "the awfulest summer I have ever experienced in my life."¹ An American home missionary, the Reverend Milton Wells, described the suffering of the Norwegians in the Fox River Valley.² According to the Reverend

¹Knut Gjerset and Ludvig Hektoen, "Health Conditions and the Practice of Medicine among the Early Norwegian Settlers, 1825-1865," Studies and Records, Vol. 1; Minneapolis: 1926, p. 17.

²According to Reverend Wells the conditions were horrendous. "The amount of wretchedness and suffering which prevailed among them last winter, was such as absolutely to mock all description. One family I visited in which I found every individual, eight in number, prostrated with disease. Two of them, the father and a daughter of some 16 years of age, were then shaking violently with a fit of the ague. The daughter shoeless, and both nearly destitute of all clothing stood hovering over a few live coals, by the side of which stood an old filthy looking copper tea kettle, from the spout of which they would take their turns in drinking. . . . In another family which Mrs. W. visited in connection with the physician, she found the sick mother in bed with her dying husband, with no one to administer to their necessities, or even to speak a word of consolation to them save two little girls of some seven and nine years of age." W. Sweet, Religion on the American Frontier, The Congregationalist (Vol. III; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), pp. 390, 391.

Wells, "The wakeful and sympathetic ear of Samaritan kindness was at length arrested by the sad tale of misery, and forth sped the messengers of mercy without stint or grudging."¹ Barrels of flour and meat were sent by the Americans to the needy Norwegians, and this act of kindness was deeply appreciated by the destitute immigrants.

The "American" or "Yankee" as he was called both in admiration and damnation was of perpetual interest to the Norwegian immigrants. Their opinion of him was often sharply divided. Many Norwegians perceived him as strict, moralistic, and devoted to New England religion. Wrote one immigrant, "The Americans also have a very strict sense of morality. The Sabbath is observed with an almost pharisaical severity."² To others the Yankees were difficult to evaluate,

From the little insight I have acquired, I really do not know what to say about these people. I am much inclined to believe that many of them are 'whited sepulchres'--if there were not a few tares among the wheat, it would be almost too good to be true.³

But to many pietistical Norwegians the Yankee Sabbath was the reason for America's greatness. "In America the Sabbath is observed very rigorously, that is to say, among the native Americans; and I therefore believe that God has blessed America and ordained it to become the biggest, wealthiest,

¹Ibid., p. 392.

²An Immigrant Living in Beloit, Wisconsin, To Friends November 29, 1851, Blegen, Land of Their Choice, p. 272.

³Ibid., p. 272.

most powerful country on the earth."¹ The Yankee was to some Norwegians a generous individual and this was expressed in a bit of doggerel:

When the Yankees perceived how we struggled,
They were ready at once with their praise;
And they shared with us many a tidbit;
Now may God bless their generous ways.²

The ethnocentric attitude on the part of the Norwegian immigrant shows through in the often expressed notion that somehow the Yankees loved the Scandinavians best of all the immigrants. Hans Barlien, the Utopian, wrote in 1842, "The Americans despise all Europeans, except the Scandinavians, most of all the Irish; but they are hopeful for the Norwegians, Swedes, and Danes."³ However, there were many Norwegians who resented the unscrupulous Americans who had cheated them on their arrival in America when they were "green" and trusting. A writer in 1858 said a Yankee "is a cunning businessman and knows how to get the better of you in a bargain."⁴ A clergyman Olaus Fredrik Duus in an American letter wrote in sarcastic tones, "I really do not know how long I can endure living under these beautiful republican

¹Carl Thorsteinsen, In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, To His Father, July 19, 1853, Blegen, Land of Their Choice, p. 275.

²Einar Haugen, "A Norwegian American Pioneer Ballad," Studies and Records, Vol. XV; 1949, p. 5.

³D. G. Ristad, "A Doctrinaire Idealist: Hans Barlien," Studies and Records, Vol. III; 1928, p. 20.

⁴Frithjof Meidell, Springfield, Illinois, August 10, 1856, Blegen, Land of Their Choice, p. 314.

conditions where the American god 'Money' holds the scepter of righteousness and where law and order are held in lowest esteem."¹ The Reverend Duus did not live long under a republican government but went back to Norway. He complained about the Yankees engaging in land speculation, but his diary is filled with the details of buying and selling land as a speculator.

The truth is that the American did not always profess the love for the Norwegian that Hans Barlien had insisted they had. In fact the Yankees on occasions called the Norsemen "Norwegian Indians." The reason for this, says one writer, was because "they were as yet unacquainted with the English language and American life and because they were generally ignorant of the subject (politics)--an ignorance that had led Americans to call them the 'Norwegian Indians.'"² To rub salt into the wounded pride of the Norwegians a man with a very Yankee name of Marshall M. Strong declared that Negroes were "as deserving of a vote and [the] privilege of freemen as are many of the whites, and more so as a class in this territory than are the Norwegians."³

¹Frontier Parsonage: The Letters of Olaus Fredrik Duus, Norwegian Pastor in Wisconsin, 1855-1858. Translated by the Verdandi Study Club of Minneapolis and edited by Theodore C. Blegen (Northfield: N.A.H.A., 1947), p. 17.

²Bayrd Still, "Norwegian-Americans and Wisconsin Politics in the Forties," Studies and Records, Vol. VIII; 1934, p. 59.

³Ibid., p. 58.

The Americans also found other things about the Norwegians of which they did not approve; this was the manner in which they sometimes used the Sabbath as a day for recreation. In Madison, Wisconsin, in July of 1857, some fifty or sixty Scandinavians

rowed across the lake and enjoyed a picnic afternoon and evening--eating, probably drinking, singing and perhaps engaging in country dances. The event was observed by many, but the picnickers were not prepared for the barrage of criticism that appeared in the local paper, warning them to behave like respectable Americans if they wanted to enjoy the privileges of the country.¹

Not only were the Americans critical of their Sabbath behavior, but so was their pastor as well who severely rebuked them for their picnicking. This they could not understand for such Sunday activity was permitted in Norway. The minister replied that this was not a question of whether it was sin or not, but that they had to be concerned about the "image" of the Lutheran Church in America.

Another social custom which was practiced particularly by the people from the mountainous areas of Norway was the practice of "bundling," not unlike the "courting" practice of the Pennsylvania Dutch. This practice was justified in Norway as a necessity because of the isolation and vast distances the suitor had to travel in courting. But when this questionable practice was coupled with drunkenness,

¹Marcus Lee Hansen, The Immigrant in American History (Cambridge: The Harvard University Press, 1942), p. 117.

as was often the case, the Americans severely criticized the Norwegians. Nina Draxten comments that Kristofer Janson observed,

The immigrants' worst troubles were those they brought with them: drunkenness and immoral customs, in particular one he designated as 'night courtship' . . . [which] Janson traced to customs immigrants had brought with them from rural communities in Norway. He maintained that Americans looked upon this with great repugnance, and consequently regarded Norwegians as morally loose people.¹

There were many Norwegians, however, who came to fully share the Yankee's pietism which he did not find too different from the Haugean influence he had already experienced. The Norwegians may have on occasions desecrated the Yankee Sabbath, but as a group they came more and more to accept the American Sabbath values. There was a gradual movement on the part of Norwegian-American Lutheranism towards a puritanism; however, "it was less characteristic of pastors and congregations of the Norwegian Synod than of other bodies."² For the most part the pastors of the Norwegian Synod drank alcoholic beverages but stressed moderation. Intoxication, however, was a problem among the Norwegian immigrants as it was among other immigrant groups. Drinking was a problem in the old Muskego settlement. The aristocratic

¹ Nina Draxten, "Kristofer Janson's Lecture Tour, 1879-80," Studies and Records, Vol. XXII; 1965, p. 52.

² Gerhard Lee Belgum, "The Old Norwegian Synod in America, 1853-1890" (unpublished thesis, Yale University, 1957), p. 147.

and lordly minister, J. W. C. Dietrichson, who returned to Norway because he could not adjust to the egalitarian spirit of the Frontier had to combat this in the early years of the Muskego settlement. "One of the open immoralities combatted by Dietrichson was drunkenness, a sin so common that American neighbors regarded it as characteristic of the Norwegians."¹ Dietrichson, himself, said that it was not something they had picked up in America, "I am sorry to say that as is the old, bad Norwegian custom, the deplorable desire for drinking and rioting has held sway in the congregation, especially during Christmas but also at other times."² Indeed the Reverend Dietrichson had his problems with excessive drinking in his Muskego congregation. Søren Bache tells the amusing story of the aristocratic pastor being chased by two drunks who were drunk in the Sunday morning service. After the service they began to fight outside of the church building. "Pastor Dietrichson," said Bache,

went over to separate them. But when he got there, the fellow on top jumped up and started to chase Dietrichson, who ran yelling that he should not beat the pastor. When the race was over, the man pulled a dollar from his pocket and said to Dietrichson, 'This one I would have given you if you had been a nice boy, but now I will go and spend it for some good liquor.'³

¹E. Clifford Nelson and Eugene L. Fevold, The Lutheran Church Among Norwegian-Americans (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1960), Vol. I, p. 109.

²J. W. C. Dietrichson, Koshkonong, Wisconsin, January 29, 1847, Blegen, Land of Their Choice, p. 148.

³Søren Bache, A Chronicle of Old Muskego, p. 160.

As humiliating as this experience must have been for the pastor and congregation it was compounded by the events of a few days later when the pastor sent two of his elders to bring the church members who had humbled the pastor before the entire congregation to him for discipline. Bache continues, "But when they got there, the transgressor treated them so liberally to the bottle that the elders were quite drunk before they left--and that was the end of the story."¹

In spite of this problem, the Norwegian Synod was opposed to Temperance Societies. According to an anonymous Norwegian school teacher, who was somewhat hostile to the Norwegian Synod, the Synod condemns

every organization or affiliation of secular or moral import insofar as these do not exactly coincide with their own so-called orthodox formulas and theories. Under this sweeping condemnation come Bible societies, mission societies, other church denominations, temperance unions, insurance companies, interest charges, life insurance, etc.²

But regardless of the Synod's position, Norwegian Temperance Societies were organized in the various settlements not excluding the small town of Decorah, Iowa, the center of the Norwegian Synod's influence. The Decorah Republican reported, "The Norwegian Temperance Society has become a fixed fact in Decorah. They have organized a society . . . Quite a few

¹Ibid., p. 161.

²C. A. Clausen (translator and editor), "A Norwegian Schoolmaster Looks at America," Studies and Records, Vol. XIII; 1943, p. 83.

have signed the pledge and the work goes bravely on. They meet at the Court House every Saturday evening." The reporter gives the interesting purpose of the society, "They propose to see whether sobriety is not just as good for one born in the north country as it is for one born in a more southern climate."¹ The paper fails to report what was the conclusion of this Temperance Society's findings. But if the Society prospered among the Norwegians of Iowa, it was a failure among the Norwegians in Texas. If the Norwegians were for temperance, this did not necessarily mean that they did not drink beer, wine, and ale. Even Elsie Amalie Wærenskjold a crusader against strong drink, tells of having "brewed ale for Christmas, and it has never tasted so good to me as now. I haven't tasted a glass of wine in four years. If I could get fruit, I would certainly have wine and [fruit] juice too."² Another immigrant wrote to relatives in Norway about a Christmas in Illinois, "We had a cozy Christmas, drank beer and punch, thought of rice porridge, and talked of the old days."³

The clergy of the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Synod enjoyed a glass of beverage on occasion. The Reverend Duus tells of receiving twelve bottles of wine from a German

¹Decorah Republican, February 8, 1866.

²Blegen, Land of Their Choice, p. 323.

³Written at Springfield, Illinois, January 11, 1857, Blegen, Land of Their Choice, p. 316.

friend. The clergyman's comment is interesting. "He stayed with me overnight . . . a couple of days later he sent me twelve bottles of St. Julien as good as any I ever drank in Norway; so now I can offer you a glass of wine if you will visit me."¹ Professor Laur. Larsen, a leader of the Norwegian Synod, "saw nothing wrong in his earlier years with a festive glass of wine or an occasional glass of beer."² When Ole Bull, the violinist, visited Luther College in March of 1872, the newspaper in the town reported that following the concert a banquet was given in the honor of Bull.

The hospitality of the groaning table was then extended to the Americans who were present as the guests of the Norwegians. . . . This was followed by a succession of toasts by the Norwegians and American guests. At an early hour in the morning the assemblage adjourned each one glad to have been there.³

One might be tempted to comment that this was quite a celebration for a very orthodox college which was known as the "preachers' school."

But as the century advanced the American drive for prohibition influenced the Norwegians, even those who attempted moderation.

The process of Puritanization can be followed by anyone who studies the records of a congregation or the minutes of a synod. Discipline became more and more

¹Frontier Parsonage, p. 103.

²Gerhard Lee Belgum, "The Old Norwegian Synod in America, 1853-1890" (unpublished thesis, Yale University, 1957), pp. 145, 146.

³Decorah Republican, March 22, 1872.

strict. One after the other, social pleasures that were brought from the Old World fell under the ban . . . By the last quarter of the nineteenth century the Protestant immigrant churches had adopted so much of the 'New England atmosphere' that clergymen who came from European seminaries of the various denominations were strangers in theology and ecclesiastical practice.¹

Knut Hamsun, a Nobel prize winning Norwegian novelist, who visited America in the latter part of the nineteenth century was surprised that pastors were not discussing theological questions but were rather interested in the so-called "Boston morals."²

The pietistic influence both coming from the Eielsen Synod and later from the Haugean Synod slowly gained ground in the churches. Eielsen himself, had called Dietrichson a drunkard for stopping at a country tavern on a hot day to refresh himself with a glass of beer. This attitude of total abstinence became stronger, not weaker, as the century progressed. In this the pietistic element found a ready ally in the American who was working for the enactment of the "Maine laws" in every State in the Union. On one occasion R. B. Anderson³ "sought support from the pietistic and

¹Marcus Lee Hansen, pp. 120, 121.

²Ibid., p. 121.

³Rasmus Bjørn Anderson (1846-1936) was one of the most controversial leaders of the Norwegian-Americans. No treatment of Norwegians in America would be complete without reference to Anderson. Although born in Wisconsin his identification throughout his long life was with the Norwegian immigrant community. He entered the Norwegian Synod's temporary school at Half-way Creek, Wisconsin, not far from

puritan factions among Norwegian-American Lutherans, but that uneasy alliance ended abruptly when he brazenly confessed his liking for beer, wine, and whiskey.¹

Regardless of how much discussion and how intensely the emigrant read the "America letters," nothing he could do in Norway could quite prepare him for the day he would set foot on American soil. What was to be his relationship to the new culture and strange new language he would hear as a babel all around him? When he landed in America, the immigrant knew that it would be only a matter of time before he would sail up the Hudson River to Albany. In the early

the present city of LaCross in 1861. He moved with the college when it moved to Decorah, Iowa. On the day of the dedication of the new building on the campus he lead a student revolt protesting the harsh discipline and poor living conditions for the students in the new building. For a time he taught at the Albion Academy and in 1866 became the first professor of Scandinavian languages at the University of Wisconsin. During his time at the University he collected some 1500 volumes of Scandinavian literature. The violinist, Ole Bull, gave concerts for this book fund. In 1885 President Cleveland appointed him minister to Denmark, and when he returned to this country he became a cod-liver oil salesman for a Danish concern. R. B. Anderson was a prolific writer and championed Norwegian culture in America. In his early life he was a strong supporter of the American common school. Lloyd Hustvedt who has written the most thorough biography on Anderson has said, "Rasmus B. Anderson was something more than professor, author, statesman, and journalist. For the Norwegians he became a symbol--he exemplified a way of life. He and many with him believed that he pointed the way, as it were, for each Norwegian immigrant who was reaching out for confidence, moral dignity, and something vague and undefined--how to become a good American." Lloyd Hustvedt, Rasmus Bjørn Anderson (Northfield: N.A.H.A., 1966), p. 4.

¹Paul Knaplund, "Rasmus B. Anderson, Pioneer and Crusader," Studies and Records, Vol. XVIII; 1954, p. 40.

years he took the Erie Canal and after the coming of the railroad the train to Buffalo. From Buffalo he boarded a lake steamer which took him around the straits of Mackinac to Milwaukee. Soon he was in one of the Norwegian settlements where again he heard the familiar dialect to which he was accustomed in Norway. Carlton C. Qualey has written, "The Norwegian settlers naturally preferred to establish themselves as near as possible to people who spoke their own language and who were of the Lutheran faith. In such a community, a 'Yankee' was almost an alien."¹ Not only did the immigrant want to live in a Norwegian settlement, he intended to settle with people from his own bygdal or district from which he came in Norway. An example of settlement by district is the pioneer Muskego settlement. Raeder wrote, "truehearted and simple, just as we find our countrymen here and there up among the mountains in Norway, they had preserved their customs, dress, and general arrangement of the house unchanged, as well as their language."² When Kristofer Janson visited Scandinavia, Wisconsin, in 1880, "he was struck by Scandinavia's close resemblance to a Norwegian community. On the streets, in stores, one heard only Norwegian. The church was a replica of those at home; the minister wore

¹Carlton C. Qualey, "A Typical Norwegian Settlement: Spring Grove, Minnesota," Studies and Records, Vol. IX; 1936, p. 157.

²Malmin, p. 16.

the vestments of the state church; the hymnbooks were the same as those used in Norway."¹

Although the vast majority of Norwegian immigrants isolated themselves from the mainstream of American life, and increasingly so as the nineteenth century wore on, not all Norwegians believed that this was the best approach. Particularly in the early years of immigration there was an earnest attempt to learn the English language. One immigrant in 1842 wrote, "I have not learned very much of the language, but I can manage when occasions arise and my wife also."² Ole Munch Ræder commented on how rapidly Norwegians learned the English language. "The ease with which the Norwegians learn the English language has attracted the attention of the Americans, all the more because of the fact that they are altogether too ready to consider them entirely raw when they come here."³ Raeder also commented on a linguistic phenomenon which has not ceased to amaze linguists to the present time. He wrote, "They (the Norwegians) do not bother about keeping the two languages separate, so that they may speak Norwegian to their countrymen and English to others; instead they eliminate one word after the other from

¹Nina Draxten, "Kristofer Janson's Lecture Tour, 1879-80," Studies and Records, Vol. XXII; 1965, p. 38.

²Ole Knudsen Trovatten, At Vernon, Wisconsin, To Tollef Olson Juve, Blegen, Land of Their Choice, p. 181.

³Ole Munch Ræder in Wisconsin Territory, September-October 1897, Blegen, Land of Their Choice, p. 209.

their Norwegian and substitute English words in such a way that the Norwegian will soon be completely forgotten."¹

Ræder went on to comment that "such a practice, to be sure, is rather common among uneducated people who emigrate to a foreign country, but the Norwegians seem to have a special knack at it."²

The Norwegians who emigrated prior to the Civil War could not foresee the tremendous influx of fellow countrymen who would come after the War Between the States. Because it was generally believed by the Norwegians that they must learn English, one of the early Lutheran pastors, Elling Eielsen, "walked from Illinois to New York just to have printed an English translation of Luther's catechism."³ Individual Norwegians wanted to learn English. Søren Bache wrote in 1840, "Early in December I began rooming with an American because I wished to attend a school in that neighborhood which was to last until the end of February. I wanted to learn English so as to associate with the people here."⁴

But as the nineteenth century progressed the Norwegian immigrant was encouraged by a great increase of

¹Ibid., p. 209.

²Ibid., p. 209.

³Einar Haugen, "The Struggle over Norwegian," Studies and Records, Vol. XVII, 1952, p. 9.

⁴Søren Bache, A Chronicle of Old Muskego, p. 44.

Norwegian immigration, and thus was to change his views of the English language and the process of Americanization. Some claimed that acculturation was proceeding too rapidly. For example, Laur. Larsen wrote in 1860, that Norwegians ought "not be too quick to mimic everything American before we have tested whether it is better than our own."¹ In 1898 Thronð Bothne wrote, "Now the question no longer is how shall we learn English so that we may take part in the social life of America and partake of her benefits; the big question is how can we preserve the language of our ancestors here in a strange environment, and pass on to our descendants the treasures which it contains."² But social isolation was not to work well when surrounded by an English speaking culture. Haugen has written,

Wherever contact with English speaking children was active, as in an urban community, the children brought home with them a keen desire to speak English. Only by the establishment of ironclad rules, by which English was banned from the home, could the parents resist this invasion.³

The Norwegian believed that "language saves faith," and the church was one of the most vocative segments of the Norwegian immigrant society to oppose English and retain Norwegian. The Norwegian Synod was the strongest opponent of English.

¹Einar Haugen, "The Struggle over Norwegian," Studies and Records, Vol. XVII, 1952, p. 13.

²Ibid., p. 1.

³Ibid., p. 2.

The Synod, in particular, feared that American doctrinal errors would be absorbed along with the adoption of the English language and consequently resisted too rapid a transition. On the other hand, certain elements of the Norwegian Augustana Synod were most ready to make the transition.¹

But there is little question in examining this era of Norwegian-American immigrant life that the period between 1870 and 1890 was "definitely a Norwegian period. Nearly all congregational work was carried on in Norwegian prior to 1890."²

But not all Norwegians agreed that social isolation was the wisest policy for the Norwegian-Americans to follow in America. Paul Hjelm-Hansen warned against any type of political separation from American culture.

I do not wish to say that the Scandinavians should form a power all to themselves or be a state within the state. No, that is by no means my desire. . . . On the contrary, I believe that it is the sacred duty of the emigrants who wish to make this country their future home and who have taken the oath of allegiance to this society, to become united and assimilated with the native population of the country, the Americans, to learn the English language and familiarize themselves with and uphold the spirit and institutions of the Republic. The sooner this comes about, the better.³

These progressive words, however, were not to find receptive hearers among the Norwegians who were now

¹Nelson and Fevold, p. 300.

²Ibid., p. 300.

³From a Farewell Speech by Paul Hjelm-Hansen, At Alexandria, Minnesota, September 4, 1869. Blegen, Land of Their Choice, p. 446.

experiencing increased immigration. Secular and clerical leaders began to call for a new expression of Norwegian culture.

In the early part of the twentieth century a strong reaction set in against the great American "melting pot." Waldemar Ager made it plain that the native Americans seemed to think that the immigrants would be happy to be melted down

into something greater and better than they were before. . . . Out of the melting pot there is supposed to come a new man, a supercitizen, a superman with all the best features from the various races and none of the bad ones. But the so-called American does not himself wish to be assimilated with the foreigners; he does not wish either to assimilate or take up in himself the Russian, the Pole, or the Jew; but he wants these to be absorbed in each other.¹

No, there need not be a "melting pot." The problem, said Bernt Askevold, was that Norwegians had tried to become Americanized too quickly and in doing so they had forgotten their motherland and had become altogether too familiar with the native born American. He saw, however, that the church was preserving the language, and he was also encouraged by the new Norwegian societies which were being organized. Askevold wrote, "This Norwegianess, which evidently is a

¹Waldemar Ager, "Smeltedigelen," in Kvartolskrift, 12:33-42 (April, 1916), as cited in Einar Haugen, "The Struggle over Norwegian," Studies and Records, Vol. XVII, 1952, p. 23.

lively development, is also an affair of considerable future significance; it causes me to believe that here is a possibility for a Norwegian-American literature in the Norwegian language."¹

Askevold and others called for a Norwegian literature and their call was not in vain for "during the 1870's a distinct Norwegian-American literature had its beginning. Like the American literature of the period, it told the story of the common man; in ballads, poetry, and fiction the settlers wrote about themselves."²

The two Norwegian-Americans who were to assume the role of literary critics were Rasmus B. Anderson and Hjalmer H. Boyesen.³ Anderson made his home in Madison, Wisconsin, the center of the Norwegian-American settlements. But Boyesen was from the East. "In the East, too, they had their critic; and curiously enough he was closely associated with

¹Haugen, p. 23.

²Gerald H. Thorson, "First Sagas in a New World: A Study of the Beginnings of Norwegian-American Literature," Studies and Records, Vol. XVII, 1952, p. 109.

³Hjalmer Hjorth Boyesen (1849-1895) was born in Norway and became the most successful Norwegian-American writer in the nineteenth century. He wrote a novel entitled Gunner. This novel of Norwegian peasant life so impressed William Dean Howells that he published it in serial form in the Atlantic Monthly in 1873. He wrote several other novels while a professor at Cornell and Columbia Universities. In the latter part of his life he questioned the wisdom of his emigration to America.

the dean of American letters, his development closely resembling that of William Dean Howells."¹

The plan for the cultural development of the immigrant Americans was to have leading literary figures from Norway visit the Norwegian settlements and give lectures. Without question the most popular figure in the middle of the nineteenth century was Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson (1832-1910). One need not wonder why this was so. The early Bjørnson wrote in a romantic style about the Norway the immigrants had known as children or in their youth. These immigrants "began to look back upon Norway as representing an almost unapproachable perfection."² It was this Bjørnson that the immigrant Norwegian loved. "In Bjørnson's bondenoveller and early poems the immigrant saw Norway pictured with just enough idealism to fit in with his rose-colored recollections of the land of his birth."³

But it was a different Bjørnson who came to America for a tour of the Norwegian settlements in 1880. His religious views had undergone a radical change, and he at once began to question the doctrines of the Norwegian Lutheran church in America. Bjørnson was heretic enough for the

¹Thorson, p. 109.

²Arthur C. Paulson, "Bjørnson and the Norwegian-Americans, 1880-81," Studies and Records, Vol. V, 1930, p. 84.

³Ibid., p. 84.

conservative clergy, for he made it clear that he accepted the doctrine of the great Danish scholar and theologian, N. F. S. Grundtvig. But his acceptance of Grundtvig was "nothing compared with the second step, which he took in 1876 when he declared that Christians must interpret the Bible in accordance with the growing power of the human mind and that if Christianity did not heed the dictates of culture and intellect, it would find itself submerged, 'a little forsaken, homeless waif, frightened, impotent, driven hither and thither'."¹ This was followed by a denial of eternal punishment, a personal devil, and the rite of baptism.

But in spite of Bjørnson's apostasy the Norwegian-Americans were anxious to hear him. The Norwegian Synod attacked him in their church organ, Kirketidende, and "branded him as an apostate and a heretic."² At first Bjørnson did not intend to go to the Norwegian settlements in the West. He was busy with literary celebrities in the East and even spoke for General Grant in his reelection campaign.³ But Bjørnson had a change of mind, and with R. B. Anderson as his business manager he began his tour of the West with a lecture on the "Prophets." In this lecture he attacked the

¹Aagot D. Hoidahl, "Norwegian-American Fiction, 1880-1928," Studies and Records, Vol. V, 1930, p. 86.

²Ibid., p. 86.

³Ibid., p. 87.

orthodox view of the Bible, and suggested that the patriarchs were really heathen gods.

An attack of this nature was not to go unchallenged by the clergy of all the Norwegian Lutheran Synods. The Reverend H. Halvorsen, a pastor at Coon Prairie, Wisconsin, wrote about Bjørnson, "Had he himself been truthful he would have severed his relations with the Norwegian State Church and would have said both in Norway and in America: 'I am no longer a Christian; I believe in neither God nor Devil; I believe only in the progress and evolution of the race; I am an out and out Darwinist.'" ¹ Halvorsen also criticized the laity who attended Bjørnson's lectures. In scathing language Halvorsen said, "But you--in frivolity you sit and applaud and laugh at a most bitter and shameless attack on our Christian faith. There is no name for such an act, it is the profoundest treason." ² The Reverend Sven Oftedal, an able leader of the Conference ³ joined the Norwegian Synod in attacking Bjørnson. In the church paper Folkebladet, of which Oftedal was editor, he wrote,

Bjørnson lectured last Thursday at the Pence Opera House, giving the same address he delivered in

¹ Arthur C. Paulson, "Bjørnson and the Norwegian-Americans, 1880-81," Studies and Records, Vol. V, 1930, p. 97.

² Ibid., p. 98.

³ What was popularly known as the "Conference" had the cumbersome name of The Conference for the Norwegian-Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Chicago. The house was packed. The anticipation had been keen, but the general feeling after the lecture was that of disappointment . . . He would scarcely deliver such an address in the smallest seaport town in Norway . . . At the circus one looks for the clown. Is it not the same with Bjørnson?¹

Luth Jaeger of the paper, Budstikken, defends Bjørnson and attacked Oftedal saying that "he could never open his mouth without having a toad jump out."² But what editor Jaeger and his friends wanted to know was what Oftedal meant by the phrase, "At the circus one looks for the clown."³

The fight raged on in the Norwegian newspapers and periodicals between the liberal friends of Bjørnson and the conservative clergy. Some accused him of being much more interested in the lecture fees than improving the cultural life of the Norwegian immigrants in the West. Bjørnson is reported to have reveled in the cultured atmosphere of Norway when he returned. Rather strange behavior for a poet and novelist who had identified so closely with the people.

R. B. Anderson opposed "realism," the new literary trend both in Norway and America. This fight was to intensify when he became the editor of the newspaper Amerika. He continued to campaign for a literature which was romantic and for a rejection of realism. "His crusade was built on

¹Ibid., p. 100.

²Ibid., p. 100.

³Ibid., p. 101.

the premise that Scandinavian literature after 1880 was for the greater part anti-Christian. Hence his attack had mainly a religious and ethical approach."¹ He believed that the new school of realism was atheistic and often "swinish" and a genuine threat to morals and religion. Anderson attacked the writers of realism, such as, Sigbjørn Obstfelder, Gunner Heilberg, Knut Hamsun, and Henrik Ibsen, as well as Bjørnson. During the time Anderson was the puritanical editor of Amerika he prized himself for not printing sensational news in his paper. However, he allowed himself one lapse--"the editor permitted only one suicide story: this exceptional case concerned a New York woman who reportedly took her life because she had read Ibsen."²

In much of Anderson's campaign against "realism" in literature the Norwegian Synod was largely in his corner for they had not forgotten Bjørnson. But in spite of his campaign Anderson never did receive the full support of the Norwegian Synod, much to his disappointment. His mighty "crusade against modern literature ended in a whimper."³

O. E. Rølvaag, the most famous Norwegian-American novelist, was also criticized by the clergy for his realism. Indeed Rølvaag was a realist as he describes the struggle of

¹Lloyd Hustvedt, Rasmus Bjørn Anderson (Northfield: N.A.H.A., 1966), p. 250.

²Ibid., p. 238.

³Hustvedt, p. 273.

immigrant prairie life in his best known work, Giants in the Earth. Although Rølvaag was theologically conservative and a long time professor of English at St. Olaf College, he still felt the hostility of the clergy toward his literary works. It was Rølvaag's concept of cultural pluralism which was also noticed by the Norwegian-American community. "In brief, he advocated a cultural pluralism for Americans, based on a devotion to the heritage of their fathers; a knowledge of Norwegian was an 'ethical duty' resting on every descendant of Norwegians."¹ Rølvaag maintained that the Norwegians could do both--that is, promote American social interests as well as Norwegian. Yet in spite of all that this school could do there was an ominous feeling in the early twentieth century that this was a vision which was not grounded in reality. However, it must be also noted that Rølvaag was one of the original founders of the Norwegian-American Historical Association, and much of his vision has been realized in this organization which has done a great deal to preserve Norwegian cultural contributions in the United States.

Although the sects, particularly the Mormons, in the early days of immigration made inroads into the Lutheran Church and took away members, the majority of Norwegian Lutherans remained faithful to their childhood faith. But

¹Einar Haugen, "The Struggle Over Norwegian," Studies and Records, Vol. XVII, 1952, p. 34.

there were many kinds of Norwegian Lutherans, each accusing the other of incomplete Lutheran orthodoxy. However, in contrast to the Swedes who did not have diversity within the Lutheran church in their settlements, the Norwegians had several synods with different emphases from which to choose.

The first synod was the Eielsen Synod, organized in 1846, under the leadership of pietist Elling Eielsen. The Franchean Synod had been organized in 1837 but was primarily located in New York and out of the area of heavy Norwegian immigrant settlement. It was also influenced by pietism but was considered liberal by Norwegian Lutherans in the West. In 1851 Paul Anderson and Ole Andreason, disciples of Eielsen, left his synod to join with the Swedes in the Synod of Northern Illinois. The union with the Swedes, however, was short-lived, existing only to 1860 when the Norwegians withdrew, largely because of the language problem. In 1870 the Conference for the Norwegian-Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America was organized. The Eielsen Synod split into the "old" and "new" tendency in 1876 and the "new" became the Hauge Synod.

This sketch of Norwegian Lutheran church life would be incomplete without the inclusion of the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church in America which came to be called the Norwegian Synod, or simply, the Synod.¹

¹The Norwegian Synod is of particular interest to this dissertation because it was this synod which opposed so vehemently the American common school. The Synod was the

The Norwegian Synod had its beginning at Luther Valley, Wisconsin, in January of 1851 with C. L. Clausen as "superintendent" and J. W. C. Dietrichson as theologian and constitution writer. However, with the coming of several young pastors fresh out of the Theological Faculty at the National University in Christiania this early constitution was to be rejected because the young theologians detected a "Grundvigian" influence, and in this they saw the hand of Dietrichson who tended to place the baptismal confession and the Apostle's Creed above the Scriptures as the rule of practice for the Church.¹ Newly arrived H. A. Preus, Nils Brandt, and C. F. Dietrichson, all of whom had so recently sat under the anti-Grundvigian professor, C. P. Caspari, in the University, were to act almost immediately in reorganizing this Synod and eliminating the obnoxious Grundvigian section from the constitution. This was done in February, 1852. In October of 1853 the Norwegian Synod was formally organized in Luther Valley, Wisconsin.

It was a high, creedal church the young pastors organized. They were concerned with liturgical practices, chanting of the collects, and the wearing of the "black cossack, stole, and white fluted collar."² The Eielsen

largest of the Norwegian-American church bodies before the secession of 1890.

¹Nelson and Fevold, p. 154.

²Ibid., pp. 189-190.

Synod, which was low church, was intensely opposed to the high church tendencies and delighted to comment about the ministers in white collars and wearing women's clothes. There can be little question that this new Synod was indeed an extremely orthodox body.

Through all of its history, the Norwegian Synod was considered by many to be exasperatingly inflexible and dogmatic; and Preus was, as its president for more than three exciting decades, always on the firing line. 'Gegraptai' (It is written), the Synod's motto and its expression of the formal principle of the Reformation, was Preus' constant point of reference.¹

This orthodoxy was continually strengthened by the Synod's affiliation with the German Missouri Synod. Early after its reorganization the pastors of the Synod were concerned with the training of ministers, and, realizing that they did not have the resources to establish a seminary nor could they recruit enough pastors from Norway, Pastors Brandt and Ottesen were sent by the Synod to investigate possible schools already in existence where their young men could attend. After visiting several seminaries in 1855, they were tremendously impressed with Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. The Synod accepted the recommendation made in 1857 that Concordia be used by Norwegian young men to train for the ministry. But this recommendation was not unanimously accepted by the Norwegians as well as other Scandinavians who resented

¹Belgum, p. 302.

at this time Prussian pressures in Slesvig. Therefore, an association with Germans at this time was not particularly inviting.

In 1859 Professor Laur. Larsen was appointed by the Synod to assume the responsibility for the Norwegian students after an attempt made to secure a professor from Norway had failed.

For the next several decades, the fortunes . . . and the theology . . . of the two Synods were to be closely related. One hundred twenty-six of the pastors of the Norwegian Synod were given their complete theological training at Concordia Seminary.¹

There were many of the pastors of the Synod who in later years expressed their gratitude to the Missouri Synod. U. V. Koren, who was one of the theologians, although always a parish minister, "once noted casually that his indoctrination in Lutheran orthodoxy at the University had been theoretical; only in the midst of actual church life had it come alive and been tested, and only when fortified by the German orthodoxy of the Saxon immigrants in Missouri had it been molded into a systematic theology."²

The most powerful theologian in St. Louis was C. F. W. Walther, and his influence on the Norwegian Synod was considerable.³ Belgum has written,

¹Belgum, p. 191.

²Ibid., p. 73.

³For a thorough treatment of the relationship of Walther and the Missouri Synod to the Norwegian Synod, see Belgum.

While frequently disavowing his right to instruct the Norwegians, and sometimes striking an attitude of excessively modest self-deprecation, Walther nevertheless leaves no room for doubt that he is their master and arbiter in all matters of doctrine and church life. In his conviction that he writes his every word on the basis of God's Word, Walther's certainty of his position is complete. Kindliness and piety are blended with an assumption of virtual infallibility.¹

In a voluminous correspondence Walther encouraged the Norwegian Synod leaders that in spite of intense opposition they must remain true. Walther once wrote,

Let men despise us outwardly ever so much, yet in their conscience they fear your synod and our synod as the rightful heirs of the great Reformer, who alone have the genuine Successio doctrinitotis. Sinners we are, that is true; but we have not sinned against our opponents and have no apology to offer.²

It was this uncompromising attitude and dogmatism of Walther that was to be seen in the controversies which rent the Synod during its existence, including the debate of the role of the laity in the church, the controversy over slavery, election, and the American common school.

The question of lay activity disrupted early the unity of the Norwegian Synod. Eielsen and his fellow Haugeans stressed as had Hauge in Norway that laymen had a right to preach. The Reverend P. A. Rasmussen, who in spite of Haugean leanings had joined the Norwegian Synod, took the position that limiting the role of the layman weakened the

¹Belgum, p. 348.

²Ibid., p. 366.

historic Lutheran position of the priesthood of the believer. Rasmussen was of the opinion that

Laymen should certainly not be denied the right of public prayer or edification by mutual teaching of the Word of God. In accordance with Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession formal preaching should, Rasmussen and others agreed, be left to especially trained and ordained men; but public leadership in prayer and the right of assembly for mutual edification were outside the intention of Article XIV.¹

Rasmussen soon discovered that his fellow pastors were not all going to agree to this Haugean position on lay activity. One of the pastors who dissented from Rasmussen's views was J. A. Ottesen, one of the most conservative theologians of the Norwegian Synod. But Rasmussen was not to struggle alone, for

. . . at a meeting held in Chicago, August 28-31, 1860, to settle the two year-old controversy, he joined with H. A. Preus, Laur. Larsen, Nils Brandt, V. Koren, and C. F. Magelssen to holding to a strict interpretation of Article XIV. Ottesen had written several articles for publication in Kirkelig Maanedstidende in its issue of 1859.²

In 1862 he drew up a set of theses setting forth the conservative interpretation of Article XIV.³

¹Ibid., p. 345.

²Ibid., pp. 345, 346.

³Blegen has written, "These theses, which constituted a synodical decision, may be summed up briefly: the office of the public ministry is instituted by God, who has not instituted any other order for the 'public edification' of Christians; the act of leading public edification is an exercise of the public ministry; it is 'sin when anyone without a call or in the absence of need undertakes this'; in the case of real need, however, anyone who can exercise the office of public ministry in proper Christian order has both

Rasmussen, however, was not without his supporters who did not view the role of the laity in this manner and also saw the hand of Walther behind the position of Ottesen and those who held to his view. The Reverend B. J. Muus¹ was one of the leaders of the Synod

. . . who proceeded to charge his colleagues with too much formalism at this point. After much study of Article XIV, he had to admit that he was unable to understand it. It was clear to him that the article specified a public ministry not shared by the laymen, but the line of demarcation between the spheres of the pastor and the laymen, he had never been able to trace.²

The laymen of the Norwegian Synod did not accept without resentment this stress on the position of the clergy and the somewhat inferior position of the laity. However, it was the controversy over slavery which was to excite them to a much greater degree than did the laity debate. In some ways it is rather strange that an issue of this nature should have arisen among a people so passionately in love with

the right and the duty to do so. The Synod defined this need, or emergency, as the absence of a pastor; or the presence of a falsely teaching pastor or a pastor who could not serve the people 'sufficiently.'" Theodore C. Blegen, Norwegian Migration to America: The American Transition (Northfield: N.A.H.A., 1940), p. 165.

¹Bernt J. Muus (1832-1900) attended the University in Norway and was a teacher there for two years before emigrating to America. He was an energetic pastor and established an academy in the parsonage in Holden, Minnesota. He was one of the founders of St. Olaf College in Northfield. Muus enjoyed the rough-and-tumble of controversy and was one of the principal spokesmen of the Norwegian Synod against the American common school.

²Nelson and Fevold, p. 166.

freedom as were the Norwegians. The Eielsen Synod, deeply affected by the egalitarian philosophy of Hans Nielsen Hauge, as early as 1846 incorporated into their constitution, "We, standing united, wholly repudiate the fearful sin of giving our approval to the slave traffic: rather shall we employ all possible diligence to promoting and supporting opposition to it, with a view to the freeing of the Negroes."¹ The first Norwegian-American newspaper, Nordlyset, established in Muskego in 1847, was anti-slave and pro-Freesoil Party. When Knud Langeland became editor of the Democraten in 1850 he "accused the South of extending slavery into the territories and predicted a dissolution of the Union unless preventive measures were taken against slavery extension."² In 1866 Langeland and John Anderson founded the Skandinaven, and Langeland was concerned with the slavery issue before and during the Civil War and also after the War was concluded. "The slavery system was legally dead; nevertheless many were apprehensive of its restoration as a result of President Andrew Johnson's states' right tendencies."³ However, Langeland was perhaps more concerned with what was developing in the Norwegian Synod--the notion that slavery was theologically sound.

¹Blegen, Norwegian Migration to America: The American Transition, p. 419.

²Arlow W. Andersen, "Knud Langeland: Pioneer Editor," Studies and Records, Vol. XIV, 1944, p. 125.

³Ibid., p. 125.

The controversy over slavery in the Norwegian Synod in the 1860's was connected with the Concordia Seminary in St. Louis where they had been sending their students since 1859. There had been rumors for some time in the Norwegian settlements that the Concordia faculty and Norwegian Professor Larsen sympathized with the South. Laur. Larsen had published a short notice in Emigranten to the effect that the Seminary in St. Louis had closed and that the students had been sent home. After the publication of the notice by Larsen, editor C. F. Solberg asked for a statement as to the loyalty or lack of loyalty of the faculty at St. Louis and also the personal views of Larsen on the question. It had been rumored that the Confederacy flag flew daily over the Seminary building in St. Louis "and that it was not lowered until the energetic commander of the Northern troops aimed a cannon at the Seminary tower."¹

Laur. Larsen did not appreciate this demand that he make known his personal views on the slavery issue. He felt that as a clergyman he did not have to reveal his political views. A month later Solberg again challenged him to make his views known on his position on the "Rebellion." Finally, with the aid of Preus and Ottesen, he drafted a statement which appeared in Emigranten June 17.

It marshaled Scriptural authority from both the Old and the New Testament in support of the view that slavery is not sin, took the position that rebellion

¹Nelson and Fevold, p. 173.

invariably is sin, but expressed some doubt that secession constituted rebellion. In fact, Larsen said, he had heard some good reasons why a state has a right to secede, but he did not consider himself sufficiently familiar with the constitution, laws, and history of the United States to pass judgment on that question.¹

It was true, however, that the Missouri Synod sympathized with the South. The Missouri Compromise had brought Missouri in as a slave state, "Thus, the German Lutherans in St. Louis found themselves in a generally pro-slavery environment."² In addition, Walther and other leaders of the Synod, "had no sympathies with the newly organized Republican party."³ But perhaps even more important was Walther's position based on the Scriptures, and his position was not too different from that held by the Southern clergy who were apologists for the "Peculiar Institution."

The stage was now set for a debate on slavery at the Norwegian Synod meeting to begin on June 26, 1861, at Rock Prairie in the Luther Valley Church. As pastors and lay delegates gathered there was an undercurrent of expectation and the slavery question was on everyone's mind. There was no question where the vast majority of laymen stood on this issue for they were "intensely patriotic and filled with

¹Blegen, Norwegian Migration to America: The American Transition, p. 424.

²Nelson and Fevold, p. 169.

³Ibid., p. 169.

abhorrence of slavery and secession."¹ They were soon to learn, however, that their pastors were to have quite another point of view on the question. The pastors took the position that

this was not a question of politics, natural rights, or even emotion. It was a question of the authority of the Bible. But recognizing the threat to the churches inherent in the situation, they were reluctant to press their convictions.²

But if the clergy could see theological implications in the slavery question, the laity saw it simply as a moral issue. The majority of the laymen wanted to end the association with the Concordia Seminary and to establish their own theological school. This was the mood prevailing for the first few days of the meeting. It was on the fourth day of the Synod meeting that the debate began in earnest. "Larsen and his supporters took Walther's position and insisted that the debate be limited to 'slavery in itself' apart from its social, political, and historical associations. When viewed in this 'ideal' or abstract manner, slavery could not be demonstrated Scripturally to be 'sin in itself.'"³ The laymen, although they may not have been acquainted with the Sophist philosophers of ancient Greece, considered the pastors' arguments as pure sophism. Erik Ellefsen, a farmer

¹Nelson and Fevold, p. 173.

²Ibid., p. 173.

³Ibid., p. 174.

from Iowa, said that one could not solve this problem by arguments of this nature, and he insisted that slavery had to be considered as it then existed. It was no time for sophisticated arguments when at that very moment the "Rebellion" was compelling their sons and neighbors to take up arms, and the Norwegians were to contribute their share.¹ To the laymen the blood letting could only be justified if slavery was declared to be an unjust, immoral institution which must be abolished from the soil of America.

The laymen, however, were not completely alone in their stand. At least three pastors agreed with the laymen. These were J. N. Fjeld, B. J. Muus, and C. L. Clausen. The pro-slavery pastors, particularly H. A. Preus and J. A. Ottesen, believed that the anti-slavery faction could be silenced by an authoritarian statement, for they were fearful that a split was developing in the Synod over the issue. In some rather strange maneuvering

Clausen and the other pastors who had not supported Larsen's central thesis were persuaded to affix their signatures to the following resolution. 'Although according to the Word of God, it is not in and by itself a sin to keep slaves, nevertheless it is itself an evil and a punishment from God. We condemn

¹The Norwegian settlers responded to President Lincoln's call. In Wisconsin the Fifteenth Wisconsin was organized under Colonel Hans Christian Heg who was later killed at the battle of Chickamauga. "One Scandinavian-American historian believes that one in every six Norwegians in the Northwestern states served in the Civil War; another has placed the total between six and seven thousand, including four thousand from Wisconsin." Blegen, Norwegian Migration to America: The American Transition, p. 389.

all abuses and sins connected therewith, and furthermore, when official duties require it and when Christian love and wisdom demand it, we will work for its abolition.'"¹

The anti-slavery pastors signed reluctantly and the pro-slavery faction believed that they had prevented a division in the Synod.² But even more important for the Synod leaders, it was a victory for the teaching of the Word of God.

The peace was short-lived, however, for a few weeks later C. L. Clausen shocked the Norwegian Synod by writing to Larsen and Ottesen that he no longer accepted the pastors' declaration and that he considered his signature to that document to have been given under pressure. Clausen asked that his name be stricken from the document and that it was an expedient measure to silence the laymen present. He had come to believe "that slavery was in direct opposition to the spirit of Christianity, particularly the injunction to 'love thy neighbor as thyself'; and in this retraction he described the pastors' declaration as a web of sophistry."³ Soon after Clausen joined Heg's Fifteenth Regiment as Chaplain.

The Civil War after years of bitterness and blood ended with the North victorious over the secession of the Southern Confederacy. The war among the Norwegians was not

¹Nelson and Fevold, p. 175.

²The vote on the resolution is interesting. "Only twenty-eight out of sixty-six indicated approval. Ten voted an out-right 'No' and twenty-eight declined to vote." Blegen, Norwegian Migration to America: The American Transition, p. 425.

³Ibid., p. 431.

over, however, for the conservatives were still insisting that Walther's theological position was correct, that slavery "in and by itself is not sin."

The Norwegian Lutheran College meanwhile had moved from a parsonage in Wisconsin to a building on the Northwest corner of Winnebago and Main Streets in Decorah, Iowa, during the summer of 1862.¹ For sometime the rumor circulated around town and through the Norwegian settlements that the Norwegian school at Decorah was a den of "copperheads"--slavery defenders who sought to "spread their poison among the liberty-loving, promising young generation of our people in America."²

R. B. Anderson was a student at the school at the time and tells an interesting story about the evening the news came to Decorah that the North had won the War:

On the 9th or 10th of April, 1865, a report came to Decorah that General Lee had surrendered and that the rebellion had collapsed. The report set the whole town wild. In the evening all Decorah was illuminated. Every tallow dip and every kerosene lamp was shining in the windows. All the people were out and making all the noise they possibly could. When

¹It is interesting to note that this building is still standing in downtown Decorah. However, the buildings on the campus in West Decorah have not been so durable. "The present 'Main' building is the third 'Main' to stand on the same site; the two preceeding have been destroyed by fire." Bulletin of Luther College Catalog 1966-1968, Vol. XLVI, p. 9.

²C. A. Clausen (translator and editor), "A Norwegian Schoolmaster Looks at America," Studies and Records, Vol. XIII, 1943, p. 87.

people met they embraced each other. The saloons were filled and everybody was treating the crowd. I saw one man sitting on his horse in front of the bar inside of a saloon hurrahing for General Grant and the Union and for Abraham Lincoln and asking everybody to drink at his expense. It was the most exciting demonstration that I ever witnessed.¹

Then Anderson contrasts the wild jubilation on the night of victory with what was taking place at the College on the corner of Winnebago and Main Streets.

At Luther College, still located downtown, all was noiseless and perfectly dark. The College did not in any way take part in the general rejoicing. The professors were busy looking for students in the crowds and sending them home. This gloom of the College made a deep impression on the citizens and revived talk about "copperheads." The day after some citizens called a mass meeting at the courthouse and sent a demand to the professors to appear before this mass meeting and declare their attitude.²

Anderson goes on to describe the events of the next day in front of the courthouse in Decorah as people massed around to view this no doubt questionable procedure:

Professor Larsen, Professor Schmidt and Professor Siewers were escorted to the courthouse where questions were put to them and each one had to state his position on the great subject that for four years had cost the country so much blood and treasure. They arose in their places and replied that they meant to be perfectly loyal to the American government and were pleased to know that the north had conquered. They did not wish that their conduct on the evening above described should be interpreted as want of loyalty or as sympathy with secession. The replies were considered satisfactory. Had not such a meeting been held and the proper assurance

¹Rasmus B. Anderson, Life Story (Madison: Private Printing, 1917, sec. ed.), pp. 69-70.

²Ibid., p. 70.

been given there is no telling what might have happened to the school and its professors.¹

There is probably some truth in this account by Anderson, but then there were occasions when he would alter the circumstances for his own purposes.²

The interesting aspect of the slavery controversy was that it became so intense after the Civil War. The pastors continued to believe that Walther's position was correct, and therefore a military or political decision could not make it theologically sound. An appeal was made to the Theological Faculty Christiania to get their opinion on the question. Professors Gisle Johnson and C. P. Caspari replied to the Synod that, "Slavery . . . was no divine institution, but a fruit of sin intruding upon the world against God's will. Slavery pertains to the heathen world and Christianity must seek its abolition."³ This

¹Ibid., p. 70.

²The Decorah Republican does not report this incident. In fact for several decades this American weekly had relatively little to say about the Norwegians or Luther College. There were, however, from time to time small news items or announcements of coming events. There was no evidence of a "Know-Nothing" spirit. An illustration of this rather positive attitude of the native American toward the Norwegians in this area can be seen in the following item in the paper on July 9, 1869, "About two hundred Norwegian emigrants passed up the railroad on the night train, July 5th. They were enroute to Minnesota. The Norwegian people make good citizens, and we say, Come and welcome, to the broad prairies of Iowa and Minnesota."

³Blegen, Norwegian Migration: The American Transition, p. 440.

communication stating the position of the faculty on slavery was received in 1863 but was not published by the Synod leaders primarily because it supported the position of Clausen and not Walther and the pro-slavery faction. Finally in 1866 the correspondence was published. Clausen was encouraged, but, nevertheless both H. A. Preus and Clausen went to Norway in 1867 to confer with Professor Gisle Johnson. Although both men claimed that Johnson sided with him, "one comment by Johnson was significant. He said that he considered the question to be a matter to be settled by history rather than by the Scriptures."¹ Here then was the basic difference between the followers of Walther and Clausen and his supporters. The slavery question could not be decided on Scripture alone; God's progressive revelation could not be ignored.

The Norwegian Synod's leadership, however, did not change their opinion and when the Synod met in Chicago in 1868, Clausen was asked to sign a series of ten theses which in essence amounted to a surrender of his principles and all that he had so gallantly fought for. The result was that Clausen and about a dozen other pastors and congregations left the Norwegian Synod.

In conclusion it would seem that the Norwegian Synod had won the victory over the humanitarian feelings of Clausen

¹Nelson and Fevold, p. 177.

and those who followed his thinking on the slavery question. There was just too much of the spirit of the Jacksonian era in Clausen to feel at home with the elitism of the leaders of the Norwegian Synod. Blegen has written:

Notwithstanding his ministerial rank, he was essentially a lay leader. Some historians reject the idea that the struggle was in any sense one between the common people and a clerical aristocracy--a transfer to American soil of the antipathy of Norwegian commoners for an entrenched officialdom; but in a wide-ranging controversy, many elements crowd about the central issues, and there undoubtedly was some contemporary interpretation of the controversy in terms of such a class division, especially during its later stages.¹

Before we turn to the common school controversy we see another illustration of "uncompromising orthodoxy" and the struggle for the truth in the Norwegian Synod in the "Election" controversy. The slavery controversy had cost the Synod a number of churches but was little in comparison to what would be lost in the election split. U. V. Koren once wrote, "The slavery question was child's play compared with this: I don't know whether we can survive."²

The Norwegian Synod had always prided itself in its "doctrinal purity" and that it was united on all important questions, but it soon became evident that the unity was to be seriously divided on the question of election. As with the slavery question it is indeed strange that a controversy

¹Blegen, Norwegian Migration: The American Transition, p. 452.

²Belgum, p. 388.

of this nature should have been raised in a Lutheran Synod. Historically, this kind of theological argumentation was found generally in the Reformed churches which stressed Calvinistic theology. An important difference between the two divisions of Protestantism has been that "the doctrine of predestination, or God's election of men to salvation, is not a central doctrine in Lutheran theology, and predestination to damnation (reprobation) is completely alien . . . since Lutheran theology has its point of departure in the love of God rather than in the sovereignty of God, in contrast to Calvinism, it emphasizes the redemption of all men."¹

At the heart of this theological question was the place that man plays in his conversion. Does man have a part, or is man incapable of responding unless God draws him by His sovereign Will? This then was an old question, but one which was to be debated anew within the Norwegian Synod.

In 1876 the Norwegian Synod had established its own seminary in Madison, Wisconsin. Friedrich Augustus Schmidt (1837-1928) had been a professor at Concordia Seminary for several years where he had been highly regarded by Walther and the other faculty members. When it became known that the Norwegians intended to take Schmidt to their new Seminary, Walther pleaded with the leaders of the Synod not to take

¹Nelson and Fevold, p. 254.

him. However, Schmidt left Concordia and it was not long before he lost his high status with Walther and other theologians in St. Louis. The Missouri Synod had its own debate on election and in 1877 set forth its official position.

"In this statement, Schmidt believed that he detected a Calvinistic tendency. He soon came to agree fully with the repudiated asperheim."¹ Schmidt went on to accuse the Missourians with a "crypto-Calvinism" which was contrary to the historic Lutheran creeds.

This charge by Schmidt came as a shock to Walther and to the theologians of the Norwegian Synod. Walther did not reply to the charge made by Schmidt for over a year. But all knew that it was only a matter of time before the able theologian Schmidt had to be answered. Meanwhile the tiny faculty in Madison was divided on the question. Fellow teachers, Stub and Ylvisaker, lectured against Schmidt. Schmidt, however, found ready allies in the Norwegian press who were always interested in feuds in the Norwegian Synod: often these controversies were means of increasing circulation, and they "usually presented Schmidt's 'anti-Missourian' viewpoint."² The pro-Missourians were, with few exceptions the older Norwegian Synod pastors. Schmidt was accused of

¹Ibid., p. 382.

²Belgum, p. 383.

"adherence to the synergistic and semi-Pelagian doctrine that man somehow cooperates in the salvation of his soul."¹

As the controversy wore on, debated in Synod meetings, church periodicals, and the secular press, the debate seemed to revolve around the "Forms." It was on the first form that Walther based his theology. This was found in Article XI of the Formula of Concord which was essentially the Calvinistic Reformed view that God elects "solely because of God's grace and mercy."² Not all Lutherans agreed that this was the correct "form" as many accepted Aegidius Hunnius (1550-1603) a German Lutheran theologian who said, "Election is that act of God from eternity which before the foundation of the world was laid, determined to glorify all those whom He foresaw would come to faith in Christ until the end."³

U. V. Koren was the "Missourian" leader among the Norwegians in the Election Controversy who claimed that the first "form" was correct, that this was the view that had been taught him at the Theological Faculty, and he had lecture notes to prove it. However, the Norwegian State Church had accepted the second form and it is highly improbable that he received this view at Christiania. His view was basically that of Walther who had a great influence on Koren's thinking.

¹Ibid., p. 383.

²Ibid., p. 385.

³Ibid., p. 385.

What had begun as a theological debate ended in personality conflict. Schmidt was attacked by his former admirer, Walther, who said that "Schmidt was motivated by personal animus, by thwarted ambitions, and by growing intellectual conceit rather than by concern for the truth."¹ Walther's influence on the Synod continued to increase during the Election Controversy. Belgum who is sympathetic to the Norwegian Synod wrote,

In brief, there is no room for doubt that C. F. W. Walther was the unseen force behind the Norwegian Synod from 1858 until 1866. Whether that force was a blessing or a curse upon Norwegian-American Lutheranism is still a controverted question. Certainly, the encounter with Walther was fateful.²

The actual schism took place in October, 1882, at the Synodical Conference. Professor Schmidt was an official delegate from the Minnesota district. However, when he arrived he was refused a seat as a delegate.

The anti-Missouri faction in the Spring of 1883 had been successful in having the president of the Synod, H. A. Preus, and his son removed from their church in Norway Grove, Wisconsin. In 1886 the anti-Missourians opened a Theological Seminary at Northfield on the campus of St. Olaf College. The next year the Norwegian Synod by a vote of 203 to 98 voted that this act was disruptive and those responsible were disloyal to the Norwegian Synod. For the anti-Missouri

¹Ibid., pp. 410, 411.

²Ibid., p. 411.

faction to be restored to fellowship there must be confession of wrong doing. To this demand, "Thirty pastors and twenty-seven lay delegates answered formally that they could not close the Lutheran Seminary in Northfield as long as the 'Missouri' doctrine of election and conversion was taught at the schools of the Synod."¹

The break was now final and in 1887 and 1888 congregation after congregation withdrew from the Norwegian Synod and joined the "Anti-Missourian Brotherhood." Approximately one-third of the churches joined the Brotherhood. However, that Brotherhood was never organized into a synod as the leadership was looking forward to union with other Norwegian Lutheran Synods rather than to form another. There had been talk of union in the air for years, but it was the anti-Missouri group under the leadership of Pastor J. H. Kildahl who brought together the Conference and the Norwegian Augustana Synod in a merger which became the United Norwegian Lutheran Church in America. This union took place in 1890.

After a view of the controversies which rent the Norwegian Synod one must conclude that the Norwegians enjoyed debate and argumentation, but it can also be concluded that the elitist leaders of the Norwegian Synod were not sufficiently sensitive to the spirit of their own people. Nor were they sufficiently able to realize

¹Belgum, p. 414.

that they tended toward a rigorous and logical purism which these people were unable to share or appreciate. Their spirit has often been interpreted by such words, 'doctrinaire,' 'arrogant,' and 'exclusivistic.' More charitably, their weakness may be seen as a failure to realize that their spiritual children could be given more freedom without compromise of fundamental doctrine or deep Christian convictions.¹

In summarizing the religious situation at the time of the American school controversy there can be little question but that, when it came to religion, the Norwegian immigrant was factious and seemed to enjoy religious debate and controversy. The Norwegian immigrant had some fourteen separate Lutheran Synods to choose from in addition to Norwegian Baptist and Methodist churches. Furthermore, the Mormon church proved appealing to many Norwegians.

Before the Civil War the Norwegian immigrants found themselves in principally one of three Lutheran groups. First, there was the Synod of Elling Eielsen. This was the "low" church among the Lutherans, the heirs of Hans Nielsen Hauge, and it stressed the right of laymen to preach, congregational autonomy, and personal piety. It supported the American common school. However, although it was certainly influential, it was never a major force among the Norwegians and was further weakened by the withdrawal of a number of its members who in 1875 formed the Hauge Synod.

¹Belgum, p. 425.

Secondly, there was the "middle way" in Lutheranism represented by the Norwegian-Danish Augustana Synod, the Conference of the Norwegian-Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the Synod of Northern Illinois. This "middle way" which took a position between "low" and "high" church tendencies supported the American common school.

Thirdly, there was the "Synod" as it was popularly known in the Norwegian-American communities. The simplicity of its name indicates something of the size, influence, prestige, and power of the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. It was led by university trained ministers who considered themselves to be the counterpart of the Norwegian State Church. It was traditional, formalistic, and stressed above all the necessity of "pure doctrine." The Norwegian Synod served the majority of Norwegians for several years. This Synod is of particular interest to this dissertation because of its opposition to the American school system and the long controversy with the lay leadership who supported the American school and opposed the plan of the Synod's ministers to build their own parochial school system.

We are now prepared to examine the controversy which is the principal interest of this dissertation--that common school controversy which was concomitant with the other controversies of the Synod. One might suppose that with the hard work required of pioneer immigrants that there would be little time for controversy, but this was not the case.

Perhaps controversy played a psychological function on a frontier which was often for the immigrant a most difficult and lonely existence.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE AMERICAN SCHOOL AMONG THE NORWEGIAN AMERICANS

It seems strange indeed, in the light of the controversy over the American school which was to rage in the Norwegian settlements some years later, that the early Norwegian immigrants did not oppose the American common school but sent their children to them. Even the high churchly pastor, J. W. C. Dietrichson, when he arrived in Muskego in 1844 supported the American school and helped to establish a district school for the immigrants in the area. In addition to aiding the establishment of a district school he also founded a church school and employed a teacher using his own funds. Blegen has written, "In the parochial school instruction was restricted to religion and choral singing, with the understanding that the common school would furnish instruction in English and other studies."¹

However, as the university trained anti-Grundtvigian pastors arrived one by one from Norway they were critical,

¹Theodore C. Blegen, Norwegian Migration to America: The American Transition (Northfield: The Norwegian-American Association, 1940), p. 245.

not only of Dietrichson's theology, but also of the American common school. Dietrichson, however, found no fault with the American school as long as adequate religious teaching was given in the church school. One of the early critics of the American school system was the Reverend H. A. Stub who saw little good in a school where Norwegian was not taught and where students would eventually be lost to the Lutheran faith. Stub believed that not only would the faith be lost but the Norwegian language and heritage as well.

The somber clergyman, Olaus Fredrik Duus, expressed freely his dislike of the American common school. He wrote to relatives in Norway:

Under such circumstances one cannot expect things to be different here. When I say in 'the schools' I mean the public schools, because in private schools one naturally may give instruction in whatever one chooses. We Norwegian Lutherans take turns in having school in our homes just as we did in Norway. But we are, so far as I know, the only sect that follows this practice.¹

The schools in the homes of the immigrants were not unlike the omgangsskolen which were peripatetic and moved from one farm to another in Norway. Duus made some harsh comments about the American school teachers, charges which would be made repeatedly in the next twenty-five years in the

¹Frontier Parsonage: The Letters of Olaus Fredrik Duus, Norwegian Pastor in Wisconsin, 1855-1858, Translated by the Verdandi Study Club of Minneapolis and edited by Theodore C. Blegen (Northfield: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1947), p. 95.

Norwegian Lutheran Synod. Duus said on another occasion, describing a meeting with an American school teacher:

I have talked with teachers in these common schools, which are supported by public funds, fairly well educated men, who have never been baptized and who had to admit to me that they do not know the Lord's Prayer. The answer to my question, 'Do you belong to any church?' is usually, 'No sir.' 'But you are baptized, I suppose?' 'No, sir; what is that good for?'¹

After the Norwegian Synod was reorganized in 1853 the Synod and its leaders began to make its position clear. This was done in synod meetings, synod minutes, and official publications and a large number of articles and letters to the editors of Norwegian newspapers. In a day with limited means of communication these sources for expression of the Synod's position were extremely important.

Although a formal philosophy of education was never attempted by the leadership of the Synod, it is clear that they possessed one, and it was blended with their theological views. From the many references in their written work they were greatly concerned with the child, and, particularly, the Norwegian Lutheran children who were being reared in a strange land. Repeatedly we read statements, such as, "As Christians we hold that our children's secular good must always be secondary to the eternal."² Although they admitted

¹Ibid., p. 95.

²Synodalberetning, Manitowoc, Wisconsin: June 20-28, 1866, p. 23.

that the state did have some claims on the individual, the Synod agreed with St. Augustine that there were indeed two cities--the City of God and the City of man. The "worldly" or secular person is one who "believes that worldly affairs are considered to be the most important."¹ But the Christian child "must first and foremost be educated to be a citizen of heaven."² The Synod, however, also realized that the Christian, although a citizen of heaven, was also very much a part of the present world. This world was material and heathen and the Christian must live in it, but he need not be a part of this world. Even if people in America "live like Lot in Sodom," this does not mean that you must go and sit with him in the gate.

American society was viewed as dangerous by the Synod's pastors. They often compared conditions in America with the plight of the early Christians in Rome who also found themselves amid heathen people. These were civilized heathen, true, but the Christian did not send his children to their schools but taught them God's Word in the family circle, and conditions in America were not much different. The Synod's ministers, at least, viewed the Americans much like heathen. On one occasion a writer asked the question, "How do we look at the person who has not been baptized? When we were in Norway we looked at them as gypsies or as

¹Ibid., p. 33.

²Ibid., p. 33.

tramps. Here we do not need to go outside our door before we see these unbaptized people."¹ Not only was the American viewed as a heathen, but even as church members they were considered inconsistent. "They remain in the church and give their service to Christ, but in their business they are crafty people of the world."²

Perhaps American society had been Christian during the Colonial period, the Synod admitted, but since the state had taken over the schools, the result had been that the greatest number of people received little or no Christian teaching, and most people were strangers to the Christian faith and remained outside the church. It was in this kind of society that the Norwegian Lutheran feared to rear his children.

The Christian child, even though he was fallen and was completely depraved in a state of sin, no amount of education or instruction could get him to heaven. However, when the child was baptized, the Holy Spirit caused him to be "born again."³ The baptized child now must be reared and nurtured in a Christian educational environment. Education, therefore, to the Norwegian Synod became a matter of deep

¹Ibid., p. 33.

²Evangelisk Lutherske Kirketidende, December 8, 1876, p. 769.

³Synodalberetning, LaCross, Wisconsin: June 21-29, 1873, p. 25.

concern, and considerable space was devoted to the topic of "what constitutes good education." The purposes of education interested the Synod. They asked questions like, "How does one look at life?" "What kind of character is to be developed?" "Is this life and this world the only consideration?" or "Should the aim of education be mainly the consideration of the heavenly?" The answer of the Synod was clear and it was repeated often, "The aim of the school should be to help the parents give their children an education and rearing both for their eternal and secular calling."¹ It became quite clear that the Lutheran Christians who established themselves in the United States were people of the Book--the Bible--as much as any Puritan had been. The Bible was referred to repeatedly as "God's Word" and was central in their thinking, their church, and in their educational system. This viewpoint which described the curriculum of the religious school was clearly stated in 1873: "The main point is what God said, what the church always practices must be the main consideration in getting knowledge." To understand the Word of God such secular subjects as "writing, arithmetic, language, mathematics, history, geography, and the natural science can give a greater understanding of the Word of God."²

¹Ibid., p. 26.

²Ibid., p. 27.

Education then was very important to the leaders of the Synod and to those who sympathized with their point of view. A child learned what would be the direction of his life by the kind of nurture and instruction which he received in the school, an education which would not only prepare him for this life but also for the life to come. The Synod outlined somewhat its philosophy of education in the following statement:

1. The family, the church, and the state. All three of these institutions must be interested in the child and take an interest in him.
2. God has given to the parents the child to be reared to learn. They, the parents, have the power to give the foundational teaching about God and His Word. So that the foundations can be laid . . . the parents must bring their children to baptism to Christ.
3. It is the parents' duty to see to it that the new spiritual powers which are created in the child at baptism be maintained and strengthened so that the new light, influence, and power can be strengthened by the Spirit.¹

The Synod consistently maintained that the child was the parent's responsibility, the church and the school could help, but the ultimate responsibility remained with the parent. The parents, they insisted, "must show this concern for their children by prayers, instruction, by instilling the fear of God, and by showing a good example."² The parents must be Christians themselves and bring up their

¹Ibid., p. 26.

²Ibid., p. 26.

children by the teaching of God's Word. In addition to home teaching they must also bring their children to the services of the church and provide spiritual reading for the family and lead the family in the discussion of spiritual matters.¹ The parents were not to neglect the physical comforts of their children, and above all, they were to see to it that the children were properly disciplined and must not spare the rod when it was needed. The Synod was careful to point out in numerous places that the church did not have primary responsibility for the child. The Synod's position was that "The church has no right to take away from the parents power over the child and to punish them. It has no right to take and baptize the child and teach the child nor to force the parents to do these things."² But the Synod did claim the right to warn the parents who were members of the church and to use church discipline when it was deemed necessary.³

The question was raised as to the relationship of the state to the parent with regard to authority over the child. The position of the Synod was that neither the church nor the state was above the parents. If there was conflict between the state and the parent, the final decision must rest with the parent. They said, If God did not give the

¹Ibid., p. 26.

²Ibid., p. 28.

³Ibid., p. 29.

responsibility to the parents, and gave it to the state, then the parents would be free. When the school takes over this responsibility which God has given to the parents . . . then the parents have no obligation to obey the state's demands. The Scriptures make it very plain that it is the parents' responsibility."¹ The debate ranged over the whole area of the citizen-state responsibility, and it was agreed that the state must have the authority in the temporal order. The Synod insisted that the Bible taught that there are two kingdoms, God's kingdom and Caesar's kingdom, and, as Christ said, they should honor both of them. The Synod warned that they must be careful that they did not set up another kingdom where the state had no authority. Nor could parents rear their children as they please but must bring them up in the fear of God and the Bible.² The position of the Synod was that the state indeed could expect something from the parents in the temporal realm. These men had great respect for law and order, and anarchy was foreign to their thinking. On the other hand, the state must not violate the conscience of the Christian nor "violate the spiritual, or violate the Word of God. . . . No one should work against their conscience, 'we must obey God rather than man.'"³ If conditions

¹Ibid., p. 29.

²Ibid., p. 29.

³Ibid., p. 30.

in a country became intolerable, they would "find it necessary to move out of the country rather than to obey unfair laws."¹

Although Wisconsin had not as yet passed a Compulsory School attendance law,² the Synod knew that it was only a matter of time before the State enacted one. There was also the fear, apparently, that the State might not permit religious private schools. These fears were unfounded, but there can be no doubt that the Norwegians felt that many Americans were nativistic in outlook as the Bennett Law which prohibited the teaching of a foreign language in the common school was to illustrate in the 1890's. The objective of the Synod was that the Norwegian Lutherans need not attend the American common school even if they helped to support them through taxation. The fact that the common school was available did not mean that the Norwegian Lutherans should use them.

¹Ibid., p. 30.

²Wisconsin passed a compulsory school act in 1889 not long after the controversy over the schools had come to an end. The law read in part, "Every parent or other person having under his control a child between the ages of seven and fourteen years, shall annually cause such a child to attend some public or private day school in the city or district in which he resides for a period not less than twelve weeks in each year, which number of weeks shall be fixed prior to the first day of September in each year by the board of education or board of directors of the city, town, or district." Laws of Wisconsin Related to Common Schools Including Free High Schools; Also Those Relating to Normal Schools and the University: Under the direction of Jesse B. Thayer, Madison, Wisconsin, 1890, p. 73.

Shortly after the Civil War came to a close, the Norwegian Synod received a proposal from Professor F. A. Schmidt and Pastor U. V. Koren suggesting that a study be made of the school question. The subject of the common school and the religious school had been discussed before the War, but during the war little was said about the school issue. However, all this was to change when the Norwegian Synod met for their annual meeting in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, in June of 1866. Although only eight of the twenty-seven articles were acted upon, these statements, by-in-large, expressed the viewpoint of the Synod on the school question. At the previous Synod meeting the Reverend Brandt had been elected chairman and Professor Schmidt and Professor Larsen were members of the committee. They reported on June 8, 1866. After a detailed report the following points of what came to be called the "Manitowoc Declarations" were presented for both friend and foe of the Synod to see. They were:

1. It is natural for Christians to want Christian schools for their children.
2. It must be the desire of Christian people in this country to establish Christian schools in which it will be possible to learn about the same as what is learned in the so-called common school, so we need not make use of them.
3. As state institutions these American common schools deserve all praise and our support, even if for our own children we do not make use of them.
4. These schools are the greatest help to that part of the people who are not Christians and who do not enjoy Christian teaching.

5. In these schools they do not teach religion which is a necessary condition of the religious freedom which we praise, and do enjoy under this country's administration. But it is also a very sorrowful testimony about our times, which indicates a falling away from Christianity into sects.
6. When you look at the cost to build or add on to church schools, which is mentioned in paragraph two, this should not keep Christians from doing what their child's spiritual needs demand, and thus save the child from worldliness.
7. We give our fellow citizens the very best example when on religious grounds we do not use the common school. But we should do all we can to aid them.
8. We work with the best methods to promote unity and fellowship amongst the people when we obtain for our children the best Christian education.
9. All that we have mentioned will work out for us Lutherans in the United States.
10. We would not want to put aside the English language as it is so very important for the growing generation to learn. But although it is important it must be accepted as earthly wisdom and must not hinder the soul's development.
11. We would also like to become acquainted with the American school situation, and what we learn there apply to our own school that which we would find beneficial.
12. We must keep out of our schools the spirit of liberty of which the common school is the nursery. This is all the more reason not to make use of these schools for our children.
13. All of what has been written before is important even when our common schools are what they ought to be, but much more important when we know the conditions in the common schools. They have incompetent teachers. Some are atheists or openly immoral. Discipline is very weak in some schools, in others there are depraved children, and they (Lutheran children) might come under the influence of some other faith than ours.

14. The American common school takes the best time away from the religious school, and makes it very difficult to get good religious teachers.
15. It will be necessary for us to build these religious church schools so that we will not need to use the American common school, as well as other Christians, and those people who speak a foreign language.
16. It would be much easier to get teachers for such schools (religious schools), as we could use religious teachers.
17. Christian youth who have the potential should gladly give themselves as Christian school teachers and the congregations ought to support them in their preparation.
18. Where these ideas which have been written about can be developed, the church members should obtain as much influence as possible over the district school by appointment of teachers and setting the time of the school term.
19. Where this is not possible and the district school is operated so that it is a clear danger to the children's faith or morality, it is the duty of the parents to keep their children away and to work for the development of church schools.
20. Where there is no other alternative, then the children should attend the English school, after they are confirmed, to learn English.
21. A good Norwegian reading book suitable for this school should be prepared.
22. Where it is possible the church must build their own school houses.
23. Parents do not have the right to excuse themselves by saying that their children do not have the time to attend school because they must work on the farm.
24. The children can easily learn two languages, but should not, as now begin with both languages. The natural order is to have them learn to read Norwegian fairly well before beginning English.

25. Christian zeal and eagerness to see this work accomplished is a holy duty and thus we must give our children Christian education. This can be accomplished by sermons, guidance, and by various other kinds of activities.
26. Christian Sunday Schools are recommended in all churches but the sects Sunday Schools must we as Lutherans avoid.
27. Any work with the district school and the church school will not work because of the existing laws.¹

The Manitowoc Declarations on the school issue clearly outlined the Synod's major criticism of the American common school and their plan to build schools of their own. This statement on the schools was widely published; thus it could be studied by both the members and foes of the Norwegian Synod. At the Manitowoc meeting the nature of the common school in America was debated. A question that was raised on the floor of the meeting was whether the American common school could be called a Christian school. "Is the American common or district school Christian?" The answer was given, "No! They forbid Christian teaching."² It was pointed out that the Bible could be read in the common school in Iowa but only if the parents did not object to the practice. But a number argued that the reading of the Bible

¹Synodalberetning, Manitowoc, Wisconsin: June 20-28, 1866, pp. 30-32.

²Ibid., pp. 34-35.

did not make the common school a "Christian school any more than the Latin schools of Cicero's time were Christian."¹

At the Manitowoc meeting members of the Synod debated for a considerable time as to how the American common school should be characterized, "Many agreed that they had to be characterized as 'heathen'."² A common school teacher spoke at the meeting saying that his job was completely secular. He describes it in this manner:

I do not have the right to speak to any of the school's children about religion. I do not have the right to give Christian guidance or help. A heathen is not the same as filthy speech, barbarism, or wild. They are much more civilized 'polished heathen' and some have better manners than Christians.³

Although the majority of the Synod agreed that the Americans were as "baptized heathen," not all agreed that the wording was in the best taste. One delegate said that "their schools were built and established in a Christian land and by a Christian people and that the state institutions were Christian, and that he knew of many good Christian people who were school superintendents and that we should be careful of what was said about these schools and especially not use these special names."⁴ Another speaker took the view that the American school was a combination of "Christian

¹Ibid., p. 35.

²Ibid., p. 35.

³Ibid., p. 35.

⁴Ibid., p. 35.

and heathen. They, the Americans, had denied the teaching of religion because they did not want to destroy religious freedom in America." He suggested that "secular" be substituted for "heathen." He said, "The school was built by the worldly government and could not be called Christian or heathen."¹

The Synod's leadership responded to these objections with five points:

1. Schools in this country are not built and maintained by Christian people. How then can we call these people Christian, when the state and government through the Constitution and laws does not confess any Christian religion? And when the majority of people do not profess Christianity?
2. If a school superintendent is a good Christian, he can not exhibit his Christianity through the school. He cannot get religion introduced into the school as a subject. If he could, religious freedom would be violated. It is not the person but the law that rules. If a superintendent breaks the law then he is not a good citizen but commits sin. Since it is a 'sin to do wrong that we may do good' most of the superintendents have a false faith. This attitude would permeate the entire school. They would not only be false in this or that, but the principle would be false.
3. If anyone was offended by the word 'heathen' there was no reason to be upset about it when it was the truth. It is difficult to understand that some do not want the truth. Some people just talk about fine people and good morals and this is the reason some people were offended when they were called 'heathen.' But should we not call things by their right name? We don't feel bad when people call us Christians. An honest heathen would not feel shame that they are given the right name. The word heathen is not so degrading in the eyes of

¹Ibid., p. 35.

people. Socrates was a heathen. He had honor as a great person and had great knowledge.

4. But just the same we appreciate that the state assumes the responsibility for the popular education, and that we have complete religious freedom. The state establishes schools for all their citizens, and these are of different faiths; then the state cannot do anything different. To have religion in the schools would destroy religious freedom. Therefore, we do honor the schools as a governmental institution. The state's citizens are much more enlightened and educated, and here they learn to behave so that they do not act wild and uncouth. We must take this viewpoint that we must look at them as they are and not as we wish them to be.
5. When it comes to calling these schools 'worldly' this is their name. The question is not if they are Christian or not Christian for Christians can establish worldly schools. They do this when they teach only secular subjects. But when there is a Christian attitude and discipline then they are Christian secular schools. On the other hand, there are 'heathen-worldly' schools . . . When a school is held three to six months a year, and the teacher teaches all subjects then the school takes so much time in a person's life that it makes a great impression on a child's soul, heart and on his whole spiritual life. . . . A Christian spirit must permeate the school, if not, it is heathen. The moralistic stories they tell are without Christ, and a morality without Christ is against Christ and is heathen. These schools are without religion, without all Christian elements because of the law. Schools are substitutes for the parents' instruction and rearing. Christian elements are necessary for our children, and schools must have religion. Therefore a school without religion is a 'heathen' one for us.¹

However, in spite of the desire of many to continue to use the word heathen to describe the American common school, it was finally decided to use "religionless" as it

¹Ibid., pp. 35-36.

was thought that this would not sound so bad in the ears of the Americans.¹

The Synod also stressed that where the Norwegian Lutherans were in the majority attempts could be made to get Lutheran teachers into the common school. "In this way," said the report, "the schools could lose most of their poison."² They agreed, however, that "for Christ's sake we cannot use anything but Christian schools, because the common school by its principle is religionless and not Christian. Because of this we must agree that in this country Christians must build their own schools."³ In these religious schools "they will learn just about the same as they learn in the so-called common school, and in this way need not make use of them."⁴

The question was raised on the floor of the Synod meeting as to what should be done if there was no religious school or when there were no qualified religious teachers. The advice given was that Norwegian Lutherans ought to "Think it over for a long time before you send your child to the district school, for children can be harmed in these schools."⁵ However, in some cases the parents could make

¹Ibid., p. 37.

²Ibid., p. 38.

³Ibid., p. 39.

⁴Ibid., p. 39.

⁵Ibid., p. 39.

the decision as to how bad an influence the local district school was. The Synod would not say that the parents must not send their children to the common school. However, in any case the dangers ought to be recognized, "In our life in this heathen world we must be in the world but not a part of the world. The Christian people in this country are like 'Lot in Sodom'. It is necessary for a father to send his son to sea, and another to the blacksmith's shop, and there is always the possibility that the child might be harmed."¹ But if this is necessary then we must inform the children to be on guard and be sure that they have been properly grounded in the truth. Also a consideration for the Norwegian Lutheran was that they must be "very careful, and think over whether it is necessary to live in a locality where there are no Christian schools for their children."² If there are no religious schools then perhaps they should remain where they are.

This then was the basic position of the Norwegian Lutheran Synod's view of the American common school, and their intention of building their own religious schools so that it would not be necessary for them to make use of the American school. This position was to be expressed by both clergy and laymen through the Norwegian newspapers which

¹Ibid., p. 39.

²Ibid., p. 39.

served as a public forum for the widely scattered Norwegian settlements. After the Manitowoc Declarations were announced by the Synod in 1866 Knud Langeland, editor of the recently established weekly, the Skandinaven, took up the school question. Editor Langeland "took sharp issue with the theses adopted by the church body, declared that the clergy evidently intended salvation to be the reward of 'ignorance and superstition', and called upon the common people to speak out on the issue."¹ Both laymen and clergy did speak out on the school question and Langeland faithfully printed both sides of the question. He responded to the Manitowoc Declarations and said that many Norwegians were angry over the Synod's declarations on the school question, that it perhaps would be best not to write much until tempers had cooled.² As for the charge that the American common school was "religionless," the fact was that "the children read a chapter from the New Testament and with a short prayer they begin the school day each morning." "What?" asked Langeland, "Do we want the district school to become a Lutheran school? Do we want the wrath of the citizens of this country on the newly arrived Norwegians?"³ "The Americans," said Langeland,

¹Blegen, Norwegian Migration to America: The American Transition, p. 257.

²Knud Langeland, Skandinaven, September 6, 1866.

³Ibid.

"want to treat all with kindness and love. They have been pouring out liberty generously . . . They have given much land to be used for schools. Education is free for every child whether rich or poor and the result is that we have a very good school system."¹ "No," said Langeland, "it would seem that there is a crumb of unthankfulness on our part when we characterize our public schools as 'heathen,' 'un-christian,' and 'religionless'."² Langeland said furthermore that it was not the Synod's business to tell parents to what schools they could send their children. If the ministers want to have religious schools they may have them, but these schools should not be held when the common school was in session. Editor Langeland freely admitted that not everything about the public school was ideal. But what was wrong with the nation's schools was human failure and that fault can be found with any institution. From the very beginning Langeland placed his finger on the problem of finances which was going to hinder the Synod in their attempts to build a school system. Langeland wrote, "But we must take food from our mouths in order to establish a parochial school. In American newspapers we are looked upon along with the Catholics as an ignorant, superstitious people to which the priest's will is law."³

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

Charges of this nature were not to go unchallenged by the Norwegian Synod. They were soon answered by Reverend A. C. Preus, president of the Synod. In the Skandinaven he wrote that it would be difficult indeed to find a more inaccurate incident of newspaper reporting. Preus said, "The American schools are 'religionless' since the school is and ought to be what the law says it should be, and no teacher has a right to do anything else. The law forbids religious teaching."¹ Preus pointed out that "when we use this word (religionless) we are not criticizing the school, or the school law which makes it religionless. Just the contrary, we say that this is absolutely correct. It cannot be otherwise. Only by being religionless could they fulfill what they were created for--to be the educational means for all people . . . we would not wish or say or make these schools religious."²

A. C. Preus said that Editor Langeland had criticized the Synod for not being thankful for religious freedom. He warned the editor of the Skandinaven that he had better not write so hastily about the Synod because the manner in which he had written was "libelous."³ Again Preus made the point

¹A. C. Preus, "The Norwegian Synod and the American Common School," Skandinaven, September 27, 1866.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

that the Synod did not wish to do away with the common school and that they have no enmity against the nation's schools. He wrote:

. . . we do not want to lose this (the common school) as a state institution. We don't want to do this unreasonable thing by making them into religious schools. But we wish that our own schools were so complete that it would not be necessary for parents to send their children to these kinds of schools which are often administered by unbelievers and ungodly teachers. What right does the editor have to see 'harm' in these declarations?¹

Not only was Editor Langeland to see "harm" in the Manitowoc Declarations for the Norwegian Americans but so was John A. Johnson,² one of the most able laymen, to oppose the Synod position and support the American school system. Johnson believed that one of the "most important happenings in Norwegian culture in America was the question of how or in what manner our children are going to be educated in this country." He pointed out that there were two different ways of looking at the problem in 1866, "The one which is held by most of the Norwegian pastors is that the American district

¹Ibid.

²John A. Johnson (1832-1901) was an inventor and founder of the Gisholt Manufacturing Company in Madison, Wisconsin. Lloyd Hustvedt has written about Johnson that he was "perhaps the most influential layman among the early Norwegian Americans. He was a conservative in politics, liberal in religion, cautious and sound in business, frank in speech, simple and modest in manner, careful but generous with his money, honest and moral in all his dealings, gentle, but not free from stubbornness and pride of opinion." Lloyd Hustvedt, Rasmus Bjørn Anderson (Northfield: The Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1966), p. 55.

school is 'heathen,' 'unchristian,' and 'religionless' and therefore is not good for our children who need a Christian education and we should not use the common school but establish private schools where children could get both religious and secular instruction."¹ The other view stated by Johnson was held by the majority of Norwegians and that was that the American district school was not opposed to the Christian faith, that they could send their children to them to get the necessary secular education, and that they did not need private schools which were unnecessary and impractical.²

Like Langeland, Johnson saw that one of the principal problems was that of finances. The Norwegians would be forced into a position of supporting two school systems, the public school from taxation and the church school by donations. The first position, Johnson pointed out, had the support of the laity, the second position had the support of the pastors of the Synod. The solution to the problem was not to undermine the district school, which admittedly had its problems, but to work together to make the district school what it could and ought to be. Johnson showed an understanding of the thinking of the pastors of the Synod

¹John A. Johnson, "The School Issue," Skandinaven, November 22, 1866.

²Ibid.

when he wrote, "But we must also remember that our pastors have gotten their education in Norway where both the religious and secular education for citizenship is all in one school, and because of this kind of education it is difficult for them to give impartial judgment about the schools and about a new educational system."¹

Cultural forces were at work in the Norwegian American community in the post Civil War period and lay intellectual leaders were becoming increasingly interested in what was called "true people's enlightenment" or popular education. A growing awareness of the need for raising the educational and cultural level of the Norwegian immigrants became the concern of many of their leaders during this time. R. B. Anderson was one of the principal spokesmen for popular education. In 1868 he had appeared before the Synod in its annual meeting in Chicago in June of 1868 and called for a reconsideration of the position they had taken on the American school at Manitowoc in 1866. Anderson gives the details of this meeting in his autobiography. The meeting was held in Our Saviour's Lutheran church on Chicago's west side. Although the main question on the agenda was the slavery question, Anderson presented some resolutions on education which were entered in the minutes of the Synod. Anderson wrote:

¹Ibid.

I took the position that the Synod should secure the appointment of orthodox Lutheran teachers at as many American academies and colleges as possible, that the Norwegian youths should be sent to these schools so that our common schools where they are controlled by Norwegian Lutherans could be supplied with teachers belonging to the Lutheran church and the children attending these common schools not be subject to any irreligious or non-Lutheran influence.¹

Anderson tells of his first meeting with the Reverend B. J. Muss who was to become his principal antagonist in the American common school controversy.²

The plan for securing Scandinavian professors for American colleges and universities was to occupy the attention of the entire lay leadership of the Norwegian settlements for a number of years. The laymen were concerned with "genuine public education" among the Norwegians in America. When the resolutions on slavery were adopted by the Synod in Chicago in 1868, the Reverend C. L. Clausen and R. B. Anderson

¹Rasmus B. Anderson, Life Story (Madison: Private Printing, 1917, sec. ed.), p. 99.

²Anderson tells the humorous story of one day after the Synod meeting when "Mr. J. O. Kaasa invited a few, mainly ministers, to take dinner with Mr. Clausen and me. Among the guests were Rev. B. J. Muus of Goodhue County, Minnesota, considered one of the profoundest theologians and ablest debaters in the whole Synod body. He knew me by sight, but at dinner table he asked, 'Mr. Kaasa, who is that gentleman pointing at me?' Mr. Kaasa said, 'That is professor Anderson of Albion Academy: I supposed you knew him?' Whereupon Rev. Muus in his deep, bass voice remarked, 'It surprises me that an old congregation like East Koshkonong has so little appreciation of the properties as to send Rasmus Anderson as its representative.'" However, the next day Anderson tells how Muus came to his aid when he was threatened with censure by the Synod. Ibid., p. 99.

walked out. Soon after, Clausen and Anderson joined men like Knud Langeland, Iver Lawson, Halle Steensland, Erik Ellefsen, and J. A. Johnson in an organization for promoting "popular education" (sand folkeoplysing) among the Norwegian Americans and placing Scandinavian professors in American higher education.

C. L. Clausen became the leader of the movement. In November of 1868 there appeared in the Skandinaven a letter by Clausen in which he regretted that there was controversy among the Norwegian Lutherans and a division among them, and that he did not intend to get involved with the question of which faction was right or wrong. He made it clear that he was not opposed to the education of ministers and the preparation of Christian teachers for religious schools as was then being done at the college in Decorah.¹ However, Clausen pointed out that Decorah College did not meet the needs of Norwegian youth. Especially was this true if they wished

¹David T. Nelson has written about the teacher training program at Decorah College, "In 1865 a two year teacher training department was organized. Steps toward this end had already been taken by the faculty the preceding year. In 1868 the Synod requested expanded instruction in English. This was provided and the teacher's course lengthened to three years so that students completing it could teach in American common schools. The first graduates of the three-year normal course went out in 1871. Considerable effort was expended on the Teacher Training department and it produced some excellent men. But it was never popular. Attendance languished, and finally in 1886 the department was discontinued. In 1889 the church made other provisions for this field by opening Luther Normal School in Sioux Falls, South Dakota." David T. Nelson, Luther College 1861-1961 (Decorah, Iowa: Luther College Press, 1961), p. 100.

education for a vocation. He raised the question as to "where could a person go to get a higher education than what the common school could give? Yes, if he wants to become a minister or a school teacher then the Synod has their educational institution. But if he does not want to be a minister or a school teacher, but feels a call to one or the other, such as, politics or some other civic responsibility, where then can he get a higher education? He must look elsewhere since none of the Synod's high schools can give him this."¹ Clausen pointed out that the answer to this problem of providing a wide range of educational opportunities for Norwegian youth was in the plan for providing Scandinavian professorships in American secular colleges.

A meeting of the Society for the promotion of popular education and Scandinavian professorships met on March 4, 1869, at the courthouse in Madison, Wisconsin. The meeting opened at 10 a.m. and about 300 were in attendance, a most encouraging turnout, for such a meeting. Pastor Clausen announced a hymn and led in an invocation prayer. He then announced that before anyone could become a voting member it was necessary to sign a statement saying that "we undersigned do so organize a society which aim or purpose is to establish more education (true enlightenment) among our people who are

¹C. L. Clausen, "Scandinavian Lutheran Professors in American Colleges," Skandinaven, November 11, 1868.

the Scandinavians here in this country,¹ and we want to establish Scandinavian Lutheran professorships in American universities. We have here met to work to this end."²

¹Generally speaking "Scandinavian" meant the Norwegians and Danes. Although on a few occasions the Norwegians and Swedes tried to work together they were not successful.

²The Society met again on March 17, 1869, at McGregor, Iowa for further organization and there the aims and objectives of the Society were outlined in greater detail. The following are the most important sections:

Section I The name of this association shall be "The Scandinavian Lutheran Educational Society."

Section II It shall be the aim of this association to promote substantial education amongst the Scandinavians in America.

Section III This association recognizes that a more comprehensive education can in no manner be in opposition to the Christian doctrines of faith and morality in the spirit of the evangelical Lutheran confession, but is in full harmony and agreement with the same, and it is only such an education which it is the aim of this association to educate.

Section IV While this association fully appreciates the efforts that hitherto have been made in preparing religious teachers at the different seminaries, its aim is to supply a long and deeply felt desire to provide for a more comprehensive education, in accordance with the obligations imposed upon the citizens of this country.

Section V As a means to reach this end, the association will principally devote its efforts to secure the establishment of an independent Scandinavian university, and meanwhile appropriate a part of the funds to be collected for this purpose in establishing Scandinavian Lutheran professorships at the American Colleges. In establishing these professorships, preference will be given to such colleges at which the American training is not in the interest of an anti-Lutheran church government, but where its aim is to provide the students with a higher education than in matters of confession. In establishing these professorships the design is:

1. To educate teachers for the common school able to teach in English as well as Norwegian.
2. To give the Scandinavian youth an opportunity to acquire a comprehensive education fitting them for the different spheres of civil life.
3. To preserve and extend their familiarity with their native tongue and their knowledge of Northern history and literature. It is also intended that these

There was also the hope of establishing a Scandinavian university.

If the friends of this plan for popular education were present at the Madison meeting so were the opposition, and these were mainly from the Norwegian Synod. Pastor H. A. Preus, the president of the Synod, and other leaders such as J. A. Ottesen, C. F. Magelsson, and Chr. Hvistendahl were the chief representatives of the Synod. When Clausen looked over the audience that morning, he probably knew that trouble was brewing. Pastor Preus "asked for the floor and said that many who had come to the meeting were in full agreement with the goal of promoting true enlightenment." He said, however, that there were many who did not agree with "the means proposed to secure the desired end."¹

teachers should superintend the students, and render them all necessary assistance and encouragement, and doctrine, catechism, etc. of the Lutheran persuasion. Section VII As a further means to the attainment of this aim, the association intends also gradually, as its means will permit, to distribute useful and instructive popular writings, and extend itself for the establishment of good libraries in the different sections of the country.

The meeting elected the following officers: President Rev. C. L. Clausen of St. Ansgar, Iowa, Vice president Chas. B. Solberg of La Crosse, Wis., Secretary F. S. Winslow of Chicago, Ill., Treasurer J. A. Johnson of Madison, Wis. Elected to the auditing Committee were Halle Steensland and H. Borchsenius both of Madison, Wis. Constitution of the Scandinavian Lutheran Educational Society March 17, 1869 at McGregor, Iowa meeting in the N.A.H.A. Collection at Northfield, Minn.

¹Lloyd Hustvedt, Rasmus Bjørn Anderson (Northfield: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1966), p. 70.

Preus made a complete report to the Synod about the events of the next day when the pastors and their sympathizers organized their own meeting. Pastor Preus objected to the restriction that only those who signed the statement in support of the Scandinavian Lutheran Educational Society could vote. He objected that two thirds of the members were told they could not vote because their consciences would not allow them to sign the statement.

The counter meeting met on March 5th at 8:30 a.m. and opened with a psalm and a prayer, the first session of what was to be a long day. The second session lasted from after dinner to 6 p.m. Pastor Preus spoke on three questions:

1. What is 'people's true enlightenment?' and why should we work to this end?
2. Why could we not work for people's true enlightenment? And why can we not work together with the Scandinavian Lutheran Educational Society?
3. How can we to the best of our ability plan for a 'people's true enlightenment' among our countrymen?¹

Preus argued that they were not opposed to secular knowledge, but that it must be illuminated by God's Word. The secular world, on the other hand, exalted and praised itself for talents and knowledge and the ability to learn. Preus said that this attitude was not anything else but

¹Beretning omet Møde Til Fremmelse af Folke-oplysning blandt Skandinaverne i Amerika avholdt i Madisons Norske Lutherske Kirke i Madison den 5te Marts, 1869 (From the O. M. Norlie Collection, N.A.H.A., Northfield) preface page.

darkness. All knowledge must be illuminated by the Word of God. Preus said that Christian people historically have not been opposed to education. It must be remembered that Christians established schools in Alexandria, Antioch, Caesarea and these schools survived in spite of bloody opposition. As for Lutherans and education everyone knew what were Luther's and Melanchthan's views on education. The American school was necessary, for the "country's citizens need to know how to vote, and that is something we should do both for ourselves and also for our adopted land."¹ The Norwegians who have come to this country also need education. "They need to know the country's language and institutions . . . or we will be able only to do the heavy, menial work and this has been the practice until now."² Not only so, but education was necessary so that "educated Lutherans could be elected to political office" and "so the church with its pure word and sacraments would become better known and respected and its great influence spread among the people as 'leaven' in this country which has been flooded with false teaching, fanaticism, and sectarianism."³

After recognizing the need for more education among the Norwegian people and especially the role that the

¹Ibid., p. 6.

²Ibid., p. 6.

³Ibid., p. 6.

Lutheran was expected to play in society Pastor Preus came to the second point which were his objections to the Scandinavian Lutheran Educational Society and why it was necessary for them to oppose it. The reason for their lack of support was not that they felt self-righteous but rather for the "unparliamentary" manner in which the whole thing was done the previous day.¹ In addition, Preus said they could not support this organization because of the following reasons:

The American High School (colleges and universities) are either 'religionless' or sectarian, or administered by atheists and the spirit of anti-Christ. What real Lutheran would send their children at an immature age to a high school where the Christian influence and education was not recognized? It would be at the time of confirmation (between 15-20) years of age that the young people would seek such education and just at that stage they need to be established in the knowledge of Christian truth and faith. And furthermore, they need to be under discipline.²

Preus pointed out that students would attend these schools and get the notion that Christianity as a way of life need not be the foundation of true education. Lutherans would not send their children to Roman Catholic high schools.

Then Preus asked the question,

Is it better to send them to various Reformed sects, Methodist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, etc? We could not work with Papists in the various high schools because God's Word warns that we be very aware of false prophets. These denominational high

¹Ibid., p. 8.

²Ibid., p. 8.

schools could not be used by the Norwegians because of the 'liberalism.' These schools would seek to proselyte the Lutheran young people sent to them. In addition, the nativistic churches would argue that the Lutheran teaching is out-dated. The Americans would tell the Norwegian students that 'These Lutherans are so old fashioned that it would be good for them to leave the Lutheran Church, and not be a member of an immigrant church, and that it would be better if they joined a church which was endorsed by the native born American.'"¹

But not only would the Americans seek to draw away Norwegian students from their church but they would also question the authority of scripture, and argue, "The Bible is not clear and it is impossible to come to an absolute conclusion about what it means, and this attitude is followed by skepticism which would with Pilate ask, 'What is truth?'"²

The kind of education supported by the Scandinavian Lutheran Educational Society would complicate the position of the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America. Granted that the students who would go to these institutions would receive an education. But of what value would an education be which filled the minds of young people with liberal notions? Especially would there be problems when these young people returned to the Norwegian settlements. "Would not our churches then be undermined instead of growing in godliness?"³

¹Ibid., pp. 8-9.

²Ibid., p. 9.

³Ibid., p. 9.

Preus next took up the argument of the leaders of the Society for placing Norwegian Lutheran professors in American colleges and universities. The intention of the leaders of the Society was to keep the Lutheran spirit and faith alive in the Norwegian students who attend American institutions. Preus said that a basic question that these leaders must ask was how they would know that these educational institutions would accept a good Lutheran as a professor? After all, it was the responsibility of the trustees of these schools and not an outside society to make these decisions. Preus noticed that some of the leaders of the Society were not good Lutherans. He said, "Many of the Society's members are people who have turned their backs on our church."¹ These people would not be too interested in how orthodox these professors would be. The Society, it was true, talked about promoting the evangelical Lutheran faith in paragraph three but they believed one of two things, either they didn't understand what genuine Lutheranism really was, or they would use their beloved Lutheran faith as a shield just to confuse those people who were already confused.² Preus said it was their duty to warn their people about these dangers. Even if a true Lutheran professor could be found, having a Norwegian element in an

¹Ibid., pp. 9-10.

²Ibid., p. 10.

American school from an administrative point of view would destroy the harmony and unity of the school.¹ Preus said that if a more liberal Lutheran professor were chosen it would be even more dangerous, "because the parents believed that it was a Lutheran professor who would teach, advise, and counsel the students. But when all is said and done the students will not be in a genuinely Lutheran atmosphere, but rather in a very dangerous place."²

Preus next dealt with the third point which was the reason for their meeting. The question was raised, "How can we to our best ability plan for 'true popular education' among our countrymen?" Preus said that it was essential to promote religious elementary schools. This was essential because it was the foundation for higher education. But in this endeavor there were indeed some hindrances to overcome. One of the chief obstacles to the progress of the religious elementary school was the English district school. There had been conflict between Norwegians who were building religious schools and the common school, particularly in districts where Norwegians were in the minority. On the other hand, Preus said that where the Norwegian Lutherans were in the majority they should work to have Lutheran teachers take over both of these schools. Where this could not be

¹Ibid., p. 10.

²Ibid., p. 10.

arranged, religious schools should be established so that in addition to the religious teaching all the subjects taught in the common school would be taught in the parochial school. This dual system would be expensive, but Preus said, "Christian parents would never be sorry because they had taken this special burden so that they could get a good Christian education for their children where they could be taught the Christian faith and at the same time get the other educational subjects all in a Christian atmosphere and with Christian discipline."¹

Preus admitted that it was true that there was a shortage of teachers able to teach in both schools, but a new professor who could teach English had been appointed in the department of education last year at the college in Decorah. These students of education would attend the College for three years and after this time would be "completely capable to be able to take over the English school."²

Pastor Preus continued to describe the Synod's plan for higher education which was to build academies³ in various places. "We shall work to build academies which would be suitable for young people in the districts around, in both

¹Ibid., p. 12.

²Ibid., p. 12.

³For the best treatment of academies and the Synod see B. H. Narveson, "The Norwegian Lutheran Academies," Studies and Records, Vol. XIV, 1944.

the newer and the older Norwegian settlements, for example, Koshkonong (Wisconsin) and in Goodhue County, Minnesota, etc."¹ Preus also felt that the time had come for giving the women more educational opportunity. The curriculum would be like the American college with religious teaching as well. These schools would have their year regulated "so that the students in the busy seasons of the year could get home and help their parents."² These academies would also make it possible for the less privileged to attend. The benefit from these local institutions would be great. Preus said, "What a spiritual lift these schools would give our people! It is so great that it cannot be imagined. The parents would find that the money they had used for their children's education was very well used and the children would be more appreciative of their parents because of this."³

The plan then of the Synod was to have elementary religious schools in place of the American common school, and a system of academies. The students' education would then be concluded at the College in Decorah. This was one aspect of "true people's enlightenment"; another was a plan

¹Beretning omet Måde Til Fremmelse of Folke-oplysning,
p. 12.

²Ibid., p. 13.

³Ibid., p. 13.

for a periodical which would be without political articles or writings of a polemic nature. Preus said, "This paper should be devoted to needful educational subjects . . . articles on world and church history, culture, and nature studies."¹ All of the subjects in the paper would be written in the light of the Word of God but would also be entertaining and educational. The periodical would avoid "romantic" stories and stories about robberies, both of which are detrimental to youth, and they must not be given a taste for this kind of reading material. Preus said that local libraries could be set up, "even if it is a small collection of books, they would be of great help."²

In concluding the long day Pastor Preus said that, in contrast to the meeting of the previous day, the meeting of the Synod's leadership was in the spirit of harmony and unity. A committee was appointed, consisting of A. H. Preus, Ottesen, and Jacobson to look further into the school question.³

One could almost predict that when the details of the counter meeting were held on March 5th that there would be a reply in the Skandinaven. The reply to the Synod's leadership came from the pen of J. A. Johnson who wrote an

¹Ibid., p. 14.

²Ibid., p. 14.

³Ibid., p. 14.

article, "A Report of the Madison Meeting." He commended the pastors for bringing up the subject of "middle schools" (academies) which was a good idea but something ought to be done about it. Johnson wrote that he and his friends had talked for some time of the need for these schools, "so if the meeting of March 4th has no other fruit than the pastors considering these questions seriously, then the meeting was not in vain. But then again the pastors have talked about these schools before and nothing has become of it."¹

Reasons for their slowness to put a plan in action was that the pastors knew how expensive these schools were and therefore did not go through with their plans. In addition, the pastors found out that they simply did not have qualified teachers to teach in these academies. Johnson thought that it would be better to get Scandinavian professors in American colleges.²

Johnson also wanted to correct a misunderstanding that "Clausen called the meeting in opposition to the pastors. There is no truth in it. Clausen has added a great deal to the Madison meeting."³ Clausen had made his views known in the previous Fall when he had written in the Skandinaven. He said that he did not want to underestimate

¹J. A. Johnson, "A Report of the Madison Meeting," Skandinaven, March, 1869.

²Ibid., p. 14.

³Ibid., p. 14.

the necessary education for the education of ministers and teachers. But he continued to see a problem of not having an adequate educational institution which would prepare them for a vocation other than a church related one. He asked, "Where can a young person go to get a higher education than what the common school can give? Yes, if he wishes to become a minister or a school teacher, then the Synod has their educational institution. But if he does not want to be a minister or a school teacher, but feels called to one or the other--political or some other civic responsibility--where can he get a higher education? He must look elsewhere since Synod's school cannot give him this."¹ The answer, Clausen had said, was to place Norwegian professors in American colleges and universities, and perhaps someday the Scandinavians would have their own university.

The position of the Synod was now clear. The Synod had begun with the Manitowoc Declarations on the school issue and the counter proposals to the Scandinavian Lutheran Educational Society with its plan to place Norwegian professors in American institutions of higher learning. The year 1870 was to see a great deal of writing both for and against the position of the Norwegian Lutheran Synod on the school question.

¹C. L. Clausen, "Scandinavian Lutheran Professors in American Colleges," Skandinaven, November 11, 1868.

R. B. Anderson opened the attack in January of that year in the pages of the Skandinaven. Anderson expressed surprise that, in spite of the strong stand of the Synod and its pastors on the American common school, some of them were sending their children to these schools. Anderson said, "I do not know what plan the pastors have for the education of our fellow Norwegians when they do not allow them to attend the American school since they naturally would not and I hope do not want them to sink down in ignorance without education."¹ As for the church schools many did not have the necessary text books and only a relative few could attend the College in Decorah. It seemed to Anderson that it would take a "whole generation" to get the kinds of schools that were needed.

The focus of the battle now moved somewhat from what the Synod had been saying to individuals who strongly supported the Synod's position on the American school. The Reverend B. J. Muus of Goodhue County in Minnesota was an able defender of the Synod's point of view. In March of 1870 an article appeared in the Fædrelandet og emigranten entitled, "Schools and Good Schools." Muus first pointed out that America was filled with "different sects all the way from Universalists to Quakers who admit openly that they

¹R. B. Anderson, "The American School," Skandinaven, February 16, 1870.

do not believe in the Holy Scriptures."¹ Muus continued, "If they teach in school one religion which I do not like, then I can go back to the school with the constitution in my hand and forbid them."² Muus said that some say that in the American common school no religion was being taught, but it would be more accurate to say that some religion was being taught. Muus said that the basic question which must be asked was whether good Lutherans could support the common school. He made his position clear in the following:

1. Should we not first and foremost seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness? Naturally, all of us want to teach our children to do this. If we have a school, we have faith in it so that we can send our children to it to be educated. It ought to be clear that when we do the opposite we teach them to seek other things during the week and go against God's commandment that we first 'seek the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness':
2. If the school teaches the children love of God and neighbor, it is just a false self-righteousness. If we do this, we cheat our children and teach them to do wrong. If the school should instill these attitudes in children, that of the love of God and his fellowman, then the school teaches a part of the Christian faith. This is just what is forbidden in the American common school and every man 'with the constitution in his hand' can go to the school and forbid them and deny them to teach in this manner because it is against the law. The Americans say, 'You Christians send your children safely to school, we shall not harm your "particular notions" when it comes to spiritual matters.'³

¹B. J. Muus, "Schools and Good Schools," Fædrelandet og emigranten, March 10, 1870.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

Muus goes on to illustrate what a good school really is, and he has, of course, the American common school in mind which is "religionless." He wrote:

If you don't have any good ideas about what a good school is, to use a poor illustration, they tell us that the pick pockets in London also are very interested in giving their children a good education. They hang clothes in a room and hang little bells that ring at the least motion. If the children can pick a pocket book out of a pocket without the bells ringing, it is alright. But if the bell rings, the children receive a beating. This is their idea of a 'good education.'¹

To Muus the religionless American school was not a great deal better than the pick pocket schools of London. But he had other charges against the American common school:

When a pupil goes to school for several winters, he does not learn anything but to read a little, learn a little arithmetic, and when he is lucky, learn a little geography of the most primitive kind; and perhaps read a romance with the title of 'United States History.' Then I think it is but little for all the time and money spent. For a Norwegian it will perhaps look as if there was something to learn as a foreign language always gives the instruction a certain glamour.²

It was not long before J. A. Johnson answered Pastor Muus. He said that he had read the Pastor's article in Faedrelandet og emigranten. Johnson admitted that Muus was an important person in the Norwegian Synod and wished that someone more able than himself could answer. However, Johnson said that he had been in the country for twenty-five

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

years and had been a teacher in the common school and therefore knew something about the subject. In addition, Johnson tells of the intense interest the laymen have in the schools. "I want also to say to the Pastors that the laymen are deeply interested in this question."¹ The reason for this was that they wish the very best for their children. The conclusion that Pastor Muus came to was, "that the common school because of the principle upon which it is founded must work against the Kingdom of God. For us who have gotten our education in the common school," said Johnson, "it is certainly unpleasant for us to hear such a judgment."² If the charges of the pastor were true, then the Lutherans had better take a good look at the situation and determine "if we are working against the 'Kingdom of God' and work to remedy the situation."³

Johnson said that perhaps one of the foremost questions was, "What is being taught in the district school? If one looks he will see that subjects like reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, grammar, and in every good school some higher mathematics and also one finds perhaps physiology and science are being taught."⁴ Then Johnson asks the

¹J. A. Johnson, "The Common School," Skandinaven, April 13, 1870.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

question, "Are these subjects sinful and are they really unchristian, and is it a sin to study them? These are the subjects taught in the common school and these are the subjects who according to Pastor Muus' meaning are enemies of the Kingdom of God. To Pastor Muus these subjects are sin to study."¹ Johnson did not agree but considered them as God's gifts. He pointed out that the knowledge gotten in the schools made it possible to develop the nation by the building of great buildings, roads, and bridges.² "Pastor Muus," said Johnson, "will reply that he never said that these subjects were not important. Why is he then so opposed to the common school where you learn these things?"³ Johnson said that many oppose the common school because they believe that it is difficult for children to learn both religious and secular subjects and therefore believe that of the two, the religious school is much more important. Johnson wrote in reply to this, "Here I answer that God's will is that we use both our secular and spiritual gifts. It is not God's will that we concern ourselves only with the religious. People must learn to use their hands and minds or both, if need be, and so take an important part in the life of the community, and be an asset to the community."⁴

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

Johnson pointed out that the religious American was not aware that he was working against the Kingdom of God as Muus claimed. The American children who attended the common school did learn to read, write a little, learn a little arithmetic, and, if fortunate, a little bit more as pastor Muus had said. From Johnson's point of view this simply was not so, for "the knowledge that I have gotten I have the district school to thank for. And if this is not very much, in the Pastor's eyes, I think that I am very privileged to have this much."¹ He went on to relate how that this limited education had given him many hours of joy and that it had showed him that he was a "debtor both to God and man."² Johnson said that Pastor Muus had talked about his willingness to support the free public school system, but he had also talked about the hindrance which inhibited the development of the religious school. But what did the Pastor mean by "hindrances"? Johnson replied, "I suppose he means that it is a hindrance for those who support the private school to be forced to pay taxes for the common school. As far as I know this is the only hindrance. If you can call that a hindrance."³ Not only so, but Pastor Muus had said that the

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

Americans themselves were observing the schools themselves and were finding much fault with them.¹ Johnson admitted

¹Although this dissertation is primarily concerned with the controversy over the American school among the Norwegian immigrants, the Americans were not totally ignorant of what was being debated so vehemently in the Norwegian settlements. A good illustration of this was Pastor Muus' controversy with superintendent of schools for Goodhue County, H. B. Wilson. On May 25, 1870, an article appeared in English, which had originally been printed in the Goodhue County Republican entitled, "Our Public Schools Versus Sec-tarian Schools in a Foreign Language." In this article Wilson said that he called attention in his Annual Report to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction that there was an element among the clergy "that was hostile to the success of our common schools." In this article he singled out Rev. B. J. Muus as the leader of these Norwegians who oppose the common school in his county. Wilson said, "In the article above referred to (Muus' article "Schools and Good Schools") which a friend of mine has kindly translated and sent to me, the reverend gentleman exhibits a spirit of the most narrow-minded bigotry and intolerance it has ever been my fortune to read, and I thank him for writing it. It shows for itself his intensely bitter hostility to American institutions, better than I can represent in words." Wilson acknowledged that there were many Norwegians who did not agree with Muus but Muus claimed to speak for them. He thanked Muus for writing the article "because the Americans can see what kind of sentiments are entertained and expressed by those among them in reference to institutions which they regard as the most sacred because it will show the Scandinavians themselves that they have among them those who are opposing their true interests by trying to perpetuate in this land of their adoption, a foreign language, and foreign sentiment, and foreign institutions, thereby fostering sectional and national prejudice on the part of a portion of our people against another." Wilson continued, "It would seem that Mr. Muus has got into the wrong longitude for his sentiments. Although in free America, he is an aristocrat with the same ideas of superior deference that is due the clergymen, as much that is entertained in monarchical Europe. Let me say to him that it is the free, enlightened spirit of our common schools that makes the United States superior to the priest ridden people of the Pope's dominions of Italy, or the inhabitants of Mexico or South America." Superintendent Wilson's closing remarks were interesting. "In closing this article which is already longer than I had

that they were by no means perfect. But to allow children to be reared in ignorance was not the answer. Johnson wrote that what needed to be done was "to take good care of our children and send them to the district school so that they can be educated. Build good commodious schoolhouses and find good teachers even if you do not always like the teacher. This is no reason to take them out of the school."¹ Johnson pleaded that parents ought to attend the school meetings. He said, "Please don't save on getting an attractive

intended, I disclaim all feelings of hostility or prejudice toward the Rev. Mr. Muus." Wilson's criticisms were perhaps justified but Wilson's nativistic spirit permeates the article. Skandinaven, May 25, 1870. In June of 1877 R. B. Anderson sent to the Skandinaven a letter from a medical doctor from Goodhue County, Minnesota. Anderson wrote, "I am sending these to you so that the Scandinavians will have the opportunity to see with what kind of eyes the American citizens view us and our ministers. The letter comes from a doctor who lived some seven miles from Pastor Muus: 'He and his friends have had the people here under their immediate control, and are doing the very worst thing for them they can. . . . We have organized an English debating society, but it was a difficult matter to get it on a firm basis. The priest forbid the young to come, and he also refused to let them attend our evening spelling schools. This was a hard blow to us who are trying with might and main to educate and elevate those who the priest is trying to rob of their rights as American citizens and keep them down on the level with the beast that roams over these broad prairies. We are going to help those people if they will be helped, all that is necessary is to show them the difference betwixt those who are ground down under the iron hands of priestcraft and those who are free to go forth and get knowledge and become the first citizens of a free and enlightened country.'" Anderson added, "So you can see how Pastor Muus is doing in his campaign against the common school." Skandinaven, June 5, 1877.

¹J. A. Johnson, "The Common School," Skandinaven, April 13, 1870.

schoolhouse and a good teacher. It will return in double blessings to our children when the time comes."¹ As to wages, the teacher who can teach in both English and Norwegian could ask for a salary in the district school from thirty to forty dollars a month."²

As the controversy continued in the press and in the Norwegian Lutheran Synod, men like H. A. Preus, B. J. Muus, J. A. Johnson, and R. B. Anderson were the principal spokesmen for their respective views. However, a review of the newspapers of the period indicate that laymen were intensely concerned with the school question. A. J. Berdahl has given a good description of the everyday operation of schools in the numerous Norwegian communities. Berdahl wrote on one occasion that the school district had been recently divided, and that a "commodious schoolhouse" that would bring the district honor had been recently completed.³ He complained, however, that it was very difficult to "get those Norwegians to see the need to learn some English. But the problem is that there is also a church school which is the only school some children attend. And in this school all that the children learn is catechism, interpretation, and the New Testament, and the children sit and 'chew hard on it' without

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³A. J. Berdahl, Fædrelandet og emigranten, August 3, 1871.

understanding what they are learning."¹ Berdahl claimed that it was not his intention to do away with the Norwegian religious school, but he would like to see the American and religious schools cooperate and work together. One way that this could be done was to arrange the terms of the two schools so that they would not be in session at the same time. For example, in the Norwegian school it would only be necessary to teach reading, writing, and religion. All the other subjects could be learned in the American common school.

Berdahl said that one of the principal objections of the Norwegians to the American school was the belief that children should learn good Norwegian "before they come to the English school and are confirmed."² This was not good reasoning because by this attitude parents rationalized their children's absence from all schools. Berdahl bemoaned the fact that "instead of learning something, to read books and have a faithful teacher who would help them along, they stay home where they lose their interest in reading, and become lazy, and are good for nothing."³ Parents claimed that the English⁴ school ruined their children and therefore they must stay away from the common school until the age of

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴The Norwegian immigrant often used "English" when he meant American school.

confirmation. But Berdahl said this was impractical thinking because, when the child was confirmed, he was no longer considered a child, and so on "a beautiful day in the next school year he goes off to school to learn his 'a' 'b' 'c's. He learns the letters' names and the next day to spell a few words, but in a short time school becomes difficult for him and so he thinks of all kinds of mischief to get into."¹ The end result was that he dropped out of school and went to a distant town to dance and drink. Berdahl also made the observation, as many did, that school attendance in the Norwegian settlements was irregular.² His figures were interesting. "In this district there are over one hundred school age children (Fillmore County, Minnesota) and when we look at the teacher's daily register, we find about forty enrolled, and when you investigate further you get very disappointed. The daily average attendance is about ten students."³ Of course, in the summer, Berdahl pointed out, it was not possible for the older children to attend because the farmers had much work to do. But, he added, it would be possible for the younger ones to attend as they were not needed at home.

¹Ibid.

²Superintendent of schools John W. Wedgwood reported on the district schools in Norwegian settlements of Northeastern Iowa. Superintendent Wedgwood wrote, "The pupils are very irregular in their attendance coming one day and staying home the next." Decorah Republican, February 7, 1869.

³Ibid.

However, the parents were careless and indifferent, and complained that they would not send their children to the common school before they were confirmed "because the immorality of the schools will harm them."¹ In addition, the parents complained that the English schools made their children "loud mouths and disobedient."² To this criticism Berdahl replied, "Dear parents who keep your children away from school on these grounds. Answer me the following question, 'Where can you find children who have regularly attended the English school who are less moral, loudmouth and disobedient?' Just consider for a moment the Norwegian youth who attends the Norwegian religious school for two or three months a year. Then the child is allowed to remain home all the rest of the year without the slightest school instruction. It is no wonder they lose interest in reading and their lessons."³ As for the common school being immoral, the fact was that the English school was as moral as the Norwegian. Berdahl said that it was true that the American school did not teach religion, but you could not show from the textbooks they use that there was anything immoral or unchristian in them. "Do we want to remain as ignorant as we were on the first day in

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

this country? We are now in a country where we are the law givers and we should work hard to learn the language."¹

Berdahl said that the language must be learned and they must be educated so that they might have a voice in the affairs of government. But he warned, "As long as the children grow up in ignorance of all that which is American, and as long as the American school is opposed whether directly or indirectly, and as long as we work against them we can never be on the same level with our fellow American citizens."²

There appeared in the summer of 1873 a pro-church school article entitled, "The School System Among the Norwegian Americans," probably written by one of the leaders of the Synod. The writer pointed out that in "all the United States children between the ages of 5-21 can be educated; only in Michigan is there a compulsory school law."³ As for the public schools they were without religious teaching so that all faiths and churches could make use of them.⁴ As to the curriculum the subjects were the common ones, spelling, reading, writing, etc. The English language was the main language although some states permitted the German and

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³The writer was in error; Massachusetts passed a compulsory attendance law as early as 1852.

⁴"The School System among the Norwegian-Americans," Skandinaven, July 29, 1873.

Norwegian language to be taught as was the law in Wisconsin. There were two terms of school, one in the summer and the other in winter, and school must be in session at least five months a year. It was the prerogative of the school board of the district to set the time and also to decide what the teacher's salary would be for the year. The district voted men to the school board and then the secretary and clerk were responsible to choose a teacher who was nonsectarian. The teachers were hired for one year and this made the turnover of teachers high. The writer said that for the summer session young girls were usually employed. He seemed to get to the point when he wrote, "This school (the common school) is established for non-Christians, for those who look down on Christian principles, for people who will not build Christian schools for their children."¹ The answer to the problem would be to get teachers qualified to teach in both schools. He wrote, "It would then be possible for him to stay longer and have a decent salary."² Now the way to get control of the schools would come about in the Norwegian settlements where they were in the majority. However, the writer said that they had discovered from "experience that Americans do not like Norwegian teachers for their children,

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

and most of them are opposed to the Norwegian religious school."¹

The writer now discussed his plan for control of the schools in the Norwegian settlements:

1. Get full control over the school system.
2. Employ a Christian teacher and in this way get a fully religious school for our children.
3. Make certain that the children will not be influenced by a dangerous atmosphere which is now the case with those who attend the common school.
4. Children will not meet discouragement and disappointment as they do now in the irreligious schools.
5. If this plan were carried out, it would make it possible for our children to have a good, well rounded education in a shorter school year.
6. With God's help there would be a greater harvest for the good in the daily lives of their children and for eternity.²

Although the Norwegian Lutheran Synod was opposed to the common school, it could be used under certain circumstances. The writer said, "We Lutherans could send our children to the common school, especially when we are not able to build religious schools ourselves."³ The article goes on to say that the position of the Synod had not changed since Manitowoc, "but as long as the teachers are not Christians and the other children are unruly and disobedient,

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

and the text books are not good for our small children to read, we Lutherans cannot send our children. We are responsible to God for their upbringing."¹ He admitted that the common school was a necessity and that they ought to be supported, but so were the religious schools necessary because religion could not be taught in the common school. But the task of establishing these religious schools was not progressing well. He stated his reasons for this:

1. The common school takes from five to seven of the best months of the year.
2. The religious school teachers must teach in many districts to have enough work for the year.
3. When the common school is in session the religious school suffers because the children cannot attend.
4. It is difficult to find good teachers and keep them because it is hard to travel from one place to another. Usually the teacher has a family but is poorly paid by the settlement for his work; yet the teacher feels called to this work.
5. It is up to the church to give and to support this work.
6. There are few young people who want to become educated so that they can teach in the Christian religious schools.²

Again the writer, who probably represented the Synod, thought that the best arrangement would be to get positions for their religious teachers in the common schools. Such an arrangement was considered successful if a teacher could be found who could do both well.

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

In 1874 the feud between Rev. B. J. Muus and J. A. Johnson was to flare again when at the annual Synod meeting held at Pastor Muus' church in Holden, Minnesota, Muus discovered Johnson in the audience. Muus jumped to his feet and said that such an ungodly paper as Skandinaven had no business to have a reporter attending the Synod meeting and that the Skandinaven was worse than the Dagslyst, a liberal paper. However, Professor Schmidt came to Johnson's rescue and told them that for the sake of social grace the reporter from the Skandinaven should be allowed to remain. Pastor Ottesen agreed with Schmidt, and Pastor Muus was greatly disappointed that they would let an enemy of the Synod remain in the meeting. Johnson pointed out sarcastically that if he had been opposed to the common school and had supported slavery, he would have been "invited to have the best seat in the church that day."¹ As for the American common school, it was supported by all the leading American statesmen, and the Protestant majority considered the schools as the Republic's chief cornerstone. On the other hand, parochial schools were unAmerican, because "children are impressionable and get the idea that all other churches are false, have no truth, and have the wrong kind of faith, and that they alone are correct."² With this narrow biased education it was

¹John A. Johnson, Skandinaven, December 15, 1874.

²Ibid.

little wonder that these children grew up to engage in strife and argumentation, and it could even go so far that blood was shed. On the other hand, Johnson said, "If children go together to the same common school they get to know each other."¹ He said that even the German, Carl Schurz, who was a leading German immigrant supported the common school. In one of his latest speeches Schurz had expressed his deep feelings and thoughts about the American school.²

As for getting a seat in church that day when Pastor Muus would have barred him Johnson said that he thought the Pastor would have been happy to have an unbeliever in church. "Has he no love for us unbelievers?"³ Johnson wrote regarding Muus, "I don't want to talk about his Christian behavior, but he feels that he is qualified to judge other people's Christianity."⁴

R. B. Anderson, a life-long friend of J. A. Johnson now reentered the controversy over the American public

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴But Johnson did judge Muus' Christianity by relating how Muus had established a theater group in his church at Holden to raise money for the Swedish people who were suffering from famine. The scenery and costumes were beautiful, according to Johnson, but Muus' church would not let him continue because, "they had heard from childhood that drama was sin." After one performance the congregation forced him to stop his theatrical production. Ibid. Some years later Rev. Muus was involved in a divorce case. The Skandinaven covered it in depth. Pastor Muus returned to Norway shortly after.

schools. The event which triggered his resentment was a notice in the Evangelical Lutheran Church Times, the official organ of the Norwegian Synod, that they had decided to build a church school in Decorah, Iowa, so that Norwegian Lutheran children need not attend the American school. Anderson replied, "This can only be taken as a declaration of war against the American common school. It is surprising that the intelligent Norwegians of Decorah would go ahead and make these plans which is a war against the Republic. The common school is our country's cornerstone, and the building of these religious schools is nothing less than treason to this country."¹ He went on to say that the school system in Decorah would probably survive without the sixty-nine Norwegian students which would now go to the religious school. Decorah had ten denominations; it would be a strange situation if these churches would not permit their children to go with other students to school. Anderson said that the Norwegians in Decorah had criticized the subjects taught in the public schools and the methods of instruction, but, said Anderson, "I want to say here that I have never seen common schools as bad as church schools. Just recently a layman wrote to the church paper saying that he could give the church school twenty dollars a year in Decorah to keep it operating. It is also expected that he will give to the

¹R. B. Anderson, "Against the Common School," Skandinaven, October 17, 1876.

church and to Luther College for professors' salaries, and also to Madison (the seminary) and missionary work. The average Norwegian farmer cannot afford this expense."¹

Furthermore, Anderson said that a religious school in Decorah would not be necessary if the Norwegians would stop criticizing the American school and work for its improvement. The ten or twelve professors in Decorah could have a great influence on the school system there. "But when they establish religious schools they work together with the Pope."² Anderson called on the Norwegians to defend the American common school, "I ask everyone to put on all their weapons and be in his place . . . the common school must be protected!" In forceful, emotional tones Anderson wrote,

If our language will not last for a couple of generations without taking our children away from the common schools, very well, so let the Norwegian pass. If the Lutheran church cannot make progress among us without taking our children out of the common school, very well, let the Lutheran church fall, and I will say peace on its dust. It does not deserve to stand if it cannot stand beside the common school.³

Again in emotional language Anderson made his appeal to the Norwegian people:

Norwegian people in cottages all over America, shelter the American common school, protect it as if it were your own eyes. If they come to you and

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

ask you to join the Norwegian church school flee from them as you would flee from priest domination. The common school must be preserved.¹

There was, of course, much reaction to this plea by Anderson for the common school. Letters in the press both supported and criticized his position on the Norwegian language, the Norwegian Lutheran Synod, and the American common school. In the early part of 1877 there appeared an article by J. A. Johnson. In this lengthy article Johnson gave a review of the American school controversy. He said that the common school had been harshly criticized by some Norwegian people. "At the Synod meeting at Manitowoc, Wisconsin, it said, (look it up for yourself), that the American schools were 'heathen'. Pastor Muus has said that the school 'must after its principle work against the Kingdom of God' (see his piece 'Schools and Good Schools'). Pastor H. A. Preus has said that the common school is for those who reject Christianity. See his writings."²

After this brief review of the school controversy, Johnson drew attention to the latest development, and this was a speech given by the theology professor Schmidt. Johnson said that the speech appeared in the Madison Democrat, and he quoted Schmidt who was to have said, "Schools where the Word of God is not the authority are the 'gates of

¹Ibid.

²J. A. Johnson, "The Tree Is Known by Its Fruit," Skandinaven, January 9, 1877.

hell'."¹ With this statement Johnson, as one might expect, didn't agree and said that he did not believe that the common school had this damning effect that Schmidt said it had. Johnson then asked some questions about morality. "What about alcohol and drunkenness? Would the people who hold this view say that the Americans are greater drinkers than other nationalities?"² Johnson doubted that in the American communities there were more children born out of wedlock and more arrests for burglaries and robberies. He said that when it came to statistics, the Americans did very well. They kept the law better than other nationalities, and if this was so, the credit must go to the American common school. If the schools were as dangerous as the Synod had said they were, they must also be dangerous to American Christians. To this Johnson said, "I don't have the statistical tables on hand, but the American Protestant denominations have several million members. These gentlemen will not admit that these millions hate the Christian faith."³ The Americans in the religious denominations supported the common school because it was the foundation of a free government, but education could also make a person religious by

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

helping the person's mind to develop so that he would be able to accept the truths of Christianity.¹

Johnson said that the Americans were always seeking to improve their educational system. When Americans traveled in other countries they sought what was of value in the educational systems of these nations. On the other hand, those who opposed the common school had been raised in a country where there was less liberty and therefore they were incapable of judging the American system.

At the same time that J. A. Johnson was writing about the kind of fruit the Synod and the common school were producing, R. B. Anderson wrote an article in the Skandinaven. Anderson said, first, that he was not interested in bringing up the slavery question again but hoped by doing so that it might work as an illustration and perhaps, he said caustically, "There might be a learned philosopher among us who could aid us by pointing out the heavenly harmony on these considerations:

"Slavery is not a sin in itself."
 "Slavery is an evil."
 "Slavery is a God sent institution."
 "No Christian can be a pro-slavery man."
 "Slavery was raised up by God."
 "We will work for its destruction."²

¹Ibid.

²R. B. Anderson, "Loose Screws in the Schools," Skandinaven, January 2, 1877.

Anderson wondered how the institution of slavery could be both an evil and yet not a "sin in itself." He expressed confusion also about the other contradictions in the statement of the Synod. He used the slavery question to get to the illogical position of the Synod on the common school. Next, Anderson took quotations from the writings of Rev. B.

J. Muus:

I look at the common school which after its principle must work against the Kingdom of God.

The common school draws the children away from the only Saviour's way.

These subjects which the district school gives instruction in is necessary knowledge and deserves our honor, and credit, and as state institutions for the citizens they must be supported.¹

To these statements of Muus Anderson gave the following commentary and raised several questions:

How can we support an institution which 'after its principle must work against the Kingdom of God, and which draws the children away from the only Saviour's way?' This goes beyond my understanding. Pastor Muus is supposed to know logic, a subject I have not learned at the College at Decorah.² When I was there we were given no instruction in that subject and therefore I beg your forgiveness.³

Now Anderson turned his guns on the Synod and quoted from a report of the Synod:

¹Ibid.

²Philosophy was not taught at Luther College for several years. The early leaders of the Synod distrusted philosophy. See Belgum page 101.

³Ibid.

The American teachers are without religion and can not be otherwise. The youth learn in them those things which belong to this life which seems to be the only thing to learn, as if this were the only worthwhile thing to think about and work for.¹

A quotation from the Evangelical Lutheran Church Times was given by Anderson:

It was pointed out in the church meeting in Decorah that we do not have the right to tear down the common school but rather thank God also for this gift.²

To this Anderson replied:

Thank God for this gift? How can we thank God for the places of learning where the youth learn the things which belong to this life as the only important thing and that which alone is the only thing to think about and work for. Would it not be better to say that this gift came from the devil?³

Anderson then turned to Professor F. A. Schmidt in building his case:

I dare to say as one who seeks this country's best, and therefore I do not want to speak against the common school. It is necessary and it is helpful. We could not get along without it in my opinion.⁴

But Anderson said that Schmidt also made this statement:

This kind of school, which gives a full education both intellectual and moral instruction without God's Word, and without Christ are the 'Gates of Hell.'⁵

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

Anderson admitted that in the American school no instruction was given in religion although the Bible could be read each morning without comment. In America religious instruction belonged to the parents and to the church's Sunday School. He then challenged Schmidt to show him a favor by enlightening his reason as to why he did not want to speak against the necessary and essential American common school which he had called the "Gates of Hell." "I believe," said Anderson, "that the terrible things which have been said about our school system does great harm to our people. Many of them do not want to send their children to the 'Gates of Hell' or to these schools which are established for those who are against Christianity."¹

Anderson lamented that his charges against the Synod did not answer his argument in defense of the American school, but they would rather "scream loudly that I am trying to destroy the Norwegian Synod."² However, he said that the friends of the common school should not be afraid of their cries and to remember that there are some very good friends of the American school in the Norwegian Synod. Anderson also felt that those who opposed the common school were the Synod's most dangerous enemies.³

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

Before Anderson had sent in his article to the Skandinaven, Schmidt had made a reply in a paper called Northwestern and attempted to clarify what he meant by calling the American common school "the Gates of Hell." Professor Schmidt said, "In my English speech I did not mention either the 'common school' or any other educational institution. Although I will not deny that people who do not listen carefully what one really says can misunderstand, but one who listens carefully and understands the speaker will remember what he has said and written before. They may judge the speaker and his ideas."¹ Schmidt gave a lengthy but evasive answer. To this Anderson remarked, "You should note that the Professor in his explanations is very unclear about the common school. He does not deny that he used the words 'Gates of Hell' in describing the schools. I assume the Professor was talking about 'real' not 'ethereal' schools."² Anderson charged that Schmidt talked in such general and evasive language about schools that he actually said nothing. But Anderson insisted that Schmidt "must have had his eyes on some existing schools when he spoke about the state schools which were the 'Gates of Hell.'"³

An anonymous writer wrote an article entitled, "Professor Anderson and the Common School," in which the writer

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

said that "Professor Anderson is really the one who has put the 'yeast in the ale' and now it flows in all directions. His writings in the Skandinaven were as blasphemous as that of a boy."¹ As for the common school the writer said, "Anyone who wishes to make use of the wonderful English school can do as he pleases; as far as I am concerned, my children have never made use of that school and will never attend that school. I guess I will not be like other people then."² The writer complained that a Norwegian girl learned a little English and then she was promoted to a teaching position in the American school even if she could barely write the alphabet, and her salary was twenty-five to thirty dollars a month. On the other hand, a Norwegian religious school teacher must be satisfied with half that amount. In addition, the Norwegian school must be plain and simple.³ But, he continued that in spite of these limitations he would continue to send his children to the religious school.

Many laymen at this time wrote on the school question. In one letter entitled, "A Layman's Viewpoint On the School Question," the writer, again anonymous and a supporter of the Synod's position, said that the pastors were correct in their enthusiasm for religion, "but this zeal in the

¹"Professor Anderson and the Common School," Skandinaven, February 13, 1877.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

pursuit of their calling made the ministers opinionated."¹ He said that it would be unwise to combine the secular and religious schools. The ministers tended to give "all subjects a religious emphasis, so that the secular part of the curriculum becomes very poor."² This writer did not favor giving ministers the responsibility for secular education and thus "place it in the narrow confines of the religious schools which would be clergy dominated."³ However, he was quick to point out that he held "the ministers in high esteem as any other Lutheran" and recognized their worth, "but if you mix citizen education and religion, it will be harmful and a hindrance."⁴

Another layman who called himself, "Mere," wrote in a letter to the editor, "Professor Anderson praises the common school to the sky, Mr. Askevold brings it down below ground, and Mr. Lillisund is moderate and gives the schools a place on the earth."⁵ "Mere" pointed out that Professor Anderson said that he had never seen the common school as despicable as the religious schools. But the Professor did

¹"A Layman's Viewpoint On the School Question," Skandinaven, January 2, 1877.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵"Something Added to the School Question," Skandinaven, January 2, 1877.

not know about the common schools in the Norwegian settlements and "this he (Anderson) knows if he will think about it. The teachers are the very worst as a rule. They are inferior in their knowledge and in their teaching ability and could not teach in the American community."¹ Furthermore, Professor Anderson knew that the English language was a dead language among the Norwegian Americans. When the children began their schooling they could say only a few words in the English language, such as, "stoven," "pailen," "fielden."² He asked what could be expected from a "Yankee teacher who is not very good as a teacher? The children sit around as if they were deaf and dumb. They act like parrots."³ "Mere" then went on to describe the teachers' methods. "The teacher says a few words. The parrots say them over and over again until they are somewhat correct. They learn the sound of the words, but what it means is something else. It is a mechanical and not a fruitful education. No real teaching or learning is going on in these schools."⁴ Then the writer commented that there were some people who think these schools are the very best. The parents should realize that they must get "teachers who could give the

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

thoughts with the words."¹ As for the religious schools they have a right to function and they ought to work together with the common school. "The common school and the religious school are two educators which reach out their hands in this great work to make mankind enlightened."² As for the religious school, "When we tell ourselves how fortunate we are that the false state church is dead and buried in this country why do we then wish that it should rear its head in the common school?"³ The writer continued, "The kind of thinking that goes through Askevold's writings is this, 'those in the common school do not learn Christian teaching,' therefore it is heathen. Because it is heathen, it is immoral; therefore Christian parents with a clear conscience cannot make use of them."⁴ The writer said this kind of thinking was false, because it rested on a false premise. It was true that religious education was very important, "but this does not mean that Christianity should be the main subject in the common school. Religious instruction can and should be in the church."⁵ The common school should not be classified as unchristian and heathen because it does

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

not teach Christian dogmas. It is wrong "that Norwegians with the deepest hatred speak about the Americans 'as a big herd of unbaptized heathen' whose schools are heathen schools, pick pocket institutions, where Christian people must not set their foot."¹

The Synod's position was reiterated by a writer who called himself "Lader," supposedly a layman farmer. He first praised the ministers for their efforts in establishing Christian schools where there would be instruction in English "so that we do not need to send our children to the common school which breaks down the Christian faith."² It was true, Farmer Lader pointed out, that they had many commitments. "We farmers have many obligations, religious schools, high schools, churches, ministers, foreign missions, and home missions, but if we have a 'good will we can pull a great load.'"³ It was true, he admitted, that it would be expensive to establish religious schools which were comparable to the district schools.⁴ Perhaps the only way that this could be done was for the richer districts to assist the poorer. Of particular concern to him were the "big

¹Ibid.

²"Also an Ides," Skandinaven, July 3, 1877.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

grasshopper districts in the west where people do not have food or clothing."¹

But the writer said that the extreme financial hardship of establishing these schools was only for a short time. He now wished to give the Skandinaven "a bit of secret information,"² and the plan was that the Norwegian Synod and the Missouri Synod would form a mighty union, "and when we have gotten our Christian schools in good running order we will do the same as the Catholics have done and demand our part of the state money for our schools."³ The writer said the argument they would use was that the Lutheran church schools taught, besides religion, all the secular subjects, and therefore, as tax paying citizens they had a right to have some of these funds for the education of their children. These Lutherans could not attend the common school because

¹The writer gives some interesting information on school finances of the period: "Now every district has three to four months of religious school. The religious school teacher's salary is twenty-five dollars a month and his board is in addition to his salary. The most a religious teacher can receive is almost one hundred dollars. But if we now wish to establish congregational schools where besides religious training there will be instruction in English, we will need to have at least eight months of school. When you double the school year you must double the teacher's pay from one hundred dollars to two hundred dollars. The minimum salary we could offer him would be forty dollars a month board included, $40 \times 8 = \$320.00$. The teacher's salary will go to over \$300.00 a year. But this is not all; we will need a good school house and supplies." Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

their conscience would not permit them to send their children to the religionless common school. Then in the colleges of the denominations the students would be told that the Lutherans had the "only pure doctrine,"¹ and when they had gotten their diplomas and had gone back to their settlements, they would be sent to the legislature where together with the Catholics they would receive state funds for their congregational schools. This plan called for the large denominations to ask for state funds first and after this the smallest groups would ask for their share.² Then followed these apocalyptic words:

When these churches will get their share, the ungodly common school will be no more. The word will be stricken from the earth. When that happens we that remain will organize a feast of jubilation and sing the Te Deum three times. Because the common school, that mighty bulwark and obnoxious hoax is leveled to the ground.³

As for knowledge, said the eloquent farmer Lader, it was dangerous because it tended to make people conceited. Their ministers did not wish to deny them education and knowledge, but, after all, "it is not so much quantity as quality that counts."⁴

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

One would expect the defenders of the common school to answer this scathing attack on the American common school. R. B. Anderson replied that if the Synod got this plan across "it would be the last step. We could then say farewell to the common school."¹ Should the Synod's viewpoint be accepted by the majority of Norwegian people, said Anderson, and be carried out in the future by their children, "then it could easily happen that our grandchildren with the Catholics could celebrate over the ruins of the common school."² Anderson exclaimed, "Oh, God! Don't let this take place!"³

However, not all those who favored the Synod's position were quite as radical as "Lader," or whoever he might have been. C. Lillisund was a Norwegian school teacher who took a more moderate position. Lillisund believed that the widespread discussion of the school question in the Scandinavian newspapers had been profitable. He wished to clarify his position as not being the same as Bernt Askevold's. Rather, "I want the common school, I respect it, I will seek to build it up. A man from McFarland, Wisconsin, wrote in the Skandinaven that I want to tear down both the Skandinaven and the common school. What kind of words are these? Have I ever said that I want to tear down

¹R. B. Anderson, Skandinaven, August, 1877.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

the Skandinaven? I like the paper, and I don't think he should have said that."¹ Lillisund went on to express his views on the common school. "Now listen," he wrote, "and don't misunderstand me again! I love and respect the common school, the school of the people, the United States system, and the Norwegian common school system. I like them as educational institutions for all. The common school is free. It has been established for a free people. I love the school because it is religionless. In this way the people have the right to attend school irregardless of what sect they belong to."²

However, after Lillisund had said some complimentary things about the American common school he then began his criticism. He wrote, "Because the schools are religionless does not mean that these schools should be without order and lacking morality."³ Take, for example, the so called "spelling school." "Who in the world has seen greater monkey play, or parrot squealing."⁴ He said that any Christian ought to get angry over these conditions. The problem with the common school was the careless, indifferent attitude which permeated it. Lillisund said the fault was with the parents themselves

¹"The Common School," Skandinaven, April 17, 1877.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

who ought to manage the schools better. And often the problem was with the teachers in the common school. All that many of them knew was "a little United States history, geography, and arithmetic, etc."¹ But even the poor teachers were really the fault of the people who failed to get the right kind of school superintendents who gave school teaching credentials to just about anyone. Lillisund wrote that the superintendents should choose good teachers, both men and women, not "flighty boys and girls who are often wilder than the school children themselves."²

When it came to the charge, however, that the common school was religionless, Lillisund said that this was what it must be in America. "Just think if someone would get one sect, one kind of faith in the common school. The school here in America must be without religion because of the laws of the land."³ He said it was the duty of all to keep the common school free of religion and have no part with those who would follow the example of the Catholics and some Norwegians who "are sailing in their wake and are doing all possible to get their religion introduced into the common school . . . but we can see that this would be very dangerous

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

because there is the possibility that a large church could destroy it for everyone else."¹

Although the Synod continued to slowly and painfully build their own school system, things were not going well in the late 1870's. This was illustrated by a letter appearing in the Fædrelandet og emigranten written by a Norwegian religious school teacher. He admitted that the religious school was needed in America but that conditions in the church schools were not good. He raised the question as to why the conditions of the religious schools were so poor. His first reason for their lowly condition was that so little consideration was given to them. "For example," he wrote, "in the school district meetings where the religious school is to be discussed we see few of the people who ought to be present."² This was true, he pointed out, even if the meetings were held on time. The people excused themselves by saying that they did not have the time to attend.

Another reason, said the discouraged religious school teacher, for the poor condition of the Norwegian religious school was the irregular attendance of the students. Even in the older settlements where there was some organization they only had two or three months of Norwegian School a year. This was good, he pointed out, but much more could be done.

¹Ibid.

²"Again A Word about the School," Fædrelandet og emigranten, October 24, 1877.

The real problem was the irregular attendance of the students. The teacher wrote, "Everyone can think for themselves; what fruit and what future can we expect from this school when the children come for one or two days and then are absent for three or four? You cannot, naturally, talk about progress under these conditions. The problem again is the parental carelessness and irresponsibility."¹

The third reason why the religious schools were in the condition they were in was due, in part, to the manner in which they treated the religious teacher. He said that ministers received a call from a congregation; the teacher also had a calling, but he was treated quite differently from the minister. He wrote, "It is this way when a district votes for a school; they hire a teacher if there is someone at hand who will take the job. Then they speak to him as if they had just hired someone who was going to labor for them for a few days . . . They do not seem to care about his qualifications and education. In this manner the teacher is looked upon as a day laborer, or as a month laborer."²

But there were other serious problems in the religious school as well. One of the major problems had to do with the common school that took the best time of the year for their terms. This left the inconvenient times for the

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

religious school and when the teacher was finished teaching, "He takes his hat and goes; often he has gotten only half of the salary that the common school teacher receives."¹ The religious teacher must then seek other work where he could get it; often he must be satisfied with teaching only two or three months of the year.² This teacher complained, "Under these circumstances one need not wonder that a teacher gets discouraged, nervous, and careless, and it is a weary kind of life."³ The attitude of the layman was often expressed in the fall of the year when the question of getting a teacher for the religious school was talked about. The dialogue often went like this, "What will we do for a teacher this year?" "Oh," replied the man, "someone will show up."⁴ This attitude of the layman made the teacher feel "strange" and "unwanted."

Another problem of the religious school was the rapid turn-over of teachers. The writer said that the teacher would leave as he came to know the ability of the children. There could not be good education under these conditions.⁵

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵For another treatment of the same problem see O. S. Stoutlund's article, "Again A Word about Our Religious

Although J. A. Johnson was a staunch supporter of the American common school, he was not blind to its faults any more than the religious teacher already referred to was to the Synod's religious schools. Johnson was much encouraged by the great interest in the school question, "Good papers are now filled with long articles about universal education and the proper rearing of youth. Twenty years ago it was a task to get it into the papers."¹

Johnson understood the opponents of the common school, and, therefore, the friends of popular education must band together to oppose those who oppose the common school. The friends of public education knew that the common school needed improvement. Questions ought to be asked of this nature, "Does the school live up to its purpose? Is it fulfilling its duties?"² There had been, however, improvement in school facilities, Johnson said, for example, "Most of the schools are now equipped with quite good wall maps and globes."³ He said the need now was for competent teachers. Better facilities were important, but teachers

School." Stoutlund calls attention to the heavy load the teachers must carry and the unpleasant conditions of teaching. Fædrelandet og emigranten, January 16, 1876.

¹J. A. Johnson, "The Common School Will Not Measure Up to Its Aims Until It Has Permanent Teachers," Skandinaven, July 3, 1877.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

were teaching poorly because they knew little about the subject matter themselves. Therefore the students had not learned to think for themselves. These teachers had been taught by old-fashioned methods and this was what they taught the students.

R. B. Anderson in an article for the Skandinaven seemed to complete a year of tremendous controversy over the American school among the Norwegian-Americans. Anderson said that the question was not really whether or not the common school should be eliminated. True there were those extremists who in their less rational moments made statements about destroying the common school, but this was unusual. Anderson wrote that the real question, "is whether the Norwegians in America shall make use of them or not."¹ The Synod's ministers had said that the common school should be maintained for "other citizens or other immigrant children."² But the Synod would continue to establish their own schools so that their children need not use the common school. Anderson said that their position had been that the common school would be used as a temporary measure. He was concerned that if the attitude of the ministers was adopted, "it is not difficult to see that the entire American school

¹R. B. Anderson, "The School Issue," Skandinaven, August 21, 1877.

²Ibid.

system would be forced into a most dangerous position."¹ Anderson maintained that the friends of American education "take the viewpoint that the common school is for all the country's children."² It was the duty of every citizen to see to it that the best men were elected to serve on the school board, and if this was done they would see to it that good teachers were selected. He wrote, "If you have a good teacher, then you have a good school. The school is just what the voters in the school district make it. Therefore the school is always like a mirror where each can see themselves."³ In districts where people were concerned with the school they had a good school, according to Anderson, and where there was apathy a poor school. And what of the districts where large numbers of Norwegians were found? He wrote, "In the great Norwegian settlements where our fellow Norwegians are in charge of the common school the school must 'sail its own boat'; where there are congregational schools the parents must take them out of the common school and send them to their own schools."⁴ Anderson expressed some strong feelings about this practice, "I must say that this is not fair, and it is not fair to the Republic. They

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

are forsaking the greatest cause which the Republic has laid in their hands."¹ He went on to complain that the Synod had established congregational schools in both Madison, Wisconsin, and Decorah, Iowa, but he said, "The common school is a thousand times better than these 'side-shows' which have been established."²

When the question was asked about the value of religious education, Anderson said that it was indeed important but it must not come into conflict with the common school. He wrote, "Give the children as much religious teaching as you can, but never take them out of the common school. You can teach them religion at home, you can send them to the Sunday School, and you can establish church schools if they are not in session when the common school is in session. You can, if you ask, get the common school building to use to run your religious school after the common school term is over."³

Anderson now took Halle Steensland, his early ally in the fight for the common school, to task for swinging over to the Synod's position on the common school. "When he lived in the country," wrote Anderson, "he sent his children to the common school. But now he lives in the city and sends

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

them to the church school."¹ But Anderson said that he was not alone in this practice, for many of the Synod's pastors send their children to the common school. To Anderson Steensland's² position was just like the Synod's when he "uses high sounding words that he is in favor of the common school. Then naturally, his words have the same impact as H. A. Preus or Pastor Muus' words when they preach their long sermons and use such beautiful language about the necessity of the common school."³ Anderson could hardly imagine what it would be like in the United States if Steensland's and the Synod's views would be accepted. It would be anarchy. He wrote, "I do call on the Norwegian people once more to be careful and stand in their places. The practice of not using the common school and separating themselves by building their own is a dangerous thing and must not develop. The common school must be supported and attended by our children at all times."⁴

The reason for this viewpoint on the part of Anderson was based on the conviction that, if the Norwegian remained

¹Ibid.

²Halle Steensland defended his actions of taking his children out of the public school, and when he moved to Madison placed them in the religious school. "Declaration from Consul Halle Steensland," Skandinaven, August 7, 1877.

³R. B. Anderson, "The School Issue," Skandinaven, August 21, 1877.

⁴Ibid.

culturally isolated, they would have no influence on the American people or American society. For it was the American school where the culture was learned and where the English language was taught. "The doors are open to this country's schools. The high schools, academies, and universities . . . The American does not make a difference, but invites the immigrant child to the school desk, to sit together with their own. Why not accept this generous invitation?"¹ Anderson said that if they would allow them to go to the common school, they were "saving their future generations from isolation and doing the work of a slave; but if you do not do this, the sins of the parents will follow the parents for many generations."²

A layman wrote of his concern with the shortage of teachers in 1878. He noted that the Synod in their June meeting would consider the school question again. This layman called for a couple of seminaries (teachers' training schools) on both sides of the Mississippi. He wrote, "If we cannot build large stone buildings costing twenty to thirty thousand dollars, let us be satisfied with wood buildings. The luxury of just getting prestige is not necessary in our time."³ He went on to say, "The generations who follow us

¹Skandinaven, August, 1877.

²Ibid.

³"School Teacher's Seminaries," Faedrelandet og emigranten, May 15, 1878.

will inherit our hard work and build beautiful buildings if they wish to."¹ He proposed that the small districts which could not build congregational schools could follow the example of the Missouri Synod. The smaller churches could use their ministers as both teacher of the religious school and minister of the church. The pastor could then hold school five or six months of the year and preach God's Word on Sunday."² He would indeed be a hard working pastor if this plan were adopted. The minister, it was pointed out, would then be available at all times to tend to the congregation in sickness and in health. He would also teach the confirmation class and help in the organization of various youth groups. The plan the writer admitted was the "practice of the Missouri Synod and it is working and this is the reason they have a strength which so many value and praise."³

Writing in 1881 a "P. Oplo" commented on the poor conditions of the religious schools and his plan for improving them. "First, there must be a humbling on the part of all who have been indifferent before God about Christian education."⁴ In most places religious school was kept one or two months of the year and then the children attended

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴P. Oplo, Fædrelandet og emigranten September 8, 1881.

only half the time. And when the children did go to the religious school you could not "pour it into the children's hearts. No, it must fall as fine rain."¹ According to Oplo, teaching conditions were poor in the religious school and teachers' salaries worse. If teachers could be assured of a salary, there would not be such a high turn-over of teachers in the religious schools.

The writer was a teacher with twenty years experience who became so discouraged by the poor administration of the schools that he was forced to stop teaching.

It would seem that as the decade of the 1870's came to a close the Norwegian Lutheran Synod itself was not too satisfied with the progress of the religious elementary schools.² "Even in settlements where congregational schools had been in existence for several years they seldom build new school buildings. The reason for this is because they (the parents) do not want to be bothered and give money for the support of the schools, and therefore do not put their hands to the work in Christ's name."³

¹Ibid.

²Only about 1800 students were attending the Synod schools in 1879. A writer for the Synod comments, "This number is much too low when you think that only 1800 get a good foundation and generous religious teaching. And who knows how many of these are those who the parents send only a few months and not the entire school year?" Kirkelig maanedstidende, May 16, 1879.

³Ibid.

It became quite clear that by the end of the 1870's the controversy died a natural death.¹ The majority of Norwegians continued to send their children to the American common school, and the Norwegian Lutheran Synod could never accomplish what they set out to do in Manitowoc in 1866, that of building a solid parochial system after the model provided for them by the Missouri Lutheran Synod.

The American school controversy within the Norwegian-American community has been traced in this chapter. It was a controversy not without its share of complexity and ranging from moments when the defenders of their views did so with reason and Christian charity to moments of personal vindictiveness and acrimony. The debate over the American school in the Norwegian settlements was particularly extensive and heated because of the opposition of the largest and most powerful religious body among the Norwegian-Americans, the Norwegian Lutheran Synod. The Synod opposed the American school and sought to establish its own school system patterned after that of the Missouri Lutheran Synod.

The plan of the Synod for its own school and its rejection of the American school system generated a counter force led by a group of capable and articulate laymen, some within the Synod, others without. These laymen were

¹Laurence M. Larson, The Changing West and Other Essays (Northfield: N.A.H.A., 1937), p. 146.

democratic in sentiment and opposed the elitist views of the Synod on the school question. They supported and defended the American school system, particularly the common school.

CHAPTER V

AN EVALUATION OF NORWEGIAN-AMERICAN CULTURE AND THE AMERICAN SCHOOL PROBLEM

The controversy over the worth and role of the American school to the immigrant was by no means confined to the Norwegian-American communities during the latter half of the nineteenth century, nor can it be said that all native born Americans saw the common school as an unmitigated blessing. Many Americans born of old native stock viewed the school as a nonsectarian institution which no longer taught the true Protestant orthodox faith, and thus the common school of Horace Mann could never fulfill its function. Many felt that education without religion neither could nor would succeed. This criticism was not without some historical merit for up to the nineteenth century there had never been education without a religious emphasis of some kind. If many Americans could not accept the nonsectarian American school, it is little wonder that the immigrants often found it more difficult to do so and therefore raised some questions about the school's purpose and worth.

The immigrants' criticism of the American schools was more vocal in the period after the close of the Civil

War and extended into the twentieth century. In the ante-bellum period when immigration of Norwegians was relatively small there was generally an acceptance of the American School and an acknowledgment of the need to learn the English language and to become "Americanized." This was not because the immigrants had a great love for the American common school and American society generally, but apparently because they sensed a feeling of insignificance and futility in trying to perpetuate their culture in a strange land when survival alone was foremost in their minds. However, this attitude of resignation to the inevitability of losing their culture and language gave way after the Civil War to the belief that the ethnic life style could be and indeed must be preserved in America.

Like the Norwegians, the four ethnic groups examined in Chapter Two feared "Americanization" and advocated by resolute determination the perpetuation of their culture, language, and faith, and the establishment of their own school systems. There were exceptions, of course, to the prevailing attitude of the immigrants. Outstanding men like the German, Carl Schurz, the Hollander, the Reverend Henrich Peter Scholte, and among the Norwegians, John A. Johnson and Rasmus B. Anderson, were but a few of the immigrant leaders who accepted acculturation but still remained faithful to their ethnic group.

It is an interesting social phenomenon that the ethnic groups studied became more nationalistic and ethnocentric in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The second and third generation immigrants were often more nationalistic than were their fathers and grandfathers who disembarked to make their new home in America. It was this "clannishness" or the immigrant's desire to perpetuate his culture that the native American often resented. But the immigrant in return resented the Yankee Sabbath, Boston morals, and prohibition-values that the American considered important. In addition, the native American's dislike of any foreign language also embittered the immigrant. The Bennett Law in Wisconsin was an attempt to prohibit the use of foreign languages in the public school by the native Americans and was bitterly opposed by all immigrant groups and successfully repealed. Even the most liberal leaders of the ethnic groups branded this law as nativistic in character.

A popular myth in America has been the notion that the native American and the immigrant viewed America as some kind of "melting pot." This concept of America was latent in the sentimental sonnet written by Emma Lazarus (1843-1887) and inscribed on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty:

Give me your tired, your poor,
 Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
 The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,
 Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed, to me,
 I lift my lamp beside the golden door.¹

Lazarus seemed to express the prevailing attitude of the native American in the lines, "The wretched refuse of your teeming shore." Perhaps this was the attitude of the American who gladly used the cheap labor of the immigrant in the development of a nation. But the immigrant, although poor, disliked being labeled as "wretched refuse," and, although things might have been bad in the nation of their origin, they looked back in love not anger. As Waldemar Ager pointed out, the native American wanted the immigrants from Europe to be melted in the pot with other ethnic groups, but the native American saw no need of getting into the pot with the "Russian, the Pole, or the Jew." The European was a cheap source of labor but not a social equal to the American. It is of little wonder that the immigrant resented this attitude and sought cultural isolation rather than acculturation into the dominant society.

As a rule the ethnic immigrant groups opposed the American public school which was viewed as an institution that would destroy their ethnic solidarity or their religious

¹Emma Lazarus, "The New Colossus," Poetry for Pleasure (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1960), p. 290.

faith.¹ The obvious solution then was to establish their own schools where the process and aims of education could be controlled.

The major focus of the dissertation was on the controversy over the American schools among the Norwegian-Americans. When we look in depth at this struggle, we see that a major issue was the relationship between the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the Missouri Lutheran Synod. Part of the blame for forcing the Norwegian Synod, the largest of the Norwegian church bodies, to seek fraternal and educational opportunities with the Missouri Synod must be placed on the Norwegian Lutheran Church in Norway for not sending the pastors the Synod repeatedly asked for and so desperately needed for the churches on the frontier. The theological faculty and leaders of the State Church in Norway questioned the affiliation between the Norwegian Synod and Missouri but did little or nothing to alleviate the critical shortage of pastors.

¹Theodore Blegen has written that the Swedes did not seem to have debated the value of the American school as did the Norwegians. He says that the controversy over the American school "was wholly lacking among the Swedish American Lutherans." Theodore C. Blegen, Norwegian Migration to America 1825-1860 (Northfield: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1931), pp. 243-244. Although it is true that it never reached the proportions of the struggle of the Norwegians, the Swedes were not free of controversy. Leaders of the Swedish Lutherans like Erik Norelius took a position not too unlike the leadership of the Norwegian Synod.

After the Norwegian Synod began sending their young men to the Seminary in St. Louis just prior to the Civil War, they came under the charismatic spell of C. F. W. Walther who was to mentor the Norwegian Synod leadership and reshape their theology and social thinking. The leadership of the Norwegian Synod never ceased to refer to the excellent theological education they received under professors Gisle Johnson and C. P. Caspari; but clearly the influence of these men declined as the pastors came more and more under the influence of Walther. An illustration of Walther's increased power over men like J. A. Ottesen and U. V. Koren can be seen in the slavery question. The position of Walther and the Missouri Synod was that "slavery in itself is not sin" and this became the position of the leadership of the Norwegian Synod. When the position of the Oslo Theological Faculty was sought, the faculty replied that this was basically a socio-historical question and not a theological one and therefore could not be decided solely on the basis of Scripture.

Not only did the locus of influence and authority shift from Oslo, Norway, to St. Louis, Missouri, but with the transition came a change in the theological position of the Norwegian Synod's pastors. It would appear that U. V. Koren was influenced by Walther to the extent that he rejected the "Second Form" on election which was the one held by the Lutheran State Church in Norway. Over the years

Koren became so impressed with the Calvinistic views of Walther that he claimed that this was the view taught by Professor Gisle Johnson at the University and had class notes to prove it. Koren was possibly correct in saying that he had notes on the "First Form" because Professor Johnson, probably in his lectures, presented the Calvinistic view as well as the Lutheran "Second Form."

As in the controversy over the place of the layman in the life of the church, as well as in the slavery and election debates, it can be clearly seen that the pastors of the Norwegian Synod were following the rather elitist views of the leadership of the Missouri Synod--views which the majority of democratic-minded, and independent-minded Norwegians would resent and eventually revolt against.

The alliance with the Germans of Missouri was disastrous because it blinded the eyes of the leadership of the Norwegian Synod to the historical and social differences between the Germans and the Norwegians. It should have been clear to the pastors of the Synod that the Norwegians were not the homogeneous followers of Martin Stephen who had organized the Gesellschaft which settled in Missouri, a slave state and later a member of the confederacy. With the exception of the Norwegians in Texas very few Norwegians settled south of the Mason Dixon line. Both those who came before the Civil War and those after had no sympathy for slavery, the South, or the Democratic Party. The Norwegians

became ardent Republicans. The Saxons in Missouri continued to support State Rights and the Democrats prior to and during the Civil War. Probably the reason that they did so was that they wanted to develop their colony and religion with the least amount of opposition from outside influences.

Another reason for the Norwegians' opposition to the Missouri affiliations and the oft heard cry, "that is Missouri," in the Synod meetings was the Missouri Synod's approach to church and social problems. The Missouri Synod model was used by the leadership of the Norwegian Synod who failed to see that, although it was a workable one for the Germans, it did not work with the Norwegians. What the Norwegian leadership did not understand was that the Norwegian had come out of a different cultural and social milieu in Norway. The Norwegian immigrant had left Norway primarily for economic reasons, but he was still influenced by the new intellectual and political events taking place in Norway. Historically, the Norwegian had always had a love of freedom which had been nurtured for centuries in the bygders of home valleys. Freedom had been revived in Norway after the generally liberal Constitution of May 17, 1814. This spirit of liberty was promoted and romanticized in poetry and literature; political leaders like Hans Nielsen Hauge promoted in the Norwegian people opposition to the Danish appointed officials who were often oppressive and always arrogant and class conscious.

It would seem that the Norwegian Synod's leadership who came from the ruling class of Norway found it rather easy to identify with the exclusive and aristocratic white gentlemen of the Southern States. Many of the Norwegian laymen within the Norwegian Synod resented this stress on position of the clergy and the assigning of inferior status to the laymen. It is no wonder that the egalitarian editor, Knud Langland, despised the class consciousness of the Norwegian clergy in Norway as a young man and disliked these same elements in the aristocratic leadership of the Norwegian Synod. He often expressed his dislike of these anti-democratic tendencies in the pages of the Skandinaven. In addition, the Eielsen Synod, the heirs of Hans Nielsen Hauge, were egalitarian and seemed best to express the philosophy and thinking of so many of the laymen of the Norwegian Synod. However, many of these same laymen disagreed with the church practices of the Eielsen Synod, but they did not disapprove of the Synod's opposition to slavery and their support of the American common school.

There was in the minds of the pastors of the Norwegian Synod a desire to isolate the Norwegians from the dominant American society. Some realized that at best it was a holding action, but nevertheless they were committed to it. Acculturation could be stalled by stressing Norwegian as a spoken language in the home, school, and church. Thus it would not only save the language, "the language of the

home and prayer," but it would save the Norwegians for the Lutheran church as well and keep them away from the Yankee churches. Perhaps this was one of the reasons for the intense opposition of the Synod's pastors to the Scandinavian Lutheran Educational Society whose principal aim was to place Scandinavian Lutheran professors in American colleges and universities. The President of the Synod, the Reverend H. A. Preus, pointed out that the Synod was not opposed to education, libraries, and good literature, but that it was highly dangerous to send immature Norwegian young people to American schools. Here they would come in contact with American young people who might question the religion of these "backward and dogmatic" Lutheran students. The simple fact was that youth educated in sectarian schools simply would not believe any longer in a conservative Lutheran faith such as the Norwegian Synod and the Missouri Synod.

The Norwegian Synod's views on the American school system has been dealt with at some length and has traced the internal struggle within the Norwegian-American community. There was controversy over the public school in other ethnic groups, but in the Norwegian community the opposition was perhaps more apparent, at least from the Norwegian's point of view, because the largest religious group in opposition to the American school system was the Norwegian Lutheran Synod. The other Norwegian Lutheran groups supported, by-in-large, the American school.

Although there had been opposition to the American school before the Civil War, the position of the Norwegian Synod was not made clear until the Synod met at Manitowoc, Wisconsin, in the summer of 1866. It was here that they clarified their position and argued over the best word to describe the American common school. On the surface it would seem to be a question of semantics. At first, the adjective "heathen" was used to describe American schools. One might ascribe the poor choice of words to the ignorance of immigrants who simply did not know the English language very well. There might be some measure of truth in this explanation; however, it must be pointed out that they knew enough ancient history to assert that Socrates was a "heathen" who commanded great respect, and therefore the native American should not feel too badly about being identified with Socrates. However, before the meeting was over the word "religionless" was substituted for "heathen." They concluded that this word would not sound so badly in the ears of the native Americans. "Religionless" was used widely and repeatedly during the controversy to describe the American common school.

In a study of the old Norwegian Synod one soon realizes that these were strong men not given to compromise but given to polarization of ideas and attitudes. As with the slavery question so with the common school. But if it was not compromise, then it was a strange inconsistency.

They said that slavery was both " good and evil" and that the common school was also good and evil.¹ It would seem that they could at times argue from whatever set of assumptions best suited the occasion.

The Norwegian Synod's model for a school system was that of the Missouri Synod which worked very well indeed for the Saxon Lutherans. It was not that the leadership of the Synod opposed education, for they were educated men themselves and knew its value. Pastors like H. A. Preus realized that the Norwegian without education would be forever relegated to doing lowly menial tasks. Preus outlined a complete educational system which included the elementary, middle, academy, and finally the college. The students then would not return to the Norwegian settlements with their heads full of American, sectarian, and liberal notions. The plan of the Scandinavian Lutheran Educational Society for Scandinavian Lutheran professors would not work. The only way

¹ Belgum claims that pastors like Koren and Ottesen were logicians. He has written " . . . whether because of formal training in Aristotelian logic or through informal practice in dialectic, such pastors as Koren and Ottesen were formidably logical. Many an opponent in theological strife during their half-century of labor in the transplanted church must have become ruefully aware of their superiority in argumentation." Gerhard Lee Belgum, "The Old Norwegian Synod in America, 1853-1890" (unpublished thesis, Yale University, 1957), p. 101. Belgum cites C. L. Clausen's experience with Ottesen, H. A. Preus, and Laurence Larsen in the slavery controversy. It might be added that it would not be much of a task to defeat a pastor with no formal university education in any kind of debate. R. B. Anderson could see no logic in their position on slavery and on the common school. He could see only inconsistency.

that Lutheran orthodoxy could be preserved is for the Synod to do the complete task of education. But laymen like John A. Johnson called for more vocational and practical education. If Norwegians were to have a part in building America, argued Johnson, they must be educated to design and build bridges, buildings, and highways. As Johnson pointed out, the Synod could not nor would not supply this kind of education. This contention of Johnson was born out, for the curriculum of Luther College remained narrowly philological long after the school controversy had ended. It became quite clear as the century progressed that the large majority of Norwegian-Americans would not follow the leadership of the pastors on the school question. This was especially true as the pastors became more and more enchanted by the Missouri Synod.

However, other laymen besides John A. Johnson opposed the Synod's plans to build their own school system. Leaders of the Norwegian-American communities such as Knud Langeland, Rasmus B. Anderson, and others pointed out repeatedly that the Synod did not have the funds necessary to build their own educational system, for it seemed to them to be a matter of finances as much as will and determination. These laymen pointed out that will and determination were admirable virtues, but it took money to erect buildings and pay the salaries of teachers.

The opposition of the laymen was not purely on financial grounds. Men like Rasmus B. Anderson saw the American common school as the "chief cornerstone of the Republic." To Anderson the American school was egalitarian and Jacksonian in spirit. The Norwegian immigrant could still become enraged to think of the humiliation received from the class conscious clergy in Norway, and they were determined that it would not happen in America. They opposed the pastors in the Norwegian press and did it effectively. Some native Americans also opposed the plans of the Synod pastors and accused them of "priestcraft" and of being "monarchists," concepts they considered foreign to America, and there were many Norwegians who conceded that the nativists were right at this point. The laymen came to believe that you could not be a good American and be opposed to the democratic American common school.

The laymen, however, were not blind to the shortcomings of the American school. They admitted the weaknesses of these schools for terms were short, buildings poorly constructed, and teachers too often poorly educated and always poorly paid. But while they fully recognized the shortcomings of the American public schools, they called for the support of all Christian citizens to help make it the kind of institution it ought to be. This line of attack often disarmed the opposition, at least to some degree.

Rasmus B. Anderson acknowledged that there were those individuals who would destroy the American common school if they could. But Anderson did not believe this was the crucial issue. The real issue was, rather, whether the Norwegian immigrants should attend American schools. The Synod had for years talked about developing a parochial system so complete and with such quality that the Norwegians would not need the American schools. Such a plan and such an attitude could only isolate the Norwegian immigrant from the mainstream of American social life. Anderson contended during his long and stormy life that the Norwegians had something to offer the American people and the developing nation. Although Anderson, the Norwegian sage on Carroll Street in Madison, had enemies both in the American and Norwegian community, few would deny that he believed that the Norwegian need not hang his head in shame but could be proud of Norway and Norwegian culture. Furthermore, the Norwegian did not need to renounce his Norwegian culture to be a loyal American. Anderson's entire life was spent in promoting the merits of Scandinavian culture, and he opposed the native American's desire to cut off the immigrant from his cultural roots.

Anderson was joined in this crusade by men like Langeland, Johnson, and later, Rølvaag, who insisted that there need not be a melting pot at all--that the Norwegian could at the same time be a good American and still maintain

and cherish his Norwegian culture and heritage. The average American, however, saw little good in a cultural pluralism but a great deal of value in the concept of America as a melting pot for this would promote the spirit of national unity and loyalty to America alone.

Interestingly enough the question of "cultural pluralism," which troubled the immigrants, has been raised again in our society. Today the Negro in America is seeking an "identity" and a concomitant stress on his racial and cultural heritage from Africa. Thus we hear of the "black" Americans and "Afro-Americans." This raises the question of whether American society can be totally integrated, using the "melting pot" concept, or whether the social situation demands a "cultural pluralism." On this question Kenneth Boulding has written:

Stressing the "melting pot" idea, American society has sought to create through public education a uniform culture. With increased affluence and increased political skill, this ideal can now be called into question. Can we now invent a "mosaic" society, composed of many small subcultures, each of which gives to its participants a sense of community and identity so desperately needed in a mass world, and which can at the same time remain at peace with its neighbors and not threaten to pull the society apart?¹

These leaders of the Norwegians, although they could not articulate it as well as modern observers, believed that

¹Kenneth E. Boulding, "Expecting the Unexpected: The Uncertain Future of Knowledge and Technology," Designing Education for the Future, Vol. I, ed. Edgar L. Morphet and Charles O. Ryan (New York: Citation Press, 1967), p. 212.

the native American or the dominant society had never fully recognized or appreciated the ethnic and cultural diversity of American society. Little sympathy had been shown in their schools for people of different and distinct life patterns. To the nativist in particular it was inconceivable that one could be a "good American" and not have the same tastes and values of the New England Yankee. What men like Anderson and Rølvaag said was that one could indeed be a good American and at the same time not deny but recognize and participate in things Norwegian. To them the public school ought to be a place where Norwegians could learn about America and still appreciate Norwegian culture and heritage. Regretfully, few Yankee teachers in Norwegian communities knew or cared much for Norway or Norwegian culture. To them "the melting pot" filled with immigrants and seasoned with a generous amount of dominant values would produce the kind of man envisioned by Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur in the late 18th century, "The American is a new man, who acts upon new principles; he must therefore entertain new ideas, and form new opinions. From involuntary idleness, servile dependence, penury, and useless labour, he has passed to toils of a very different nature, rewarded by ample subsistence--This is an American."¹ It was this model

¹Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, "Letters from an American Farmer," Literature of the Early Republic, ed. Edwin H. Cady (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1950), p. 289.

and not that of cultural pluralism which was adopted by American educators.¹

With the demise of the Norwegian Lutheran Synod as a power in the Norwegian communities after 1890 its membership dropped from 144,000 to 94,000 members. This came about when the anti-Missourian element left the Synod to form the Brotherhood.

Although the Old Norwegian Lutheran Synod was weakened by the secession of the anti-Missouri element, the old "Decorah Ring" continued to lead what was left of the once powerful Synod. After the death of the leaders such as Koren and Preus, the Synod joined with several other Norwegian Lutheran bodies in a merger in 1917. However, a very small minority refused to join this new alignment and as late as 1925 there was still opposition to the American school. O.M. Norlie, professor at Luther College, wrote in 1925, "The secular schools by their very secular nature, not to speak of their anti-christian spirit in many places, are

¹Calvin Stowe expressed the same sentiment when in a speech he said, "It is altogether essential to our national existence that the foreigners who settle on our soil should cease to be Europeans and become Americans; and as our manners and our institutions are of English origin, and the whole foundation of our society English, it is necessary that they become substantially Anglo-Americans." Transactions of the Fifth Annual Meeting of the Western Literary Institute and College of Professional Teachers (Cincinnati: Executive Committee, 1836), pp. 65-66, as quoted in David B. Tyack (ed.), Turning Points in American Educational History (Waltham, Mass.: Blaisdell Publishing Company, 1967), p. 149.

de-christianizing the land, no matter how much some of them try not to do so."¹ The dogmatic voices and spirit of Koren, Ottesen, Preus, and Muus echo through these words, but the American school controversy was over and had been for many years. The Norwegian immigrant had made his decision. Not only was America as a country his home but the American school, in spite of its weaknesses, was to be his school, an institution of American society which he supported and valued.

¹O. M. Norlie, History of the Norwegian People in America (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1925), p. 377.

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