

# Grace out of Stigma

## The Cultural Self-Management of a Saami Congregation

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Laestadianism is an evangelical and fundamentalist movement *inside* the Lutheran Church, principally in northern FennoScandia and particularly in Saami- and Finnish-speaking communities. This essay considers the historical circumstances in which Laestadian blossomed among the coastal Saami of North Norway. It looks at the changes that were wrought in social relations and value orientations between coastal Saami and the surrounding non-Saami world; in particular, Saami learned to accept (as a measure of grace) their own traditional social arrangements and, compared to non-Saami, their own humble material circumstances. In interpreting the material, recourse is made to the Batesonian distinctions pertaining to processes of *schismogenesis* and *steady state*.

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This is an essay about how the truth of a relationship with God is revealed through the corrupting power of secularity, and about how an ethnic minority turns to good account, by this means, the stigmatized identity attributed to it by the majority population and its institutions. There are debts to acknowledge, incurred while gathering my thoughts, to Henri Bergson (1956) for his discussion of myth in religion as “a counterfeit of experience,” to John Roberts (1964) for his notion of cultural self-management, and to Ruth Benedict (1935) and, even more, Gregory Bateson (1936) for their far-reaching discussions of cultural process. In contemporary terms, the essay is about symbolic opposition (Schwimmer 1972) and ethnopoliitics (Dyck 1985) – from a time before the institutional emergence of the Fourth World among native peoples themselves (Manuel & Postons 1974) or in anthropology (Graburn 1981).

Our congregation is Laestadian – Laestadianism is an evangelical and fundamentalist movement *inside* the Lutheran Church, taking its name from Lars Levi Laestadius (1800–61) who was an ordained pastor in northernmost

Sweden. The movement belongs to northern FennoScandia and particularly to the Saami- and Finnish-speaking communities (Boreman 1954; Sivertsen 1955).<sup>1</sup> The direct concern of this essay is with the Laestadianism among coastal Saami all of whose communities, constituting the majority of the world's Saami population, are along the seaboard of northernmost Norway (Paine 1957b) in the two provinces of Troms and Finnmark.

That Laestadianism has had but a short history makes it implausible to regard it as a “given” or necessary expression of “Saaminess” (*contra* Gjessing 1953, to whom we will return). Instead we are led to consider the historical circumstances in which it blossomed and those in which it is now fading. These circumstances demonstrate the ethnopolitical role of Laestadianism even though Lars Levi himself did not view his evangelism in this light – notwithstanding the facts that his mother was Saami and his parishioners either Finnish-speaking farmers or Saami-speaking reindeer pastoralists. The ethnopolitical component was attached to his evangelism by his parishioners. Through Laestadianism, chang-

es were wrought in social relations and value orientations between coastal Saami and the surrounding non-Saami world; in particular, Saami learn to accept (as a measure of grace) their own traditional social arrangements and, compared to non-Saami, their own humble material circumstances.

The organization of this essay is as follows. Part I opens with a background review of coastal Saami relations with Norwegians prior to Laestadianism, I then turn to Laestadius's message of salvation, and conclude with an account of the Laestadian congregation in coastal Saami communities. In Part II, I explore the nature and force of the changes Laestadianism brought to coastal Saami society and culture through applying Bateson's insights concerning schismogenesis and steady state. Here particular attention is paid to the dynamics of polyethnicity – for interposed between the coastal Saami and the Norwegians were immigrant Finnish-speakers whose preachers disseminated Laestadius's message along this northernmost coastline.

Throughout, I will be especially concerned with the place of the Laestadian congregation in a process of communication, as I think this best illustrates the important ideational role which individual congregations have had in their local communities. Lars Levi Laestadius, we may say, sent out a redemptive message. Certain groups *chose* to receive it; they also made critical emendations to it – in some instances these were incorporated by Laestadius, in other instances they were introduced into the Laestadian communities independent of or despite Laestadius. Clearly the emendations are crucial data. But also, to receive the Laestadian message implies rejection of other “messages” – for example from the clergy of the Lutheran Church (who may well “correct” theirs, as in point of fact they eventually did).

Whereas in a Church there is a great measure of ascription and little flexibility regarding doctrine and ritual, a “congregation” (as I will employ the term throughout) is a religious community that can choose to part ways with a Church in these matters. Thus, in the case of a congregation it is meaningful to pause and to enquire whenever a dogma or biblical figure or

an idiom of social behaviour is censured or praised in redundant fashion. I see such data as either expressing the role and status the congregationalists desire, and/or as rationalization of their present circumstances in a world that includes a population outside their congregation but affecting their lives.

Throughout, then, attention will be paid to problems of cultural management and to what Benedict (p. 176) once pinpointed as:

“occasions which any society may seize upon to express its important cultural intentions.”

## I. Coastal Saami society and relations with Norwegians

The ideal point of departure would be a configurational portrait of coastal Saami society and culture at the time of contact with Laestadianism (approx. 1840–60). But we are restricted by the data available;<sup>2</sup> the most that can be done is to make certain deductions on the basis of certain limiting parameters prevailing at about that time.

An obvious and pervasive parameter was the demographic. Settlements were perforce widely dispersed and of a small size: 15 households was a large community and the mean was nearer 5; this pattern was actually retained until after the Second World War. There was, then, a low density of population.

This situation is related to a high mortality rate and – a matter for comment here – a transhumant exploitation of resources. Though the practice of a four-season fjordal transhumance had become attenuated by the middle of the nineteenth century, summer and winter residences were still common and periodic shifts of residence, independent of the seasonal moves, were prevalent. This last feature related to the problem of fuel supply. The simple dwelling of turf and wood and the short distance of the moves meant that each household could change its residence independent of the help of others. However, the household that was physically and socially isolated from all others met with additional ecologic restrictions: it would probably have insufficient labour to pull the heavier type of fishing boat up

onto the beach or to herd the livestock in the summer. Thus these three points emerge: (1) there were ecologic constraints for seasonal and periodic movements of households, (2) the technical aspect of movement did not necessarily place a household in a position of dependence on others, but (3) other kinds of mutual aid between households were *faute de mieux*. We may add that the extensive bilateral idiom of relationship (cognatic and affinal) and the high incidence of marriages between persons from the same or neighbouring fjords made it easier to arrange *ad hoc* work teams and to change partners.

These circumstances of demography and ecology helped to define economic parameters: there was very little accumulation of rights either to resources or to products. The economy was little competitive. This is true throughout the nineteenth century, indeed up to 1945, although during this long period natural barter (markets and trade with Russian schooners) became replaced by exchanges with reference to money values and eventually by purchases and sales with money itself. Even after World War II economic activity in the Saami settlements was restricted to the replenishment of products which each family consumed. A further economic limitation, independent of the factors of demography and ecology, was the disability of the coastal Saami in a capitalist market economy (below).

The circumstances of relations with Norwegians meant that principles of behaviour here were quite different from those between Saami themselves. At the beginning of our period, contact with Norwegian culture and with Norwegians was largely limited to two spheres: trade and religion, and the alternative courses open to the Saami can be reduced to two: (a) complementary relations (Saami submissiveness/Norwegian dominance) or (b) symmetrical relations (patterns of rivalry). Treating trade first, I will now briefly describe the *complementary* relations that existed in both spheres.

In a word, coastal Saami dependence on an outside market for necessities of life increased throughout the nineteenth century and this market was controlled by non-Saami. They

kept money and other assets, such as whatever land they desired, technological skills of an industrial society and trading contacts, under their exclusive control. The merchants managed to stimulate the Saami dependence on a market without losing their own control of it (and without raising the Saami standard of living); so the roles of submissiveness and dominance were regenerative, they reached their peak after the barter trade with the Russians was finally withdrawn in 1917. Two further points are relevant here: the merchants' dominant position was expressed *qua* Norwegians as well as *qua* merchants; secondly, the few investments that were possible for Saami fishermen were significant for the collective benefit they bestowed: there was a mutuality between these fishermen that was at the economic expense of the temporarily economically stronger. This last point was also a function of the "closed-clientele" system of the merchants whereby their clients were usually unable to increase their wealth in correspondence to increases in their efforts of production.

Whatever remained of paganism – it was probably not much – among the Saami of North Norway after the Christian missionizing campaigns of early *eighteenth* century, had to go 'underground.' A hundred years later, when Laestadianism was about to reach the coast, this pagan past was beyond cultural retrieval<sup>3</sup>; and instead of a nativistic movement, promoting symmetrical relations with Norwegians in the religious sphere, we find what is perhaps best described as a Norwegian clerical "suzerainty" over the religious life of the Saami. Institutionally, they were Christian communities, for example the Christian *rites de passage* were generally maintained; yet there were very few clergy and there was generally a language barrier between them and their parishioners. In contemporary reports there are occasional references to prayer and bible-reading meetings, but what is more often mentioned is that Saami confirmands learn the catechism "by heart," in Norwegian, without understanding it (Sivertsen 1955; Steen 1954).

The relations between Norwegians and coastal Saami in the two spheres, trade and religion, were, then, of quite different intensity

even while they were complementary relations in both cases; and with the intervention of Laestadianism in mid-century they took very different courses.

Before turning to this event, however, it is important to record, from about the same time, the widening and worsening of relations with Norwegians generally. In 1805 there were about 290 Norwegian fishing families in Finnmark (the northernmost province); in 1875 the total Norwegian population in the province was 9,807, by 1891 13,921. By mid century, Saami had become a minority population in the province. The Norwegian colonists dispersed themselves to many places along the coast and into some of the fjords which for centuries had had an exclusively Saami population. Saami and Norwegians became increasingly aware of their differences, and these became an important part of the image each held of their own culture and society. Thus these differences were also regenerative, and a factor in the self-management of each culture. As much is evident, as we will see, in the role of Laestadianism; and – on the other side – there was a hardening in the official Norwegian position towards the status of Saami language and, from practically all Norwegian quarters, a new moral censoriousness towards the coastal Saami who were now depicted as inferiors in all walks of life. (The tone of Norwegian comment had been very different prior to this period of colonization.) The tempo of colonization – and its temper – was carried into the present century. Between 1891 and 1930 the population of Finnmark increased by 24,000 – all of 22,000 of this number were Norwegians, and it really was not until after World War II that they demonstrated a willingness to include “Coast Lapps” in their society (as “Norwegians” not as Saami).

But already in the early stage of this progressive deterioration of relations between the two cultures and populations, Laestadian preachers presented the Saami with a basis for *symmetrical* relations with Norwegians, i.e. relations of rivalry instead of submissiveness. The basis was non-economic. The preachers were able to challenge the spiritual power of the Church by presenting an alternative sym-

bolism that was readily communicable and also attractive in the prevailing circumstances.

### Laestadius's message

Laestadius roundly condemned the sacramental and spiritually lax Christianity of the Church; this was now “conventional” Christianity, he said.<sup>4</sup> It was spiritually “dead” and encouraged “Pharisaical” Christianity among the members of the Church. True Christianity had a “living” spirituality and only persons who had experienced “rebirth” could be called Christians. Yet, even for a person who had experienced rebirth, the state of grace bestowed could only be an *impermanent* state. The fallen *nature* of man could not be eradicated.

A Christian, then, is constantly being reborn and yet is still conscious of the imperfection of his nature; the Christian life – Laestadius conveyed – is one of oscillation between attainment of grace and falling away from grace. All Laestadians sin, and no Laestadian will maintain that he always knows when and how he has sinned.

Faced with the problem of how it was possible for any person to obtain absolution despite their nature, Laestadius resuscitated Luther's vigorous teaching of absolution and, at the same time, he had to stress that final absolution could not be achieved in this life. He taught that there are two kinds of sin: those that are implicit to the human nature which only God can recognize and judge and forgive – they are sins against Him; and sins “between persons” – it is upon the open confession of these sins that spiritual birth is dependent in the first place.<sup>5</sup>

The teaching about absolution that Laestadius followed may be regarded as a process of Christian initiation through three successive stages: (1) awakening and awareness of one's sinful nature, (2) anguish, soul searching and excruciating repentance, and (3) actual “second birth” or rebirth. Only those who attained stage 3 were “Christians” and only they were entitled to hear evangelical preaching. All others – the “awoken,” the “anguished” and the “improvident” (those who had not made a be-



ginning towards their absolution) – must be incessantly rebuked with the Law of the scriptures.<sup>6</sup>

Laestadius's apprehension over the question of absolution was increased by the knowledge that there are always many of what he called "thieves of grace." He repeatedly reminded his own "awoken" congregation in Swedish Lappland that the period of anguish should be a long one and weigh heavily on the conscience; and that they could not attain a state of grace through "deeds." Grace could only come through repeated "cleansing of the conscience."

Laestadius associated the prevalent use of sacrament and of prayer with the use of "deeds" in the attainment of salvation. He pronounced baptism to be a "subsidiary matter [which] the Baptists and prelates of the Church have made into a principal matter [although] it does not have anything to do with the condition of grace" (1933: 230). Nor can prayer produce the state of grace. When speaking of prayer, Laestadius clearly had in mind the three stages towards absolution that are accomplished in this life. Prayer is only helpful when practised among "Christians" and then only as a means of prompting the conscience and holding it awake. The prayers of the "improvident" are dismissed as non-spiritual supplications "which God cannot grant since they damage the soul"; Laestadius considered the prayers of the "awoken" to be weak pleas of consciences troubled with fears of Judgement. The prayers of "Christians," however, are made in the knowledge that "as they sin everyday, so they must repent everyday." They are prayers of anguish: "the Pharisee," says Laestadius, "always has the power of prayer, but Jesus's disciples are often so poor that they have no prayers – only sighs" (1933: 35f., 229f., 258, 457f.).

In the place of prayer and the use of sacrament in the attainment of grace, Laestadius referred his "awoken" congregation to "the living faith [that] arises from a heavenly passion" and is manifested in a "sign of grace" from God (1853: 42f.).<sup>7</sup>

Yet it seemed that Laestadius, too, was making the attainment of grace a matter between the sinner and God alone. The matter at issue

here seems to be reflected in, for example, verses 5 and 6 of Matt. VI.

Verse 5 says,

"And when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites: for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men."

It is upon this authority Laestadius was able to attack "pharisaical" prayers. However, verse 6 says,

"But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee."

For many years Laestadius himself had wrestled alone with the problem of his salvation; he had acted in the spirit of verse 6, though at the time of his "conversion" (in 1844) he did invoke the spiritual help of a few others not in his parish, notably a small group led by a maternal cousin (Sandewall 1950). Laestadius described to his congregation the long period of anguish that preceded his own first rebirth, and how the signs of grace he had experienced confirmed the fact of rebirth.<sup>8</sup>

But few who listened to Laestadius believed that they themselves could undergo such an arduous spiritual trial, they also doubted whether they would receive – or be able to know when they had received – the confirming sign of grace. Violent ecstatic manifestation in the "awoken" and "anguished" congregation marked the severity of the crisis.

It was in these circumstances that the burden of the individual was lightened, in two stages, through the mediation of the assembled congregation. Laestadius acknowledged the ecstatic manifestation as a sign of grace; indeed he encouraged their ecstasies as proof of "living" religious experience (1853: 41f.).<sup>9</sup> When members of the congregation were in ecstasy, or were approaching that condition, they usually made an open confession of their sins. Thus ecstasy would spread through a congre-

gation within a few moments, so that in effect there would be a congregational confession of sins. The congregation became “reborn.” Whereas ecstasy was held not to be a “deed,” prayer was so regarded and the movement – with Laestadius following them – soon came to reject categorically the efficacy of private communication with the Almighty: this was “pharisaical” behaviour. Verse 6 (Matt. VI) was ignored.<sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless, the congregationalists remained tormented by doubts over whether their sins had been forgiven. How could they know – they asked – when God was invisible and all of them were sinners? It was on the authority of John XX. 22–23<sup>11</sup> (and also Luther’s sermon for the first Sunday after Easter) that Johan Raattamaa, who was Laestadius’s first convert and became the first Laestadian preacher, forgave confessed sinners their sins. He did this as a member of the congregation. We are told that it was only the sins of the anguished that were forgiven; and that they had to acknowledge that they believed Raattamaa was one of God’s children – i.e. that he had received a sign of grace – and that he spoke the word of God (Boreman pp. 126–7). Raattamaa’s action was accepted by Laestadius who preached that “for those who are [still] in doubt, a sign of grace is a voice from heaven which says: ‘your sins are forgiven’!” Laestadius added, “true Christians have the power to forgive sins” (1949: 621).

Thus the key that admits Christians to the Kingdom of Heaven was given to the congregation: the requirement of *its* mediation was now added to Laestadius’s teaching of absolution. Laestadians were no longer merely single followers of the pastor Laestadius but had become a community of persons, bound together and made inviolable on account of the spiritual autonomy that belonged to the congregation of the reborn. As Laestadianism spread and local congregations were formed, spiritual autonomy resided in each.<sup>12</sup>

What are the implications of this autonomy? I have tried to indicate something of the spiritual issue of truth at the inception of Laestadianism, I now turn to the adoption of this truth by scattered congregations where it be-

comes an element of power in relations between persons and groups.

## The Laestadian fulfilment

When Laestadianism once reaches a community, great efforts are made to bring *all* the households into the congregation.<sup>13</sup> In very many instances indeed, this has been accomplished. On the other hand, few serious efforts, and never with much success, have been made to spread Laestadianism in Scandinavia beyond its geographical centre in the north. The aim has been the total saturation of local communities within this area. This pattern is understandable in view of the two principal objectives and achievements of the movement.

One: justification of the hard conditions of life within the local community.

Two: a myth of universality of which the local community is the centre and which is maintained independently of the Church and State. Both are communicated in Laestadian doctrine and symbolism and also in the behaviour among congregationalists.

In a Franciscan manner, poverty is interpreted as ascetism and as a means of self-protection from the insinuation of the “religion of the Pharisees” that wishes to make the attainments of bourgeois materialism compatible with religious virtue. Thus Laestadians inherit Laestadius’s preoccupation with the problem of salvation without “deeds.” They also rejoice in their knowledge that it is with their preachers, and not the clergy, that the “true light” and the “real power” are deposited. The external world is explained to them: distinction between the “worldly,” or ungodly, and the godly affects all personal activity and attitude; worldly loves and values stand between a man and God, they are the designs of the devil. Similarly, all things can “belong” or be “used” in either a worldly/ungodly way or a godly way: furniture must be of the simplest, flowers not brought into the home (not plucked), clothing must be plain (men should not wear ties and women not choose coloured scarves), only religious or certain technical books be read and only the weather and news reports – and lately Norwegian Church services – be listened to on the

wireless. It is clear that the disdain is for things never or scarcely possessed.

The myth of universality is frequently expressed at Laestadian meetings. It is to be found in the major premise in Laestadius's teaching, namely that the private confession to "the invisible god" is irrelevant to salvation. Here Laestadians also recall what Luther said: "to whom but God will you confess your sins? But where will you find Him if not with your brother?" (Wisloff 1957). They ask each other: cannot a shipwrecked mariner, who has no hope of rescue, find God alone and obtain His forgiveness? The answer is always a categorical "no."<sup>14</sup> They assert it is the habit of the non-Christian to "pray to God in the sky instead of going to his brothers" (Sivertsen p. 435), but "God is [only] in God's congregation." No one reaches God with prayers from the [outside world] and "God cannot hear prayers unless it is through the brothers [of the congregation]" (*Sions Blad* 1948, no. 11).

The Laestadian view concerning sacrament also bears on the myth. In the Sermon on the Mount it was said, "except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matt. V. 20). Laestadians have commonly identified the ordained clergy (non-Saami) with the Scribes and Pharisees, and they find in Laestadius's teaching the injunction to wrest from them the basis of their power. Laestadius devoted an entire sermon of castigation of Nicodemus, who in other Lutheran circles is a blameless, indeed mildly praiseworthy figure (he assisted at Christ's burial). Laestadius recognized in Nicodemus the prototype of the "improvident" or "thief of grace" since Nicodemus believed that a person would be reborn through baptism and, further, that after baptism a Christian has no need to be reborn again (Boreman, p. 230).

Laestadians insist that the Holy Spirit, which is in the word of God, is only communicable when spoken out aloud in a congregation of those who are already God's children. This was another major premise of Laestadius.<sup>15</sup> In this way the Laestadian congregation is made the guardian of the faith, erudition is made a sign of God's grace, and defences are secured

against the "false prophets" of many denominations who misinterpret the scriptures and find "other meanings." Laestadius made it clear that it is impossible to "read oneself to salvation," this was another reason why the Scribes and Pharisees were rebuked in the New Testament, and Laestadians rebuke the clergy on this score. Frequent warnings to "false prophets" assume extreme forms and serve to uphold the conviction of Laestadians of their spiritual ascendancy, even in the most isolated congregations.

Laestadians, then, claim "the word" as the source of their power vis-à-vis the outside world.

The Laestadian preacher is a "brother" in a fraternal congregation; in no sense a marginal member of the community, he follows the same livelihoods as others. There have been changes in the emphasis of the preacher/congregation relationship, but not in accordance with Weber's predictive treatment of charismatic authority. It was only in the first decades that there were emphases suggestive of an authoritarian relationship with routinization: for example, Raattamaa urged preachers to come to him in Karesuando for a kind of ordination through "a laying on of hands" (Sivertsen, pp. 385-87). This is accountable largely to the quick expansion of the movement among widely scattered and "awoken" congregations. These had to be enlightened dogmatically and, in their independent position vis-à-vis the Church, the preachers themselves were responsible for impressing upon the congregations that they had inherited the Apostolic Succession (through Peter-Luther-Laestadius).<sup>16</sup> In this connection the "laying on of hands" retains its symbolic significance among Laestadians, but as a congregational symbol and not one designating the office of preacher. We find it in the normal Laestadian manner of embracing each other in greeting, as well as in the embrace accompanying confession.

An individual wishing to confess usually approaches the preacher's table first and receives forgiveness from the preacher, thereafter turning to the congregation shouting exultantly "Give me forgiveness!" (*Adda munnje anda-gossi!*). This is accorded orally and by a waving



of hands. The person then makes his or her way between the lines of benches into the midst of the congregation and approaches those to whom a personal confession is to be made.<sup>17</sup>

During the first decades of the movement, open confession made *in detail* to the whole of the gathered congregation was normal. But this places demands on the individual that are not easily met; it also places a great deal of temptation on members of the congregation; and it could lead to the forgiveness of the sins of those who had not confessed where these sins were "shared" by several persons. Gradually the insistence on detailed open confession was dropped, although not on dogmatic grounds (Sivertsen, pp. 357–61): it was left an optional matter. But the principle of confession "within the congregation" was never challenged.

Confession within the congregation – with the bestowal of absolution – replaces judgement within it. The only true judgement is the Judgement of God. When a preacher appears to be judging the congregation, he is warning them of this higher Judgement (as he is careful to point out). Otherwise, he repeatedly warns "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matt. VII: 1).

The congregation is a repository of family values<sup>18</sup> and its membership signifies the maturation of these values in the individual. It is on this basis that the total relationship grows between individual/community and congregation; at the same time, however, it implies one qualification: generation, or more strictly, domestic status. While it is true to say that *all* persons over school-age in a Laestadian community normally associate themselves with the congregation, for many of the unmarried this is left implicit: they may not attend the meetings regularly and they may still yet have to make their first open confession to the congregation. It is this act which bestows full membership and it is often delayed until after marriage; but with the achievement of this domestic status it is anomalous not to belong to the congregation. Marriage is sanctified. Laestadians accept, without further condoning it, a degree of laxity in pre-marital behaviour, but

marital behaviour is sanctioned most strictly and, when it is necessary, various pressures are applied to bring married persons to confess (and not just once) inside the congregation.

Thus the difference between "the congregation" and "the community" in Laestadian areas is as though between the adult and the not yet adult community. Even so, the difference between the reborn and those not awoken is partly overshadowed by the significant practice of the reborn to confess themselves openly still sinners, since "we are all children of Adam," and by their asking forgiveness (of the sins between persons) from unbelievers too. Furthermore, preachers insist that a father must not quarrel with his son on account of the son's present ungodliness; rather, the father must do all he can to keep his family intact and in harmony.

This situation implies certain departures from the doctrinal teaching of Lars Levi Laestadius. The three stages of absolution become neglected, and preachers make no systematic separation of the Law from the Promise. (It really cannot be otherwise where "Christians" and the "improvident" are present at the same meeting.) In the congregations of my experience, the preaching is 'legalistic,' although with varying severity, and the evangelical message is associated with the participation of the congregation in confession. In this way the Promise may actually be said to be heard only by God's children as those outside the state of grace exclude themselves in their passivity.

Another departure concerns infant-baptism. The critical view taken by Laestadius over the use of sacraments – he saw them as rites of *privilege* – has been endorsed by Laestadians: it is accepted that souls are not saved by baptism alone. And Laestadius also said: "all children die blessed" (*Sions Blad* 1939 no. 2).<sup>19</sup> Yet the baptism of infants is widespread among them: it is regarded as a rite of inclusion (and continuity) afforded to *all* who are born in the local community and it is performed by one or another member of the congregation there (not necessarily a preacher).

To conclude: the Laestadian fulfilment is reached by open confession and by the congregation giving itself to ecstasy with glossalia

(*likkatus*). It was then – and only then – that I would hear triumphant exclamations: *Mii sab-melažžat!* (“We Saami!”).

## II.

The interpretation of this material through the lenses of Bateson (of 1936 & 1949) rests upon a series of distinctions, the highest order of which is between schismogenesis and steady state.

Very briefly (for I am traversing classical ground), *schismogenesis* is activated through a regenerative circle whereby A's acts are stimuli for B's acts, which in turn become stimuli for more intense action on the part of A, and so on. Thus a situation of schismogenesis produces compulsive and progressively distorted behaviour (1936: 187–88, 1949: 36). But there are two kinds of regenerative circles and so two kinds of schismogenesis:

1. “the mutually promoting actions of A and B [are] essentially similar,” producing “symmetrical schismogenesis” recognized in relations of competition and rivalry;
2. “the mutually promoting actions are essentially dissimilar but mutually appropriate” and recognized in patterns of exhibitionism-spectatorship and dominance-submission (1949: 36)

Now, applied to our ethnography, schismogenesis pertains to Saami-Norwegian relations (and not between Saami). This is true of these relations both before and after the advent of Laestadianism; however, Laestadianism transformed relations with the Church from complementary to symmetrical, leaving those of economy and citizenship (particularly with reference to language and land rights) as complementary. Here, then, the relation (one of feedback) between these dissimilar schismogenetic domains warrants special attention below.

But schismogenesis (of either kind) because it is a cumulative process will eventually lead, if nothing intervenes, to an ‘explosion’ – and that happens sometimes; but usually not, instead there is “self-correction” whereby “in-

crease in N causes a decrease in M” (1936: 175). The operation of the house thermostat is the familiar example of this process.<sup>20</sup> We see this avoidance of ‘explosion’ in the changing intensity of relations between the congregations and the Church. Particularly noteworthy is the reactive role the Church eventually adopted in its relations with the Laestadian congregations, and there will be more to say concerning continued Laestadian membership of the Lutheran church.

Actually, Bateson sees self-correction (with its “degenerative” link) as one of two processes of non-accumulative change, the other is *steady state* – and it is as such that relations among coastal Saami themselves may be understood. The critical and interesting point, then, is that while schismogenetic relations prevail in one broad domain of life, those of steady state are evident in another.

Of course, steady state is not a changeless condition, rather one of dynamic equilibrium and remarkable for its “balance.” Its ethos is one of non-rivalry so there is the substitution of a plateau for a climax (1949: 46, 40). Bateson found the concept in communications engineering. In the language of moral philosophy it may be likened to the “satisficing” (Simon 1979) of values rather than the maximizing of any single one of them, thus – following Bateson again – “in such systems it is very important to permit certain variables to alter” (1949: 50).<sup>21</sup>

Also in respect to coastal Saami relations of steady state, Laestadianism ushered in a change in their form – and in this connection we must look at the place of ecstasy in an ethos of steady state.

## The relations of steady state

I have stressed how people leave Laestadian meetings reconciled to their neighbours (realizing their dependence on each other) and reconciled, as well, to their low status in the world of material values. The processes involved can best be elucidated through application of the principles of steady state, and the first point to be made is that these were influential in coastal Saami society prior to Laestadianism. We

find them in traditional behaviour that I have elsewhere labelled as *non-involvement* (Paine 1965).

In the social conditions outlined at the beginning of this essay, one can expect only rudimentary institutional life such as is probably unable to support elaborate sanctions; for though certain actions are recognized as offences, no person has the authority to act on behalf of the community nor the power to enforce their will. On the other hand, the physical dispersal of the community can oblige individuals largely to accept each other for what they are – in itself an important sanction on behaviour. Our material suggests that these fjord dwellers had to reckon with becoming placed in absolute dependence on one another from time to time, and we may suppose that (no less than today when this behaviour is observable) they saw the wisdom in behaving in a neighbourly fashion towards each other. This implies relations of a diffuse kind and a muting of competition.

However, “neighbourliness” (in the meaning I attach to it) describes *successful* social relations in their positive aspect; but even in a situation of little economic competition, neighbours can become rivals instead of partners; ill-will and also conflicting loyalties to third persons (particularly an implication of bilateral arrangements) can bedevil relations between neighbours. When this happens the predilection of coastal Saami is to withdraw from each other. Sometimes this occurs as a consequence of conflict: neighbourly relations have broken down and each person seeks peace for himself through withdrawing from relations with the other parties. For as long as their dwellings were simple wooden structures covered with grass sods (up to World War II), a dwelling might very well be abandoned and another constructed elsewhere in the fjord (with neighbourly relations in mind). But the withdrawal need not be physical and (as I was able to observe) may be used discretionally and anticipatorily so as to dampen conflict: in these cases it is directly supportive of neighbourly relations where these mean avoiding taking sides in disputes between others, avoiding neighbourly criticism.

Now this behaviour appears to be consonant with the principles of steady state of which Bateson writes:

“Neither the individual nor the village is concerned to maximize any simple variable. Rather, they would seem to be concerned to maximize something which we may call stability, using this term perhaps in a highly metaphorical way” (1949: 50).

This is from an essay on Balinese culture and society, and there are other striking parallels between Balinese and Saami materials regarding how conflict is avoided or buried rather than resolved,<sup>22</sup> thus permitting the *status quo* and “balance” of society to be retained (without recourse to progressive change and subsequent self-correction). We find, then, steady state to be a condition independent of structural categories like “hierarchical” (Bali) or “acephalous” (Saami), “unilineal” (Bali) or “bilateral” (Saami); those categories and steady state (or schismogenesis) are different kinds of abstraction.

But non-involvement is an inadequate basis for congregational relations, indeed it summons up their antithesis. Laestadianism made steady state relations compatible with congregational *involvement* of persons with each other. What is remarkable is how the transformative force of Laestadianism took hold of these villages with minimum disturbance to their social structure. We can see how in respect to two notable innovations – a congregational leader or preacher, and congregational confession.

A Laestadian congregation insists upon the experience of hearing the voice of God from among their number, but also, as reborn they are equals in the eyes of God so they are all equal in the eyes of each other. Therefore although this congregation requires an authoritative preacher it does not raise him (always a man) above the congregation. In relation to the rest of the world, it is the autonomy of their congregation that Laestadians choose to stress, whereas with regard to relations among themselves they assert its acephalous composi-



tion. (This does not leave God out, "God is in God's congregation.")

Likewise with the Laestadian confession: itself an innovatory mechanism for reconciliation it became the occasion for the reaffirmation and celebration of neighbourly values. It is as an 'open' confession that it is interesting: for even though it is open, people 'empty' themselves. This is helped through the ideology of a total relationship in being a Laestadian (and the open confession regenerates the ideology). The rewards of confession lie in the fact of it being accepted: the offence is liquidated and rather than having penance imposed, the confessing (and offending) party is drawn *closer* into the fellowship of persons. Acceptance of confessions is ensured as a consequence of the congregational position: it is a congregation of the reborn but rebirth is contingent upon confession and forgiveness, and only the reborn can forgive sins. (And because they do that, a person cannot later be upbraided with matters he or she has confessed.)

Most important of all, probably, villagers are 'helped' to their open confessions by the fact that they are made while the congregation, as one, reaches its moment of truth with glossalia and ecstatic convulsions (*likkatus*). Wondering about this phenomenon, I find remarks of Ruth Benedict on trance helpful:

[It] "is a potentiality of a certain number of individuals in any population. When it is honoured and rewarded a considerable proportion will achieve or simulate it" (p. 168).

I prefer this assumption over that (of Gjessing 1953) which links Laestadian *likkatus* back to Saami shamanism of previous centuries.<sup>23</sup> But there is still the question, why is ecstasy rewarded among these Laestadians or what reward does it bring?

I have already reported (above) on how Laestadius himself, and his early followers, wrestled with this question doctrinally. There is this to add concerning the cognitive context of *likkatus*<sup>24</sup>: As congregations, coastal Saami communities are able to see in their low status the promise of high status, and on the occasions of *likkatus* and confession the metamor-

phosis is fleetingly accomplished. There is the illusion that the realities outside their meeting house do not exist. In short, *likkatus* is a source of truth for Laestadians who use it as an alternative source of power to that which the clergy find in the use of sacraments and prayer. It is important to them that the clergy cannot judge the spiritual efficacy of *likkatus* – even as their own preachers find biblical authority for it as *their* sign of grace.

But their *likkatus* is also a moment of truth psychodynamically, bringing to mind a passage from Bateson where he speaks of persons' "hope of release from tension through total involvement" (1949: 38).<sup>25</sup> The Laestadian congregation is an instrument of a system of steady state – that we have emphasized, but its members are also deeply affected by their schismogenetic relations with the Church and its clergy. (Not even the congregation can hermetically seal off from each other the two domains of internal and external relations.) With this in mind, one sees how the *likkatus* of Laestadians both forwards the schismogenesis in which they are entangled and acts as a powerful release from it (viz. Bateson's notion of self-correction<sup>26</sup>). It is a moment of cultural rejoicing (*Mii sabmellažžat!*). It is also a release into those relations of steady state that I have been describing.

## The schismogenetic relations

To a noteworthy degree the coastal Saami were unresponsive to the Laestadian message when it first reached them (Sivertsen 1955). This may be a matter for surprise in view of the role that Laestadianism has since had among them; however, application of Bateson's theory of change leads us to a satisfactory explanation of the material without paradox.

Laestadianism initially crossed the Swedish border into North Norway in the 1840s at 4 localities (Kautokeino, Alta, Lyngen, and Ibestad) and in each case it was brought by Saami. These were reindeer nomads who had their winter pastures in Laestadius's parish and had been personally converted by Laestadius who entrusted to them the evangelical missions in their summer pastures in Norway.<sup>27</sup> However,

Laestadianism was spread along the long coastline by Finnish-speaking preachers drawn from among the newly-arrived immigrant population,<sup>28</sup> and it was particularly in such Finnish-speaking communities that Laestadianism took root during the first decade or more. The settled Saami population hung back; it is true that by the end of the 1860s there was a congregation in practically every fjord where there was Saami settlement, but that was a generation after the arrival of the first preachers.

The immigrant Finns were mostly of peasant stock and their material culture and frequency of literacy (in Finnish) were relatively high. Moreover, as recent immigrants these people were the most unsettled element of the population and their sense of identity and ethnocentric vigour were heightened by the political and cultural difficulties they found in North Norway.<sup>29</sup> Laestadianism propagated a new enlightenment, and the immigrants had the cultural resources to embrace it. They arrived as rivals of the Norwegian-speakers; there is abundant evidence to show that each party saw its relations with the other in this way. The Finnish-speakers brought agricultural innovations, they also became shopkeepers, some of them even invested capital successfully into fishing; in most cases they held resolutely to their Finnish tongue and where they did relinquish or supplement a Finnish cultural trait it was nearly always to Saami ones they turned, not Norwegian. Weight should be given here to the fact that Laestadius's parishes (Karesuando and thereafter Pajala), although situated on the Swedish side of the Swedish-Finnish border, were very Finnish of culture and language, more so than they were Saami – least of all were they Swedish. Thus it is reasonable to suppose that for the immigrants to North Norway, the Laestadian movement was a symbol of their Finnish culture.

The important point is that politically, culturally, and also economically, the Finnish-speaking immigrants had a symmetrical relationship with the Norwegian population; whereas the coastal Saami, at the time of the arrival of the Laestadian preachers, were in a progressively complementary relationship

with Norwegians. Laestadianism could not be a part of such a relationship: its acceptance inevitably implied symmetrical behaviour vis-à-vis the Norwegians. Herein lies the explanation of the tardy response – and “inertia” (Sivertsen)<sup>30</sup> – among coastal Saami. Their acceptance of Laestadianism involved a none too simple change in cultural self-management – in Bateson's terms there had to be a self-correction of their complementary relationship with Norwegians in the non-economic sphere. The Finnish-speaking preachers played a crucial role here. First of all in the obvious sense of providing the relevant model for behaviour; and then, I suggest, the coastal Saami began to embrace Laestadianism by a ‘transfer’ of complementary relationship – from Norwegian clerics to the Finnish-speaking preachers. The transfer was temporary and one of kind: the pattern of complementarity with the Norwegians had been that of submissiveness/dominance, in the case of the Laestadian preachers it was one of audience/actor.

This is, of course, a deduction; however, it is perfectly credible on historical evidence: the immigrant Finns had a broad surface of contact with the Saami along the coast (and there was much Finnish-Saami bilingualism) yet there was usually little or no competition between them; and Finnish soon assumed the status among all Laestadians of the religious language or “holy language.”

The ‘transfer’ to a complementary relationship with the Finnish preachers was a transitory yet crucial phase for the coastal Saami in their weaning themselves away from the Church. The next generation of Saami Laestadians – with preachers of renown – moved into symmetrical relations with the Church. However, the dominance (complementary relationship) of the Norwegian mercantile and political systems was not reduced – rather the contrary was the case given the increased pressures of Norwegian colonization. Of particular significance was the new symbolism of *submission* in accord with the Laestadian messages (as presented in the Saami communities) about the pollution of the material world and about salvation without “deeds.” Clearly, then, this schismogenetic world of the coastal Saami was

'heated up' by the bifurcation of complementary (profane) and symmetrical (sacred) relations with the Norwegians.

The intensity of relations between congregation and Church has varied through time, as we will see. At their most intense, the physical area around the altar is the stage and the contested prize of the schismogenesis. The Church dispenses the sacraments and wishes to do so from the altar. In the early decades, the altar, with the officiating clergy standing there, would be assaulted by Laestadians in the throes of *likkatus* – and they would be refused the sacraments. The Laestadian triumph here – and the Church's loss, was in the making of the church altar redundant: meetings were held elsewhere and the clergy bidden to come to these unconsecrated places to give the sacrament of Holy Communion to Laestadians manifesting the sign of grace through *likkatus*.

Years later, Laestadians were encouraged to hold their meetings in the churches. This act of compliance by the Church served to decrease Laestadian competitive responses; it even threatened them with the loss of their own definition of the situation.<sup>31</sup> However, there was a long period of time between these two outer points; indeed, the cycle has not yet been completed in most instances. Laestadians still bring into the churches different norms of behaviour to the Church's own. They listen to their own preachers there and it is still normal for persons to converge in the aisles, and for there to be *likkatus*. Besides, their meetings in churches are usually no more than annual or biannual occasions – the village Sunday meetings through the year are held in school premises or in each others' homes. Furthermore, the Church well knows that any carelessness or obstinacy on its part in their handling of Laestadians – especially acts that are construable as "pharisaical" or patronizing – are likely to spark off symmetrical responses.

There would seem to have been little cause for Laestadian continuance within the Church: the righteous must sever themselves from Mammon. Yet the Church was not discarded. Laestadians could gain so much from threats to leave that it was unnecessary to fulfil them,

and unnecessary to bring upon themselves the organizational implications of such an act. Today the ritual and dogma and everyday parish work within the Church in North Norway are heavily influenced by Laestadian emphases in the teaching of absolution, confession and grace.

But from its outset the movement was distrusted by churchmen and a *modus vivendi* was not sought until after Laestadianism had proved itself unassailable and (most surprisingly) therefore necessary to the Church's well-being in the north. It had been considered that a consequence of Laestadianism would be a high rate of Dissent from the Church and the "Lapp Mission" (*Finnemisjonen*) was established in 1888 as a counterweight. But the mission's handpicked Saami- (or Finnish-) speaking preachers defected, in a number of instances, to the Laestadian ranks; on the other hand, when the evidence was examined it was found that actual Dissent was (as it continues to be) lowest in the Laestadian-saturated areas. Thus as early as 1893 the Bishop of North Norway, who had actually urged the founding of the "Lapp Mission," declared "Laestadianism ... is the kernel of the Lutheran Church" (Sivertsen pp. 124–28, 130). However, the situation has always been ambivalent. On the one hand there is the Laestadian claim to spiritual autonomy, and on the other, their continued membership of the Church.

Again, there is much symbolic play around the terms of Laestadian participation in Holy Communion. Notwithstanding Laestadius's view of sacraments, Laestadians have always enjoyed receiving those of communion. Nor are they actually acting contrary to the Laestadian legacy which we find stated (and often hear cited) by Simon Peter (in this instance in connection with baptism of Cornelius's household):

"Can any man forbid the water . . . [to these] which have received the Holy Ghost ...?" Acts X: 47

There are customarily a great number of communicants whenever an ordained minister is



invited to officiate the sacraments of communion at the end of a Laestadian meeting (more often in a village schoolroom than in a church). Even should the pastor himself be considered a “thief of grace” his dispensation of the sacraments is not thereby profaned since it is axiomatically held that his *office* is from God. However, this does not necessarily prevent the presence of clergy being interpreted by some as a sign of congregational compliance with clericalism – or still worse, of indebtedness to the clergy. But over and above that, I believe most Laestadians also interpret the communion service as a ritual *confirmation of the righteousness of the congregation*, performed by the clergy.<sup>32</sup>

Certainly, the ‘management’ of the communion service is likely to be on Laestadian terms. No longer is the individual communicant required to answer in the affirmative to the question:

“Do you believe in the forgiveness of sins from my mouth as from God’s mouth?”

Sivertsen pp. 155, 164, 368.

But by no means all the clergy have found a *modus vivendi* with their Laestadian parishioners – even though they realize the Laestadians could empty their country churches. In 1959, for instance, that threat was made publicly (*Tromsø* 1–8–59; *Dagbladet* 30–7–59). And sometimes the congregation (*sic*) asks the stranger officiating the sacraments:

“Are you one of God’s children?... Do you believe that we who *are* God’s children can forgive sins?”

For all Laestadians, the attainment of grace remains the crucial religious experience and can only be obtained by confession within the congregation – Laestadians on their deathbeds ask for their co-congregationalists. It sometimes happens that a person who is “awoken” but has not confessed his sins to the congregation, rejects the intercession of the clergy and dies in sin owing to the failure of a Laestadian to arrive in time.

In accord with what we should expect, only a

few of the Norwegian fishing and rural communities in the far north – even though they, too, suffered the domination of merchant and cleric – embraced Laestadianism (with Norwegian-speaking preachers). Nonetheless, their own cultural self-management has, for us, illuminating twists to it. Anti-Laestadian they might be, yet it has been among them – Norwegian fishermen and farmers, and not among the Saami and Finnish Laestadians – that Dissenterism won footholds in the north. In other words, they chose an *alternative* to Laestadianism even as they looked for an alternative to the Church. Their Dissent did not dampen their schismogenetic relations with the Saami – nor their hostility (in the majority of cases) towards Laestadianism. From their point of view, the anti-clericalism of a Laestadian congregation was not its diacritical feature but its anti-Norwegianism, something that seemed to them to be self-evident in the Laestadians’ use of either Finnish or Saami.<sup>33</sup> Other Laestadian behaviour became tarred with the same brush. For instance, though ecstatic manifestation has occurred in Norwegian religious movements from time to time, its appearance in Laestadian congregations was perceived phenomenally as non-Norwegian behaviour and motivationally as anti-Norwegian. Part of the explanation is that the spread of Laestadian congregations through the northern fjords brought the Norwegian population there to a keener consciousness of their ‘colonial’ position. This gave them more cause to embrace their Norwegian-ness. So it was that popular antipathy to Laestadianism outdistanced that which was first brought to life by churchmen. In its early attacks on Laestadianism, the Church had urged Norwegian-speakers – those who were dissatisfied with the Church no less than those who remained loyal to it – to view Laestadianism as a non-Norwegian movement, but the Church’s subsequent change of attitude had little influence on most individual Norwegians – for them (as I heard so often and as the literature records from earlier years) Laestadianism was “primitive.”<sup>34</sup>

## Towards demise

Prevailing economic limitations (pp. 2 f. – an objective fact of life among the coastal Saami up to World War II – were incorporated, by the Laestadians, as their *way of life*.<sup>35</sup> This continued even after the war. Thus congregations were not vainly taught to try to come nearer to Norwegian society and technology; rather, they were encouraged, as we saw, to adopt an attitude of disdain towards worldly things. It was on this basis that the congregation became the one focal point of consequence in so many communities, and Laestadians became preoccupied with the problem of salvation without “deed”. However, it is precisely here that the state – beginning with its post-war North Norway Plan – has been undermining the congregation. Through economic development it has removed some or much of the low-status standing of the coastal Saami communities, and as their creditor the State is able to sanction the inhabitants to some extent. Where the congregation exercised social control within a framework of direct relationships, the State now requires inhabitants to delegate authority within a centralized system whose boundaries lie far beyond their own community.

The State identifies economic communities – and it is important to recognize that acceptance of this is widespread. People believe they will be given more comfortable and secure lives. Many Laestadians actually demonstrate their acceptance by sitting on local co-operative committees and the like. However, they deplore the systematic secularization of values that they see happening all around them. Then again, an increasing number of persons in these rural communities do not sympathize with the persisting Laestadian cultural and social separation and ascetism, for them the Laestadian position is becoming indefensibly ambiguous, hypocritical.

Thus Laestadianism is now becoming expressive of a *difference between people within the same community*. Yet the belief in God and the devil, and concern with salvation, are still general. So the refusal of many to join Laestadian congregations these days must be recognized as a specific refusal: non-Laestadian chil-

dren of Laestadian parents do not recognize Nicodemus (a “thief of grace”) in the ordained minister. They assert that also in their religious life they now belong to a wide society.

From the point of view of the approach to change followed in these pages, the interesting feature is the *innovation of economic competition* (among the coastal Saami) and its implications for the congregation. As we have said, open confession within the assembled congregation has been the keystone of Laestadianism, and the conditions under which it was made rewarding were those of non-competition, equality of persons, and a unitary value system. Each of these conditions is broken today. Inhabitants now compete for certain things they all value but cannot share, and, as well, different inhabitants compete for different values.

Rejections from within are lethal for a congregationalism whose strength has resided precisely in the devolution of autonomy to local communities; but this also means there can be no collapse at the centre for there is no centre. The demise of congregations is happening at different rates, though the process is much the same (and usually slow): a circle of diminishing impulses in each case, where A's acts now produce a weakened response from B which in turn weakens further the behaviour of A, and so on.<sup>36</sup>

## Acknowledgements

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## Notes

1. Boreman states that there are 251,000 Laestadians in Finland, however the *pro capita* rate is highest in the Saami-speaking population of northern Norway, Sweden and Finland. Finnish immigrants also took Laestadianism to the United States – Michigan in particular.
2. This section draws largely on material presented in Paine (1957b) where they have been collated from different sources.
3. Though Gjessing (1953) strongly questioned this. “Cultural retrieval” is a term of Roberts (1964).

4. In this section I draw primarily upon Laestadius's, own writings (see References).
5. I was given this account of Luther as a precursor of Laestadius:  
At the time of Luther there was darkness in the world. Luther sought light out of the darkness. He read the Bible, he read both the New Testament and the Old Testament, he read here and there: but in vain! He could not appease his conscience. But it was to be as the Lord willed it: He sought Luther and showed him that true salvation can only come through confession of sins. He told Luther that should he confess his sins then he would find salvation. Luther recognized the word of God and began to preach the confession of sins. At the same time the Church was advertising the forgiveness of sins for money. Luther threw himself into the battle against the Roman Church and preached the right and the only true religion – salvation through confessions of sins!
6. Regarding Laestadius's terminology, see Boreman pp. 96 & 102.
7. The teaching that rebirth cannot be accorded by baptism or through prayer is contrary to Articles 2 and 9 of the Confession of Augsburg, 1530, of Lutheran practice.
8. In his autobiographical writings Laestadius recounts the story of his early life in terms of the *rites de passage* he enunciated for the neophyte to the Laestadian congregation.
9. See also Boreman (pp. 57 & 187), Sivertsen (pp. 397–406).
10. Subsequently, however, there was dissension over this matter: see Sivertsen (pp. 439–40). Laestadian schisms are not dealt within this essay, and as far as I know they have never affected relations inside individual Laestadian communities.
11. "... he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose so ever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them..."
12. For the possible affinities of Laestadian theology with Judaism, see Kaufmann, pp. 36–37.
13. This section is based primarily on field work in the 1950s: the ethnographic present covers the unchanging aspects of Laestadian fulfilment. For a comment on later research, see note 34.
14. See Romans X: 1-10, 14 for possible Laestadian source.
15. On this point Laestadians refer to Luther and the New Testament: Romans X: 14–17; Acts VIII: 30–31. Cf. Boreman (pp. 210–2) and Sivertsen (pp. 441–55).
16. See Laestadius 1933 (pp. 94, 97) and 1949 (p. 312): It was Peter who first received the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and this congregation "bore fruits" for three hundred years (until about the time of Augustine). The "fall" came with "the Pope's church" which propagated "thieves of grace"; then Luther "separated the chaff from the wheat, but in the course of time the heavenly seed has once more been mixed with weeds and human teaching, and on that account it cannot bear fruit."
17. Descriptions of Laestadian confession and ecstasy are to be found in Boreman (pp. 324–7), Collinder (p. 153), Paine (1957a: 112–7) and Sivertsen (pp. 402–6). For an analysis of the 'persuasion' of Laestadian preachers, see Paine (1988).
18. Laestadius and the preachers that followed him repeatedly turn to the family for an image of the religious relationship. Laestadius spoke not simply of "God the Father" or of the Trinity, he used extensively the phrase "the Heavenly parents" (who were waiting for their children), absolution was portrayed as a wedding in which God was the "Bridegroom" and the penitent sinners his "bride" (Boreman pp. 191–92, 207–08).
19. Laestadius recognized baptism as a need "of the heart" and as a "psychic" need experienced by all parents. He also regarded his parishioners' desire for infant-baptism as a ritual of exorcism of the doubt planted by Satan, despite Jesus's word, that children who die unbaptized will not reach heaven (1852–4, pp. 219f.; 1949, p. 651).
20. However, the processes by which such self-correction is put in motion are by no means clear (1936, pp. 187f.). See also note 26.
21. It is as well to have in mind that steady state is a cultural phenomenon and thus learnt: Balinese society is non-schismogenetic, says Bateson, but he adds "among the Balinese the babies at least, evidently have such tendencies" (1949: 42).
22. E.g., technique for dealing with quarrels: agreement between the parties not to speak to each other; and "it is common to find that activity... rather than being purposive, i.e. aimed at some deferred goal, is valued for itself"; etc. (1949: 40f.).
23. Gjessing postulates links of a psycho-historical kind. Following Lewis's (1971) discussion of religious possession, Laestadianism would be a "shamanistic religion": its possession is "solicited" and "controlled" (p. 55) and "celebrates a confident and egalitarian view of man's relations with the divine" (p. 205). Clearly, the attributions "shamanistic" by Gjessing and Lewis, flow from quite different premises and conjure up different cultural worlds in each case. I reject Gjessing's. Lewis's is helpful when comparing Laestadianism with other sects or cults.
24. Ecstasy is affective in the extreme, nevertheless cognitive processes are intrinsic to it. Rather than regarding it as a condition in which a person does not "know" what he is doing, we may say it is a condition in which a person "does" only one thing at a time. So in a manner of speaking, it is precisely when in an ecstatic condition that a person "knows" what he is doing. Cognitive processes are also present in the "management"



of ecstasy: in the present case especially between the preacher and the remainder of the congregation.

25. The passage reads:

"... We should expect our curves to be bounded by phenomena comparable to orgasm – that the achievement of a certain degree of bodily or neural involvement or intensity may be followed by a release of schismogenic tension. Indeed, all that we know about human beings in various sorts of simple contests would seem to indicate that this is the case, and that the conscious or unconscious wish for release of this kind is an important factor which draws the participants on and prevents them from simply withdrawing from contests which would otherwise not commend themselves to 'common sense.' If there be any basic human characteristic which makes man prone to struggle, it would seem to be this hope of release from tension through total involvement."

26. At the end of his paper on "steady state," Bateson writes: "a more detailed study is now required to arrive at a systematic statement about the self-correcting characteristics of the system. It is evident that the ethos alone is insufficient to maintain the steady state" (1949: 53).

27. New light is shed on this in Björklund 1986.

28. The main immigrations began early in the eighteenth century and persisted throughout the nineteenth. They were prompted by the ravages caused to the homelands by the Great Nordic War. Norway, and Finnmark in particular, came to be looked upon as a kind of Promised Land where no man need want for good land or good fishing. "Weep no longer! Here there will be food!" the children of the immigrant families were told (Qvigstad, 1920).

29. In the beginning, the Norwegian government had encouraged this Finnish settlement of Finnmark (Norway's northernmost province) which for a long time had been regarded as underpopulated. But by the middle of the nineteenth century it was deploring the situation and contriving to "Norwegianize" the province through legislation that placed non-Norwegian-speakers at a disadvantage. There was great apprehension lest this Finnish infiltration should be made the pretext of a demand of Finnmark for Finland by the Greater Finland movement in Helsinki (Eriksen and Niemi, 1981).

30. Sivertsen's (pp. 5–36) characterization of coastal Saami culture at that time is based mainly on contemporary reports by Norwegian administrators, doctors and the like about their periods of service in Finnmark.

31. A Laestadian preacher in an area where contact with the Church has been closest (Lyngen in Troms) claims that there is less and less *likkatus* at the meetings: his explanation is that the "nature" of the people is changing.

32. The difference between the views of the Laestadians and the Church on this matter (and about baptism) is of this order:

	(Laestadian)	(Church)
grace	→ sacraments	→ grace
	baptism	

There is a distinction of the same order, too, in the controversies over the aboriginal land rights: Saami argue that they have rights on the basis of natural law which precedes statute law to which the Norwegians would refer them (Paine 1985).

33. On the few occasions that I heard preachers use Norwegian in the Saami fjords, the translation was regarded by many present (even though they were bilingual) as the central performance: in conversations after such meetings the translator would sometimes be named as though he had been the preacher.

34. Still lingering in folk memory to influence stereotyped judgements is a tragic incident from 1852 in the Saami village of Kautokeino, in the interior of Finnmark. The behaviour of the newly "awoken" congregation there followed a sharply rising curve. The few Norwegians and Swedes in the village were assaulted: the resident merchant and the temporary sheriff killed, the parson and his wife injured. The enormity of the incident brought quick retribution from the Norwegian authorities: two ringleaders were hung and others given stiff prison sentences. Alarm and distrust spread among the Norwegian population in the north, and Laestadianism was denigrated as "racist," "pathological," and "primitive." For historical treatment see Nissen (1952) and Sivertsen pp. 39–59; and for a retrospective analysis of the cultural political significance of the incident, see Aubert (1970).

35. In exactly this respect, Laestadianism, probably on account of its predominantly non-Norwegian membership, culturally speaking, contrasts strongly with a more or less contemporary Norwegian fundamentalist revival movement – the Hauge brethren. This movement paid attention to 'doing well' – materially (in this case as farmers, eventually with a political representation) – as well as to 'doing good' – a life of piety. The Hauge brethren were successful on both accounts.

36. In recent years, several Master's theses from the Social Science Institute (*Institutt for Samfunnsvitenskap*) at the University of Tromsø have looked at the place of Laestadian congregations in rural life in north Norway (Björklund 1978; Nystö 1982; Steinlien 1984; Torp 1986). In relation to the present essay (whose field data are from an earlier decade), besides contributing ethnographic and historical richness and variation, as one would expect, they bring to our attention a contemporary tension between Laestadian religiosity and Saami ethnicity in a sit-

uation where Saami ethnopolitics, even as it is a continuation of what was begun by earlier generations of Laestadians, now embraces modernism and has – as judged by many Laestadians – a secular ideology.

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