

# **The Laestadian Movement: Background Writings and Testimonies**

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## PREFACE

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This is the third in a series of studies on the revival of true Christianity among the Lapps and Finns. The other studies are entitled *Lars Levi Laestadius and the Revival in Lapland* and *The Laestadian Movement: Disputes and Divisions 1861-1997*. A common fallacy of young and ignorant Christians is the notion that it is possible to compile a systematic history of the children of God. The journey of true Christians through this sin-cursed world is so infected by sin, enveloped in error and intertwined with and overshadowed by that of false Christians that it is only by the grace and power of God that sinful mortals gain any glimpses of it. Christ's parable of the wheat and tares, which grow together until harvest (Matthew 13:24-30), makes this truth abundantly clear.

We see throughout the book of Revelation that unabated warfare rages between the true church and the false church. The false church secures for herself the name of Christ and recognition from the world, and the true church is left as an ignominious and despicable heresy, worthy only of persecution and extirpation. While the harlot of Babylon basks in her visible power, reputation and glory, the bride of Christ remains in the wilderness, hidden from the world, and because of the fallen flesh and the struggle that still rages within Christians she is hidden even from herself (Colossians 3:3-4), but though despised, rejected, expelled and ostracized, she remains alive, nourished by a hidden manna (Revelation 2:17), of which the world knows nothing.

The Third Article of the Apostles' Creed, which speaks of the holiness of the church, is, like all other articles of the Creed, a matter of faith, not of sight. Nevertheless, doctrine must remain pure and as far removed from error as heaven is from hell, as day is from night, as God is from the devil. For God, who created the lights in the firmament to divide the day from the night (Genesis 1:14), is no ecumenist. Christ himself judges his kingdom now already (I Peter 4:17), and at the end of the world he will complete this work by sending forth his angels to gather out of his kingdom all things that offend and them which do iniquity and shall cast them into a furnace of fire, where there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 13:41-42).

In his 1535 Commentary on Galatians, Luther explains the words "I would they were even cut off which trouble you" (Galatians 5:12) as follows:

Wherefore, let us learn to advance and extol the majesty and authority of God's Word. For it is no small trifle (as the fanatics surmise at this day), but a single tittle thereof is greater than heaven and earth. Wherefore, in this respect we take no account of Christian love or harmony, but we sit as it were on the judgment seat, that is, we curse and condemn all men who in the least point do corrupt or violate the majesty of God's Word, for a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. But if they leave us God's Word whole and inviolate, we are not only ready to keep love and harmony with them but also to be their servants and to do everything for them. If not, let them perish and be cast into hell, and not only they but the whole world also, as long as God remains. If he remains, life and salvation remain, and the faithful, too, will remain.

These words are in agreement with those of Christ himself, who says that the first of all the commandments is to love God with all thy heart, soul, mind and strength and that the second is to love thy neighbor as thyself (Mark 12:29-31). Love for God and his Word takes precedence, therefore, over all things, even over love for the church, for without the Word, we have no church, no salvation, no faith, and no love for God's people.

# Nils Wiklund

(1732-1785)

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Nils Wiklund was born in Nederkalix, a town in northern Sweden inhabited mainly by Finns. On his ordination in 1765, he was assigned to Övertorneå (Ylitornio) as an assistant to Pastor Isak Grape. An “awakening” ensued, but whether any of the parishioners actually experienced grace remains questionable. Wiklund lost his position in 1776 as a result of accusations raised by the opposition to the “awakening,” and he decided to go to Stockholm to appeal his case to the King. There, he finally experienced grace, presumably in 1777 as a result of contact with Moravians, who were active in southern Sweden at that time. Vindicated by the King in 1779, he was assigned to Nedertorneå (Alatornio) in 1781, where other charges were raised against him, and again the King found him not guilty. The following autobiography exists in two versions. One was published by Juho Rankinen in 1888 and the other by Pastor Kaarlo Airas in 1931.<sup>1</sup> The two versions differ slightly but are substantially identical in meaning. Despite the fact that researchers believe that Wiklund wrote in Finnish, these versions appear to be independent translations of a Swedish document. The English translation is based on a comparison of the two texts.

## A Great but Pardoned Sinner’s Own Story

As a weak and shy child, I was by nature quiet and obedient but spiritually asleep and dead in the sleep of impenitence. When I was nine years old, something was stirring in my heart, and I felt that I lacked something, but I didn’t know what it was, but once, at 12 years of age, when I read the Saviour’s Sermon on the Mount, chapters 5-7 of Matthew, I became fully convinced that I was not a disciple of Jesus and that matters were miserable and poor with my soul and my Christianity.<sup>2</sup> I felt and decided then and there that if the state or condition of a person has to be as Jesus there teaches and as he demanded of his disciples, I was not numbered with them but was instead among the Pharisees and scribes, whose hypocrisy Christ, in the same place, so openly and earnestly rebukes. From that time forward, I knew and believed that I was in a wretched and dangerous spiritual condition, in which I could by no means be saved.

When my schooling began, I was guided and nurtured not only into the knowledge of Christianity but also into a pious, decent and honorable life, wherein I was protected from the sins and errors that miserably corrupt so many other young people. This caused me to be esteemed as an upstanding and God-fearing youth and to be often praised as a paragon of virtue, but even at that time I was fully aware and convinced that such praise did not belong to me and that my spiritual condition was miserable, lamentable and unfortunate. Therefore, when I was praised as good, I thought: “But it is not as you say, for you do not know my condition nor the kind of person I am.”

When I reached 28 years of age, I was, by grace, sought by the Lord and so powerfully affected that I fully awoke from my spiritual sleep.<sup>3</sup> Only then did I really notice the awful depth of my sin, my filthy, accursed and lost condition. My awakened conscience became increasingly sensitive and sharp in seeing and feeling my internal corruption of sin, my straying condition or abandonment of God, my love for the world and my fleshly mind, which I viewed as my greatest sin and the reason for my lost state. It was also my heartfelt intention and true pursuit to turn and repent from the

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<sup>1</sup> Rankinen’s version was published in Oulu under the title *Yhden suuren vaan armoitetun syntisen julistus itsestänsä*. Airas’ version, *Yhden Suuren mutta armoitetun Syndisen juttelemus Itsestänsä*, was published in Helsinki as an appendix in his *Kirkollista elämää ja hengellisiä liikkeitä Tornionjokilaakson alaosilla 1675-1809*.

<sup>2</sup> The ages in this sentence are given in Rankinen’s version as “in my ninth year” and “in my twelfth year.”

<sup>3</sup> According to Rankinen’s version, this occurred “in my twenty-eighth year.”

world to God, from sin to righteousness and from spiritual filthiness to holiness. In a word, I really meant to become virtuous and holy! But it was wrong and harmful that it occurred at an inappropriate time and that I didn't start from the right end or direction. I thought, as people generally do, that Christianity consists of work-righteousness and a virtuous mind and life, and I also tried to start my conversion here. I thought that I must become virtuous and holy before I could be accepted into grace, righteousness and salvation, and that was my Christianity, which I endeavored to establish at that time.

Sin revived in me by the law, and by this awakening grace I received a desire for God's commandments (Romans 7). Together with this, I felt the power and strength of sin in me, and indeed much stronger than ever before, and I also felt my great inability to dislodge myself from its snares. This distress, which oppressed me and made my heart restless, forced me to go to God to beg and pray for release and to ask for forgiveness for the sins I had committed and for liberation and salvation from the lordship and power of sin under which I lay. I also truly received comfort,<sup>4</sup> which ended my restlessness, and my intention to avoid sin and to live a holy life was renewed and strengthened, but again it was wrong and a great error and fault in me to consider this a complete conversion and justification, and here I ceased when I should have rushed to the Saviour, to be justified in him and to learn to know him as my Saviour, my Lord and my soul's Bridegroom. I didn't know, however, that such knowledge and familiarity with Jesus was necessary, nor that I lacked it. The mystery of Christianity and of godliness, of the Crucified Saviour and his blood and wounds, was still unknown to me. I neither knew nor understood it. I had indeed a historical knowledge of Jesus Christ and his suffering, blood, wounds and death, but I didn't understand that all of Christianity depends on living knowledge of the heart and the experiencing of it in faith. I neither knew nor understood that the only true Christianity and salvation resides in our knowing Jesus in a living way in faith as the one crucified for our sins, that is, claiming Jesus in living faith and receiving him into our hearts, knowing and enjoying in faith his agony, blood, wounds and death, eating the flesh of the Son of Man and drinking his blood and living by the faith of the Son of God.

This mystery of the cross and salvation of faith was unknown to me. For this reason, I also, instead of sharing inward familiarity, unity and fellowship with the crucified Saviour, without coming to a living knowledge of his atoning, cleansing, quickening and heart-refreshing blood, without coming into spiritual peace and rest in his healing and sanctifying wounds and into a true bending and humbling of the heart in that blessed state in which a sinner correctly and thoroughly finds himself a wretched sinner, began instead to follow and exercise godliness and holiness in another way. I wanted, as I have already said, to become virtuous and holy, that is, I wanted to be holy without the blood of Jesus and thus I was ignorant of the slaughtered Lamb of God. I wanted to be virtuous with a heart not yet quickened, cleansed, sanctified and renewed in Jesus' blood. I sought to become a great saint instead of trying to become as small as dust and a worthless sinner.

Only then did my own work and strenuous endeavor for self-effected holiness, sanctification and the preservation of peace in my conscience really begin. Now I really began to work out my own sanctification and repentance with much greater devotion and self-mortification than ever before. I indeed had enough self-knowledge to not trust in myself. God was, of course, my refuge. I went to him, begged for grace, and, as I thought, wanted to know of nothing but pure grace. But, observe again and take heed of where the error and deceit lay with me! I requested and prayed for grace from God, but by grace I did not understand the loving and gracious heart of God for Jesus' sake,

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<sup>4</sup> In Airas' version, this clause reads: "Minä sain myös totisesti andexi andamuxen" (I also truly received forgiveness).

that is, a quickening and heart-nourishing knowledge of the blood and death of Jesus and of the redemption accomplished by this means. However, in my understanding, what grace meant and what I wanted and requested, was power to live a holy life and power from God to mortify sin and power by the law to be faithful and obedient to the effects and victories of grace, and my peace and spiritual rest were based on the faithfulness and obedience that came from this power. But at that time I did not think so, nor would I have believed it if told. In my mind, my foundation was pure grace, and I was so firm in this notion that I indeed could have died for it. Meanwhile, my whole situation and all my conduct was a conspicuous sign and witness that I was actually building my salvation on the foundation of my own righteousness and sanctimoniousness, that is, on my own aforementioned faithfulness and obedience, for a single act of infidelity and disobedience or a single error would overthrow my whole spiritual rest and cast my heart into such confusion and turmoil that it could no longer control itself, which made me fainthearted and fearful and often so full of doubts that I nearly gave up my whole conversion, thinking it is no use, that I would not succeed anyway. Although I, by grace, which, under my own efforts, was truly working in my heart, revived again to some extent, it only extended as far as my own faithfulness and obedience. In a word, my peace and spiritual rest fluctuated on a loose and uncertain basis. My heart was not anchored to the cross, and I rejoiced secretly in my presumed holiness. (Note this well!) With a heart indifferent and insensitive toward the Saviour and his atoning sacrifice, his blood and death, with a heart filled with unbelief and hate for the Saviour and his cross, my righteousness and godliness, as heartfelt and genuine as it appeared to be, had no more security or anchor than did the peace of my soul, and its very foundation was nothing more than a patchwork and as flimsy as a spider's web.

By doing works and exerting myself, I progressed rather far in work-righteousness, but, oh, of what avail is holiness in a heart alien, indifferent and insensitive to the Saviour and his blood and wounds? It is entirely useless and in vain to strain oneself with one's own repentance, sanctification and righteousness when the heart does not yet know the Saviour, does not stand in living knowledge and enjoyment in faith of his blood and wounds. And since I did not have life from the quickening flesh and blood of the Son of God, nor fervor from his heart burning with love and warming wounds, I grew increasingly cold and finally fell completely asleep, but the Lord, who is full of grace and love, does not allow anyone to draw or snatch a single sheep that he has once found from his hand. He, like a shepherd seeking his lost sheep, sought me again and led me, by the powerful and penetrating preaching of the cross, that is, of the crucified Jesus, which I was allowed to hear, into a new conversion based on the blood and wounds of Jesus.

By this preaching of the cross and the elucidation of the reconciling, quickening, reviving, sanctifying and redeeming blood of the Lamb and the redemption and salvation of the soul that has occurred thereby, my heart was again convicted and awakened to its indifference and insensitivity toward the crucified Saviour. Then my sins against Jesus, my Saviour, and my innumerable sins against his grace, his blood and wounds, and all my unbelief and resultant condemnation were revealed and made clear! I recognized my separation from the Saviour, how he was alien and strange to my heart. I was not acquainted with him. I recognized my heart's secret hatred for his cross, my despising of his blood, and the lack of any consciousness of his wounds in my heart. I recognized my alienation and separation from the wound in his side and knew that my soul's resting place was not therein. I knew my old and deep-rooted, evil and filthy self-righteousness to be the whole reason for my indifference toward the Saviour and the righteousness that he has merited. I recognized my work-righteousness, which made me neglect and reject sanctification in

the blood of the Lamb, in and by which only can we be sanctified. I recognized my separation from the sacrificial Lamb, my lack of fellowship with him and my ignorance of his cross, wounds and bloody form. In a word, I had not believed in the Saviour but by unbelief had neglected, despised, rejected him and his bloody wounds and death. That was now my sin. I didn't own Jesus. He wasn't mine. That was my poverty. I didn't know him. That was my condemnation.

Behold, the nature of unbelief and what it is to become truly aware of one's unbelief and how this affects a sinner's mind! Awakened by the law to know his sins and transgressions against God's law, a sinner truly finds himself in panic, pain, agony and fear, but when a sinner, by the gospel and the Holy Spirit's enlightenment and revelation of Jesus' suffering and death, comes to know his unbelief, the only sin-producing root and source of other sins and the only reason for condemnation, he finds himself, as I did, in the greatest panic, agony and shame. Then alas and woe are heard in the heart: "Oh, my blindness and foolishness, that I have not believed, seen and known this before! Oh, that I have been so insensitive and ungrateful toward my Saviour that I have so overlooked, despised and rejected his suffering, blood, wounds and death. I haven't known my Redeemer. I haven't believed in him. I haven't loved him. Oh, that I have lived so long without God in the world! My heart has been without Jesus. I have had no living knowledge or experience of his suffering, blood, wounds, pains and death. Jesus in his bloody form has been for me an unknown God and an unknown Jesus. I have indeed known and mentioned his name but not the power of his suffering, blood, wounds and death or their fruit, blessing and salvation in my soul."

This sin, that is, my unbelief, made me exceedingly sinful. My poverty made me a beggar, and the condemnation lying on me caused to be completely overcome by panic, and in this panic, distress, poverty and need, I cast myself as a sinful beggar and as a begging sinner at the feet of the Saviour, eagerly yearning to be released, saved, pacified and nourished. I knew my sins, accused myself and confessed that I was guilty of all, particularly unbelief, as though I had no other sins, and that I was under condemnation because of unbelief. I was ashamed before the Saviour and dared not raise my eyes because I had tried to appeal to God and merit his grace and salvation by my own righteousness and sanctimoniousness, which I had zealously worked on by my own repentance and had thus despised and rejected the righteousness and merit of Jesus. I lamented my plight before the Saviour. I prayed for forgiveness for the sake of the sacrificial Lamb, grace and life in the blood and death of the Lamb, peace and rest in the wounds and redemption in the blood. I lay at the feet of Jesus with that sinful woman [Luke 7:37-38]. I wept and wet his pierced feet with my tears. I could not speak much with my mouth, but my heart spoke ever the more. It cried out, "Jesus, have mercy! Nothing but your blood will help and save me." I asked for one drop of blood: "Jesus, let one drop from your wounds fall on my heart, and I will revive, I will be cleansed, I will be healed and I will live." And the Saviour, that gracious friend of sinners, was not far from me. His heart burning with love was more disposed to give than I was to receive. He called, urged and drew me to himself with his blood, wounds and death. This was indeed medicine for my illness and nourishment for my hungry soul. Then I was also sufficiently ill, hungry and distressed to receive, with uplifted hands of faith, the offered medicine and spiritual nourishment.

The Saviour saw me lying before him in my blood [Ezekiel 16:6] and as one begging and waiting for one glance of grace. And when I least expected or hoped for it, he cast a blessed and blessing-filled glance on me, that is, he looked on me with his grace, which brings blessing and salvation. He appeared to me in his crucified form, showed me in spirit his wounds, his nail holes and his pierced side. He told me: "All these are for your sake. Thy sins are forgiven. Peace be unto thee." As soon as I could see him in spirit as the Crucified One and view his whipped and wounded

body, his innumerable scars, his blood-flowing wounds and the red blood flowing from his wounds, and as soon as I could hear his voice and sweet words, my heart burned in me. I thought, “This is the voice of my friend. This is the Redeemer of Israel and me.” Now I knew him as my Lord, my God and my Saviour. I could believe that the blood was mine and that the wounds were mine. And as soon as I thought, believed and felt this, my heart became alive, fervent, tender and yielding and my eyes welled with warm tears of love before him. I lay before him, at his bloody feet, filled with wonder, shame, prayer and thanksgiving. Only then did I vividly feel my sinfulness and Jesus’ righteousness, my death and also my life in Jesus, my unworthiness and Jesus’ merit, my indifference and Jesus’ love, my bondage in sin and Jesus’ liberation from it, my captivity and Jesus’ redemption, my accursedness and Jesus’ blessing over me. I had never been in my own eyes so sinful, filthy and unworthy, so despicable and accursed. Nor had the Saviour Jesus ever been so necessary and essential to me, so great, exalted, precious, beloved and highly blessed as precisely then in the image and form that he was in when he pardoned me and granted me his exceeding grace. The living knowledge and deep impression that I received at that time from both the Saviour’s crucified image and my sinful form made me simultaneously both a saved person and a poor sinner, satisfied and also lowered and humbled.

The Spirit of God has written this knowledge and impressed it with living letters into the tablet of my heart. He himself also invigorates, preserves and renews the same in my heart with his powerful, quickening and liberating finger, which paints the Saviour in his crucified image and form. Since that time, the Saviour has been my Lord and my God, my Immanuel, my Friend, my Brother, my Bridegroom, my Husband. My Jesus! He is my treasure, and indeed my only treasure, and there my heart is also [Luke 12:34]. He is more beloved and precious than myself. His suffering, pain, agony and anguish are my comfort and joy. His cross is my strength. His blood is my purification, my soul’s nourishment and refreshment, power and strength. His mockery is my glory. His wounds are my medicine, my city of refuge and my resting place. His death is my reconciliation, my redemption, my life. His cross is my support and my boasting. My sins are covered with his righteousness and my soul is clothed in his bloody garment. This now is my righteousness. My heart is washed and renewed in his purifying and sprinkling blood. This is my holiness. My soul has found a resting place in his wounds. This is my peace and rest for my soul. His pierced side is my security, refuge and hiding place. It is my fortress and my city of refuge into which I flee and hide myself. When enemies oppress and pursue me within or without, I can now truly sing with my heart and from my own experience:

Like a bird, when thunder rumbles and roars,  
In haste to the clefts, to hide itself it soars,  
So, Lord Jesus, thy five wounds are my rest,  
My refuge under pursuit and in distress.<sup>5</sup>

His anguished body offered upon the cross and his shed blood nourish and revive me. They are my soul’s food and drink. His heart clings to my heart, and my heart to his heart. This is my *sällskap*, that is, my companionship. Through him I stand in friendship with the Father and Holy Spirit. This is my fellowship. The Saviour, my soul’s Bridegroom and Husband, speaks with me and I with him, and our talk is of him and of his departure, suffering, blood, wounds, cross and

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<sup>5</sup> See verses 7-8 of hymn No. 259 (Ah, Herra Christ’) in the old (1701) Finnish hymnal or No. 61 in *Uskovaisten virsiä* (Ironwood: 1953).

death. This is my conversation. I stand with him in inner communion, dependence and participation, and my love cannot and my poverty will not be without him. This is my Christianity. (Behold and perceive, dear Christian, of what Christianity consists, and endeavor to come into contact, unity and friendship with this Lamb of God, who was slaughtered and offered on the cross for our sins.) I know him and he knows me. I live in him and he in me. Jesus in me, I in Jesus -- this is my salvation and life.

Oh, the precious life of faith! Oh, the life of faith hidden from all understanding, the whole world and all self-righteous ones! Oh, the blessed life of faith in Jesus! I live in satisfaction and only now know why and for what purpose I live in the world, namely, for my Saviour, for his blood, and so that I will live by and on his account, to be his own, the wages of his work, a payment and recompense for his sweat and suffering, a precious stone in his crown and a saved sinner. I am all this and all this is mine as a wretched sinner, not as one good and holy in himself, but as a sinner, and all that I have now narrated is mine as a sinner because of pure grace for the sake of Jesus' blood and death.

I am indeed sinful and entirely corrupt, but the power of Jesus' blood keeps and preserves me. I am poor and needy and have nothing in myself, but in him I lack nothing. I am vile and miserable, but his pardoning grace helps me. I am humble, paltry and worthless, a poor wretch, and I wish that I could daily become more cheap and poor in my own eyes before him because he, my beloved Crucified One, my bloody Bridegroom, the God of my salvation, would then be ever more needful, great and precious to me. I am weak. He places his hand under my arm and supports me. I am apt to fall and stumble. His arm helps me up and guides me. It also lifts and carries me when I become entirely exhausted because worse and more perilous places will be on my path, along which he leads me in this vale of sorrow.

If sin tends to revive again, his death mortifies it. If I become soiled, water from his side washes and rinses me. If Satan assails or tempts me, his bloody chest is my shield. If the world oppresses and persecutes me and drives me from one place to another, his side is my defense and city of refuge. If I become cold, his blood warms me again. If my heart becomes ill, his blood revives and heals it. In a word, Jesus, my crucified Saviour, is my all in all, and I am his sinner, his vile one, but in him and in his blood and wounds I am a pardoned and saved sinner. I hunger; Jesus is my bread; I thirst; Jesus is my drink. I am weak; his wounds are my strength. I am powerless; his blood is my support. I am a stranger and a pilgrim on earth. On the hill of Golgotha is my lodging and dwelling place. In Heaven is my home. Thither I yearn. Thither my mind, thoughts and desires aspire. Up, up, homeward, homeward! The child longs to go to his father and to the bosom of his mother, and the bride to her bridegroom. The prisoner longs for freedom. From storms and waves, the exhausted seaman longs for the harbor, but thy will, nevertheless, be done. It is closer now than yesterday. Jesus, let me remain in thee until thy coming. Amen. Amen.

# Milla Clementsdotter

(Born 1813)

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The first selection below, an article on the life and travels of Milla Clementsdotter, was originally published in the November 4, 1840 issue of the Swedish magazine *Nordisk Kyrkotidning*.<sup>6</sup> It was dated August 7, 1840, and the context indicates that it was written most likely by Johan Berglund, assistant pastor of Sollefteå, Sweden. Milla Clementsdotter has been identified by researcher Gunnar Wikmark as the “Lapp girl” known to Finns simply as “Lapin Maija” (Mary of Lapland). Though the article gives an incorrect date for Milla’s birth, it contains valuable information not only on her life but on the spiritual situation in northern Sweden during the first half of the nineteenth century. The article gives only the initials of the people whom Milla met during her travels, but the full names as recovered by Wikmark have been restored wherever possible in this translation. Milla’s year of death is unknown.

## The Lapp Girl: A View of Life in Swedish Lapland<sup>7</sup>

Milla Clementsdotter was born on All Saints Day in 1815<sup>8</sup> in Föllinge, Lapland. Her father had lost his property because of drunkenness. He was assaulted while drunk and then lay ill for quite awhile and died. She recalls many noteworthy events of her childhood, which not only show the early working of God in her but also give some idea of the way of life and customs of her people and are examples of God’s wondrous guidance.

It appears that at an early age she accompanied her mother and stepfather on their travels, which they, like the other Lapps, engaged in during the winter, going down to Jämtland and Ångermanland. Thus as a child she became known and benefited from acts of charity in the house of Pastor Strömqvist in Ramsele.

At six years of age she was left with a farming family in Nässjö in Ramsele Parish to herd goats. Her mother warned her at that time to never take any food on her own initiative. Even before this, at home, she and the other children had been firmly warned not to pilfer or steal. Their mother placed burning coals in their hands and asked whether it felt good, adding that whoever took anything illicitly would be tormented with fire in this way in hell. With motherly warnings to her little daughter and requests to her caretakers to teach her to read, she left the girl behind. But since she showed so little desire to remain, her clothes were hid so that she would not be able to accompany or follow her parents. But in the middle of the night, a winter night (presumably toward spring), she slipped out of her bed, which was behind the oven, and walked 12 miles after her parents in only her underclothes and stockings. When it was daylight her caretakers came with her clothes and fetched her. During the dancing that regularly occurred on Sunday evenings, she sat behind the oven and wept from unhappiness and sorrow.

She had previously learned the alphabet. Now she was supposed to read without learning to spell. So it went slowly, and it appears that the teacher was not gentle, nor was there much instruction. From the reading of others she now learned a good deal of the catechism, which she soon forgot.

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<sup>6</sup> The article has been republished in, inter alia, G. Wikmark, *Lars Levi Laestadius och Lappflickan Maria* (Stockholm: 1961), pp. 26-35.

<sup>7</sup> This title corresponds with that of the original Swedish article: “Lappflickan: Ett prov på ställningen i Svenska Lappmarken.”

<sup>8</sup> According to church records, Milla was actually born on November 1, 1813. See *Lars Levi Laestadius och Lappflickan Maria*, pp. 206, 207.

Her unhappiness persisted, and it was only intensified by the harsh treatment she received. Obstinate by nature, she felt that she also often suffered unjustly since the rod was her constant lot. Once she would not say grace because she had been severely and unjustly flogged, and in an angry mood she refused to pray. As a result, of course, she was mistreated and had to do what she did not feel was right.

After about half a year she moved to a better farm. There a neighbor lady coaxed her to read by offering her gifts. During her two years there, in a village by the name of Flyn, she often felt keenly troubled in heart, and she feared falling away from God. She obtained a catechism at that time from Assistant Pastor Paul Norberg in Ramsele, but she received instruction neither in reading nor in anything else while living with this family.

In pursuit of more thorough and better learning, she started traveling in the winter as in the manner of other Lapps. She went from farm to farm, singing songs and hymns, which induced many to give her food and other things. By this means, she obtained a silk scarf and coins from Dr. Sundberg's house. This encouraged her all the more to strive to learn to read and to keep God's Word. When she obtained food so that she could live in one place a few days, she stayed and asked the people for instruction and help in reading God's Word. She was treated well by many, but in some places they just gave her bran or chased her with firebrands.

Her future seemed brighter when she was accepted and adopted as a foster child by Constable Johan Gröndahl and his wife, but these foster parents died shortly thereafter. While there, she memorized the catechism though she could not read it properly.

It was then her lot to tend livestock in the summer and to travel in the winter. She spent one summer in Backa in Edslö; another in Vimmarvattnet; a third in Lövberg in Ström. During her winter travels she had continued her reading, and so now she knew the catechism.

On New Year's Day, she met her parents in Ström. Her stepfather wanted her to partake of Holy Communion, but she felt that she first needed better instruction and considered herself unworthy of going to Communion. However, she submitted to her father and went with him to Pastor Carl Axel Rothoff, who, in her opinion, was somewhat tipsy at the time. He asked her several questions, which she was unable to answer. She presumed that they were questions in accordance with the old catechism. A gentleman who was present then said to Pastor Rothoff, "I don't think you know what you are asking, my friend." Then she was given three questions in accordance with the new catechism, and when she had correctly answered the three questions and had read some passages from the New Testament, she was given a New Testament and permitted to attend Holy Communion, although she was not yet 14 years old.<sup>9</sup>

After this, she had to go to her native region. A wealthy, childless maternal uncle took her in as his child. He and his wife drank heavily. And while drunk they fought, burned their clothes and gave away their food. From this she learned the futility of drunkenness. Her uncle was also quite obsessed with his liquor. Her mother had warned her, and God's Word, in spite of her little knowledge of it, convinced her of the sinfulness and danger of drunkenness. This vice is, moreover, prevalent among Lapps of both sexes.

She spent five sad years with this uncle and had to herd his reindeer. Day and night she had to watch over them alone. She was able to rest only for short periods during the day, leaning against one of the animals. Her hardships were great, for she did not even get enough bodily nourishment due to the drunkenness of the householders, her foster parents, and their lack of food and their

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<sup>9</sup> Milla's first Communion occurred on January 1, 1827. See G. Wikmark, *Lars Levi Laestadius' väg till nya födelsen* (Lund: 1980), p. 207.

harshness. Bones, which she had to grind into porridge for herself, were often her only nourishment. She recalls with gratitude how a young man whom she met on a trip to a mill gave her food. Presumably, this happened during the winter, when the Lapps move to settled areas with their reindeer herds. At such times she could occasionally slip out at night in order to earn a little money to support herself by spinning for the farming families. She was once flogged for this by her uncle.

Her hungering, troubled soul didn't fare any better. In such a way of life, time for reading was scarce or almost nonexistent. Even if she had time, she was not allowed to read. Her books were hid from her because a certain farming family had told her foster parents that the New Testament did not contain the true Word of God. Once, however, she was able to secretly read *En ropande Röst i Öknen* [A Crying Voice in the Wilderness].<sup>10</sup> She did so with many tears. Once each year, together with the other Lapps, she was able to go to church and attend Holy Communion.

During one such church trip a suitor had agreed with her parents that she would be given in marriage, as is the custom among the Lapps, without asking her. He now tried in every way to approach her. He was somewhat advanced in years and was her godfather, and he was, moreover, not at all distinguished among his neighbors for sobriety or other Christian virtues. In the initial awakening, which she now appears to have been experiencing, a marriage, particularly with a man for whom the one thing needful was of no importance, could only be repulsive. In accordance with custom, he came to treat her to some liquor, but she poured it out in front of him. He kept an eye on her, and they were left alone in a room at his place, where, as is the custom of both Swedes and Lapps, they were to spend the night in the same bed. But she slipped away from him and lay down in the woods under some juniper bushes. This happened on the way, before they arrived in town. Now she stole a boat and thought that in any case she should thank God for even being able to escape in such a way. When she had crossed the lake, however, she was terrified to see the dreadful man, trimmed and shaven, coming toward her. She now accepted, as a godfather's gift, a present which he wanted to have viewed as an engagement gift.

In town, she became better acquainted with two Lapp boys, who, very seriously troubled in soul, had gone traveling and had learned the good word of God from Pastor Brandell in Nora. Even if their knowledge was not spectacular, their earnestness over the salvation of the soul was indeed all the greater. Her aversion to her suitor could only grow when these new or renewed acquaintances convinced her that the Last Judgment would soon occur. They were called madmen and fools by the apathetic people around them, but their admonitions, their mild, humble conduct, their devotion in prayer, to which they also exhorted her and with which she was so pleased, drew her to them and were a true joy to her in all her inner need and her present external distress. Their names were Lars Larsson and Lars Andersson.

Meanwhile an attempt was made again by the suitor to snare her. His full-grown daughter became very friendly to her and enticed her to accompany her into the woods, where she thought she was free from his persistent efforts to win her favor. Here she fell asleep in the company of her false friend, but when she woke up she found herself in the embrace of her old suitor. Fortunately, a young Swede approached and, responding to her cries of distress, helped her escape from the troublesome man. Now, in the company of Lars Larsson and Lars Andersson, she fled the town. Even after returning to the mountains, the suitor made attempts at her, which were even violent at times.

The next time she went to church, she again met him in the road, where he was sitting and shaving with a mirror. When she arrived in the town where the church was, she was asked to be a

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<sup>10</sup> A book published anonymously by Peter Jonsson Topp in 1823.

godmother, and her parents intended to take advantage of the opportunity to publish the banns of her marriage and to give her in marriage. When she resisted, her hair was pulled and she was pinched, and she would have been taken to the pastor by force if schoolteacher Olof Wassdahl hadn't intervened.

She was now encouraged by Lars Larsson to travel down to Nora and Sollefteå. And she was determined to do so even though by so doing she would lose the sizable inheritance that she would have received from her uncle if she had remained with him. Although she moved away from him, she had to remain in the mountains two years, which she spent partly with her parents and partly with other relatives.

The old suitor had given up, but now there was a new one, a young man, but he was a drinker. This man came up with the idea of forcing her into marriage by satisfying the lust of the flesh. For eight whole days she had to ward him off by force, during which his shamelessness once went so far that she almost succumbed to the violence. However, just at the time of this extreme distress the Lord sent other Lapps, who took her under their protection. A defense against the temptations was the passage: "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul" [Matthew 16:26]?

However, her soul had not yet been saved, and her troubled conscience did not yet have peace, and, in addition, she still had all kinds of external vexations. The rumor spread that she was pregnant. It started after she visited schoolteacher Olof Wassdahl because of an ailment and had obtained some medicines from him. Her troubled soul caused her to be viewed as insane. She was subjected to bloodletting, burning with tinder and other such treatments that the blind world is in the habit of administering to ailing consciences, of which it has neither understanding nor experience.

In the wintertime she also became stubborn, hard and angry with everything and nearly everyone, as is sometimes the case with souls under the bondage of the law. With little wisdom perhaps, but with love, she asked her parents, who had now become fisher Lapps, to refrain from drunkenness and Sunday fishing, and she succeeded to the extent that they refrained from the latter. Her brothers and sisters were also affected by her admonitions so that they became concerned about the one thing needful. Therefore, she was also hated, and this last year at home was a year of discipline for her.

During this period she also had a remarkable dream that made a great impression on her. She imagined that she saw a church, and not far from it there was a cottage. The people came out of the church, enveloped in smoke, and entered the cottage. Here someone was dancing with horns on his knees. Suddenly the dance ended, and the whole crowd left as though chained together, and they were pulled down into a chasm of smoke and fire. She saw fathers and mothers with children in their arms falling into it. As for herself, she felt him dragging her to the edge of the precipice, but a small, handsome man came and saved her. He asked her for her name in a friendly way. She replied, "Elsa." He said, "My name is Jehovah, and your name is not Elsa but Milla." He was carrying a book in his hand and was accompanied by another man who confirmed his words and was named Timotheus. Jehovah said that he should write her name in the book and gave her food from a small box that he was carrying with him. He asked her to tell her parents and brothers and sisters how dreadful it was in the raging deep and to ask them if they knew who Jehovah is. "If a person is not diligent in the Word of God," he said, "he will come into this terrible place, and the torment there will never end."

She now had a heartfelt desire to go, if possible, from the mountains to a place where she could obtain more thorough instruction in salvation and peace for her soul. She waited moment by moment for the Last Judgment and the coming of the Lord but lacked true confidence and trust to meet him. She gave away her clothes in vain. This did not give her peace of conscience. She had no desire to get married, as her family wanted her to do. She was afraid that she would get an ungodly mate and would rather have died.

Now her younger sister came to her, and she agreed with her that they would take turns each year, one remaining home with the parents while the other earned money in the country and aided those at home with her higher wages. It was to begin right away. And she was so glad that she could go to a place where God's Word was more abundantly proclaimed with light and grace that on that very day, toward evening, she departed, against the supplications of her parents and without any supply of food.

She obtained some reindeer cheese from an acquaintance. She went through a desolate region to Bergsvattnet and fell ill there. She was now quite afraid of death and asked the people there in vain for instruction regarding the way of salvation. She wanted to live until she learned how to die a blessed death. The man of the house wanted to send for the pastor of the congregation, but she did not desire this. Now she deeply regretted having undertaken this journey against the will of her parents and having left them so late in the afternoon.

During the illness, which lasted five weeks, she had many kinds of visions, which can be explained as caused by her high fever. When the people of the house had gone to sleep she saw, among other things, a man sitting by the fireplace throughout the nights, stirring the fire. During the burning fever she desired living water. She gave admonitions to repent to the people of the house. (Soon after her departure, the man of the house and his maid died, and it was rumored that she had divined the life out of them because she had warned them about death without repentance.)

Alone and forlorn, she prayed intensely to God to send someone familiar to her there, and a man whom she knew and an aunt then came to the solitary place where she was. She was sincerely happy to see them. Neither did she spare any efforts in urging them to repent. She lay so ill in bed that she could not even move, but when she thought she heard them ask her to depart she had the strength to get up, and she traveled a mile and a half in seven hours and arrived in Nybäcken after having spent five weeks in bed in the previous place.

A farmer in Nybäcken treated her in the kindest manner and paid for her ride for 12 miles. Then she continued three miles to Hoting, another village, where she was taken in by some very poor people because the owner of the house viewed himself as selected by God to take care of her. Here, once again, she became bedridden. It was decided she could stay there eight days. However, her fervent longing to arrive soon in the regions where there were truly spiritual teachers made her accept an offer to ride with some young people who were headed further into the parish to a dance, but they deceived her during the ride and left her behind on the road. Weary from traveling on foot, alone in a large woods on a winter night, and also deathly ill, she expected only death and wished for it as a deliverer from such great misery. However, she traveled on until she collapsed from exhaustion, and the falling snow hid her as she lay unconscious on the road. It was during the Christmas holidays, and there was no possibility that anyone at such a time, and particularly at such an hour, would happen to be traveling on this road, which led only from some mountain settlements in a sparsely settled region. On this road, however, a little beyond where she was lying, there was a settlement or a lone farm. The farmer had traveled further into the parish for a visit, and it had been decided that he would remain away until the next day. Unexpectedly, he felt overcome by so much

anxiety over those whom he had left at home that, in spite of all the pleas to the contrary, he decided to travel home from all the mirth. He had already gone a long distance along the road when the horse shied and stopped abruptly. Looking for the reason, he now found the poor girl covered by snow and near death. He took her into his vehicle and conveyed her to his house and cared for her as a helper sent by God.

The next day she continued traveling in the region. Now she fell ill again and was in bed five weeks. During this time she had the opportunity to exhort her neighbors and friends, who were staying in the area at that time and happened to come to her. She was especially glad to now see her parents again, and she asked them for forgiveness. They gave her a ride to Sollefteå. They tried to forbid her from going to the reading lessons that were being given at that time, and so again she left them.

A heartfelt desire was satisfied when she was able to personally speak with Assistant Pastor Johan Berglund. On his advice she sought work here, after she had made known her fervent desire to stay in this region, where she felt that she had more abundant opportunities to hear the Word of God. Since then she has stayed here every summer as a hired hand to tend livestock.<sup>11</sup> She also wanted to hear Pehr Brandell, the pastor of Nora. Her parents, who continued to disapprove of her anxieties over finding the Word, followed her, overtook her on the road, took away her better clothes and left her only the kind of clothing in which she could fare in their company. They took her to Hernösand and watched over her carefully. She had an opportunity, however, to speak with Major Wahlstedt and Baron Mörner, the governor. She asked if it was a sin to run away from one's parents in order to hear the Word of God. She also obtained money to buy shoes, which facilitated her flight. She now separated from her parents unnoticed.

In Säbrå she benefited from much Christian love in various places. She got food for her body and soul and encouragement to travel to Nora. She recalls with gratitude Mrs. S. in Hernösand, Mrs. S., the widow,<sup>12</sup> and Assistant Pastor Nylander.

Thus she set out for Nora, and on the way she was given a ride by a woman who was traveling in regard to the same matter. Since then her life has not been at all unusual but has been like that of other souls concerned over their salvation, with fluctuations of joy and sorrow, conflict and calmer phases.

She now appears to enjoy the favor of nearly everyone and has also regained the good will of her parents. May the Lord, who has begun a good work, also, in accordance with his promise, finish it to the glory of his name!

## **The Identification of Milla Clementsdotter with Lapin Maija**

Pastor Lars Levi Laestadius was converted on January 1, 1844, while listening to a "Lapp girl" in Åsele, Sweden, tell of her travels. He identifies this person only as Maria, and so she has come to be known simply as "Lapin Maija" (Mary of Lapland). Laestadius tells of his conversion in his autobiography as follows:

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<sup>11</sup> This sentence indicates that Berglund is probably the author of this article.

<sup>12</sup> This is presumably Margareta Lovisa Selahn, widow of Erik Peter Selahn (1789-1830), pastor of Säbrå and friend of Brandell. See *Lars Levi Laestadius och Lappflickan Maria*, p. 35.

In the winter of 1844, I came to Åsele, Lapland, to conduct a church inspection. Here I met some *readers* of the milder sort.<sup>13</sup> Among them was a Lapp girl by the name of Maria, who opened her whole heart to me after hearing the message from the altar. In the order of grace this simple girl had experiences that I had never heard before. She had wandered long distances, seeking light in the darkness. In her travels she had finally come to Pastor Brandell in Nora, and when she had opened her heart to him, he freed her from doubt. Through him she came to living faith. And I thought: Here now is a Mary who sits at the feet of Jesus. Only now, I thought, do I see the way leading to life. It had been hidden from me until I could talk with Maria. Her simple account of her travels and experiences made such a deep impression on my heart that the light dawned even for me. On that evening that I spent with Maria I felt a foretaste of the joy of heaven. But the pastors in Åsele did not know her heart, and she also knew that they were not of this sheepfold. I shall remember poor Maria as long as I live, and I hope to meet her in a brighter world on the other side of the grave.<sup>14</sup>

Another account of the meeting of Laestadius and the “Lapp girl” is given by Juhani Raattamaa in an 1890 article:

He lived impenitent until he lost a child and fell ill himself. Then he noticed that he was not ready to die and he became contrite. So he started to seek salvation. But he did not understand it until the Lapp girl Maria said to him that he should believe his sins forgiven in the condition he was now in. Then he obtained peace by faith in Jesus and began to preach with the power of the Spirit.<sup>15</sup>

The “Lapp girl” Milla was first identified as the “Lapp girl” Maria in the well-researched studies of Gunnar Wikmark. He noticed the similarities between the two young women, both of whom had traveled to Nora to hear Pastor Brandell. Wikmark learned first that in the northern regions Milla is a variant of Maria. In English, similarly, Molly and Polly are variants of Mary. Wikmark eventually met Valter Lenman of Arvidsjaur after reading an article that Lenman had written in 1955 on the meeting of Laestadius and Maria as he had heard it told by an uncle who had known individuals who had seen and heard Laestadius. Lenman recounted his stories to Wikmark, using the names Milla and Maria interchangeably. He even gave an explanation for the dual name, saying that in her troubled spiritual condition she got it into her head that she was the Virgin Mary. In order to rid her of such thoughts, those near her, according to Lenman, began to refer to her by the less provocative name of Milla. This story is significant not because of any truth it might contain but because it shows that the use of a dual name for the “Lapp girl” was prevalent enough in the past to require an explanation. Subsequently, Wikmark met another man, Göte Rådström of Åsele, who had often heard his mother speak of the “Lapp girl” whom Laestadius had met, always referring to her as Milla.<sup>16</sup>

According to church records, Milla Clementsdotter married Thomas Pålsson, a Lapp of Frostviken, in 1840, and gave birth to a daughter about five years later. The last entry in the records is an 1868 notation that the family is probably in Norway.

Warren Hepokoski

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<sup>13</sup> Many *readers* (läsare) were so radical in their criticism of the church that they refrained from participation in its activities and some eventually separated from it.

<sup>14</sup> *Tidskriften Ens Ropandes Röst i Öknén* (Pieksämäki: 1994), pp. 41, 42.

<sup>15</sup> “Kertomus L. L. Laestadiuksesta,” *Sanomia Siionista*, May 1890, pp. 94, 95; included in J. Raattamaa, *Kirjeet ja kirjoitukset* (Helsinki: 1976), pp. 362, 363.

<sup>16</sup> For Wikmark’s own account, see, in particular, *Lars Levi Laestadius’ väg till nya födelsen*, pp. 198-204.

# Pehr Brandell

(1781-1841)

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Pehr Brandell was born on January 1, 1781 in Portsås in Piteå Parish, Sweden. On his ordination in 1812, he was appointed assistant pastor of Högsjö. In 1817, he became pastor of Nora, where a revival ensued as the result of his preaching. In 1838, he was assigned to Ullånger, where he remained until his death on May 4, 1841. The item in this section was published posthumously in Piteå in 1847 by an anonymous editor as a “letter” written during his “student days,” though it lacks the format of a letter and is followed by a prayer, written presumably by Brandell.

## Words of Comfort for a Troubled Soul<sup>17</sup>

“Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.” (Isaiah 40:1-2)

Dear Friend! Lift your heart from all your distress, all your grief, sorrow and lamentation, and see here God’s fatherly heart opened for you, full of pure love, grace, compassion, comfort, consolation and sweetness. It is not sufficient that in his own heart he has forgiven and forgotten -- yes, eternally forgotten -- our sins, but in his inner yearning and desire to let grieving hearts and consciences hear and learn this for their comfort and restoration, he hastens to command his servants and all the faithful to announce and proclaim this blessed, wholesome and incomparably sweet news, saying, “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people.” Speak comfortably with them and tell them that their slavery, their bondage and time of despair has ended, for their transgressions are forgiven. For they have received double from the Lord’s hand for all their sins, namely, the forgiveness of sins and freedom from the law, grace for debt and life for death. But the reason why God, the Heavenly Father, bears such a compassionate heart for us fallen children and why he is a thousand times more happy to forgive us all our sins than we are to receive his forgiveness is that Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, came down from heaven, took on himself all our sins, redeemed us with his blood, paid the whole debt that we had before God, and thus reconciled and satisfied the Father so that he is now as favorably inclined toward you, me, and all who believe on his Son as he was toward our first parents before they had sinned. And as little as he can be angry with his own Son, whom he has loved from eternity, just as little can he be angry with us, for this Son has paid all that he owes for us, even his own life, and we have now become his joint-heirs through faith. So we are not only freed from debt and punishment but, along with this, we have received freely a far greater wealth and treasure than that which we lost in the fall, for Christ has not only paid our whole debt before God and has saved us from death, the devil and hell, but he has also earned for us the sonship and the right of inheritance with himself to an eternal life with God in heaven. Behold how much greater than all kings and emperors on earth is the man who merely takes and receives of Christ and simply allows him to give himself.

But here your heart might object, saying, “Those who show obedience to God and are worthy of this treasure indeed receive this sonship, but I above all others have been disobedient, unfaithful

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<sup>17</sup> The title and author are combined in the Swedish original as follows: *Andeligt Bref till en om sin salighet bekymrad person inom Norrbottens Län, skrifvet af Pehr Brandel, under dess Student-tid* (Spiritual Letter to a Person Troubled Over His Salvation in Norrbotten Province, Written by Pehr Brandel in His Student Days).

and obstinate toward God. Therefore, I am entirely unworthy to receive such a gift from him.” I answer, “You are such, but if it’s to be a matter of worthiness, God wouldn’t grant this fathomless treasure to any human being, but to the angels only.” So it isn’t our worthiness or obedience that causes and moves God to give us this treasure -- his Son with all that he is and possesses -- but he is induced of pure grace, freely and without cost, to give us this salvation.

“Yes,” you say, “yet it does make a difference how we men have conducted our lives here on earth, in sins and transgressions against God, in which I especially above all others have become guilty of eternal death.” I answer and say with Luther: I wouldn’t give half a penny for all the merits, holiness and righteousness of St. Peter and St. Paul, that they would thereby have merited such a treasure and gift, for Peter, Paul and John the Baptist, with all their holiness, were not a hair’s breadth more worthy to be the children of God than us sinners, you and me.<sup>18</sup> For if it is to be a matter of disputing with St. Peter, Paul and John the Baptist over privileges in this sonship, I would argue against them and say: Christ has suffered, died and risen up for me just as he has for them, and to me also he has given his Word, baptism and the Lord’s Supper, through which he has called me and has promised me grace and salvation, just as he has to them. And if, in spite of this they are more righteous than I, it doesn’t make any difference, for they, just as I, have to be pardoned and justified in Christ’s blood as nothing more than lost and condemned sinners. Yes, with all their obedience and righteousness they still had just as great a need and reason as I to dress themselves in a yet greater obedience, holiness and righteousness, namely Christ’s own through faith, and to exclude all their own righteousness and account it as dung, shame and loss, as St. Paul says of himself in Philippians 3:7-8, and to be found only in the righteousness that is imputed to faith for Christ’s sake.

Therefore, these saints would also have had to be eternally lost with all their works, just as I, if God in his eternal mercy had not, without any steps on their part, forgiven them their sins. And if Christ had not through his merits earned God’s Spirit for them and made them God’s children before and exclusive of all their own works, they, just as I, would have had to be eternally lost. Therefore, we are all equal before God, and no one has any precedence above another. So all merits have been entirely wiped away, and this grace and gift is simply offered and presented to all men, not to the worthy but to the unworthy, not to the righteous and pure, but to sinful and impure souls. And why would we need Jesus, our Saviour, if we ourselves had something other and better than sin from head to heel! Indeed, he would have been a fool to come here to us and descend into all this misery, poverty, scorn, blasphemy, anguish, pain and death, if we had been able to earn something of God ourselves.

Now Christ is a spiritual physician and does not want nor does he consider as his own such who are well and healthy without his help and treatment, as he himself says in Matthew 9:12-13: “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. . . . I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” Although no man is righteous but all are sinners, as St. Paul says in Romans 3:23, the work-righteous still consider themselves righteous, which they are not. Christ cannot help such, for they are already too big and mature for him. Therefore, it is his pleasure and joy to find and deal with those who are sick, weak, helpless, troubled, desperate and completely ruined. On such he can exercise his true office and natural function: heal the sick, strengthen the weary, revive the faint and comfort those in trouble and despair and promise them grace and the forgiveness of sins, sonship with God, his pure righteousness, holiness, purity, innocence, obedience, suffering, fulfillment of the law and resurrection -- in short, all that he is and possesses -

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<sup>18</sup> See *Luther’s Church Postil*, Sermon on the Ninth Sunday after Trinity.

- in which he so adorns them and covers their nakedness that in this attire they are as holy and pure and as void of spot or crease as he is himself. But this dressing of them in Christ's righteousness and their redemption from sin, death and all that pains and oppresses the heart and conscience occurs only through faith, when he proclaims and orders proclamation of the words of the gospel to troubled souls in regard to the disposition of his heart toward them, his suffering, his merits and love and also their redemption and salvation in him alone.

But here, dear friend, your heart might again object, saying, "Since I have committed such gross transgressions against God that no other person, I believe, can have so abused his patience, he may well reject me, for when he called, I did not listen; when he knocked, I did not open; when he sought me, I did not allow myself to be found of him; and when he called me, I despised him, etc. God answers this himself, opens his fatherly heart for you and says that he even forgives the most scarlet of sins (and all that is and is called sin) for the sake of his dear Son. Listen, therefore, not so much to what your own heart tells you, but rather to what God himself in Heaven tells you. For to express his fathomless love toward poor sinners, he describes his grace and forgiveness as being as great and as long-lasting as he is himself -- that is infinite and eternal. In the above text, Isaiah 40, he says that he has already forgiven you your transgressions. Indeed, what are we other than transgressors before God? And in Isaiah 44:22 he says, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud, thy sins; return unto me, for I have redeemed thee." And in Isaiah 43:25 he also says, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Take notice, dear friend, the Lord proclaims to you an eternal forgiveness and says that he will never again remember your sins.

Dear friend! Why are you so grieved, and why do you afflict your conscience with your sins and not let what he has forgotten and disregarded remain forgotten and disregarded? Oh, do not dig up your sins, which your Jesus has buried. Do not sink into sorrow now that Jesus wants to comfort you through his sweet gospel. Do not trouble yourself. Neither allow the law, sin, nor death to terrify you since Jesus, who has overcome them all, now wants to comfort you and make you glad over your victory and redemption in him. Do not burden your heart and conscience now that Jesus wants to ease, cheer and encourage you with his Word and Spirit. For that which Jesus said in Matthew 9:2 to the man sick of palsy he says to you and to all hearts and consciences that are troubled and distressed over their sins, "Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." Behold, thus your sin here vanishes in his righteousness, your death in his life, and your condemnation in his salvation, as Luther says.

Therefore, do not seek deliverance from your sins elsewhere, not in contrition for sin, nor in the law, nor in works, nor in anything that is or is called human, but only in Jesus through faith, for "neither is there salvation (and deliverance from all sins), in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). In Isaiah 43:11 he also speaks comfortingly to all who seek him, saying, "I, even I, am the Lord, and beside me there is no saviour." Behold, dear friend, now you hear the voice of your true shepherd, you who are running along all kinds of roads and paths in the wilderness, seeking him in distress and are unable to find him anywhere. Here in the gospel he allows himself to be heard and doesn't want to be sought or found elsewhere. He calls to you, saying, "I am the Shepherd, the only Saviour, the comforter and helper of all wretches in distress." So "come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). For I am the Good Shepherd who gives his life for his sheep (John 10:11). Oh, with what more pleasant or sweet words could he describe his compassionate

heart toward poor sinners so as to draw them to himself than when he offers himself to freely suffer death for them, for their deliverance and salvation?

Indeed, here the human heart cannot fully understand or grasp, and even less can any tongue express, the height, depth, length and breadth of this measureless love or see and behold its joy therein. He says himself in John 15:13, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." But St. Paul praises the love of God and Jesus even more, saying, "for his enemies" (Romans 5:10). Therefore, as soon as you feel your sins and know that you are a lost sheep that has run astray from Christ, your Shepherd, you already have the comfort that he himself is seeking and searching for you, his sheep, until he finds you, and when he has found you he will lay you on his shoulders and bear you through the wilderness with joy. This happens when you hear and believe his promises and rest on them. Behold, this is how he depicts and describes himself in Luke 15, and as soon as you feel that you want to run away from Christ you should press ever closer and closer to him, for he seeks you not for the purpose of frightening and smiting you but to be able to kindly draw you to himself. Yes, you also have the comfort that the stripes and sorrows of your sins are cast on Christ and are borne by him, as Isaiah says in 53:4: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows," and in verse 6: "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." This is said also by John the Baptist: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). And hymn 14, verse 9, of the Swedish hymnal says, "Christ laid thy sin on himself and said unto thee: Come to me, thou who art sinful, thy sins I bear on myself."<sup>19</sup> Ah, sweet gospel! Thus we have no sins, for here there is a constant bearing. Christ bears both us and our infirmities unceasingly on himself. But it feels very different to a man in time of temptation. Yet he has to learn to hold fast to the Word and believe against all feeling and experience. That is, he has to hope in the grace of God which he hasn't yet experienced. Dear friend, do not despair in regard to God's Word and promises, in whatever condition you may be or may encounter, for in him they are yea and amen

(II Corinthians 1:20). In your feelings and thoughts it often seems as though God has completely refused you his help and has eternally forgotten you, but it is not so. Do not follow your thoughts and do not believe your heart, but strive -- yes, and struggle with all diligence -- that with eyes, ears and senses closed to all objections you might grasp and believe only God's Word and promises. He himself says in the Prophet Isaiah 54:7-10: "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth (Genesis 9:9-11), so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee."

Behold, the Lord, who is truthful and cannot lie, must yet for the sake of our unbelieving hearts testify and confirm his Word with the deepest oath, by his own life (Hebrews 6:13). And yet he can hardly get us to rely on his Word. How wretched of you, o wicked unbelief, for being the reason we do not dare with joy, or at least without fear, lift our eyes and behold God's mild face and compassionate heart for us in Christ his Son but go about instead with tear-filled eyes and hearts,

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<sup>19</sup> This is the old Swedish hymnal of 1695, which was in use during Brandell's "student days." This hymnal (on which the 1701 Finnish hymnal is based) was replaced in 1819 by a new hymnal, which was one of the "new books" criticized by the *readers* for their liberal innovations. See, for example, *Tidskriften Ens Ropandes Röst i Öknen*, pp. 360-397.

thinking only of the law and our sins, although we have the greatest reason to let our face radiate pure joy and gladness. For why should the person who hears from the gospel, hears it proclaimed from God's own mouth, that all his sins are forgiven, that he is proclaimed righteous and that he possesses life and salvation, sonship and inheritance, for the sake of and with Christ, why, I ask, should such a person sorrow? He has no reason to do so, for these are not sad tidings but such great salvation that even the angels desire to look into it (I Peter 1:12).

Here you see, dear friend, that I have not urged any fruits of faith, nor asked you to show faith by works. No! Here I have had to exclude law, work, love, piety and everything, for such things are not for you in the condition you are now in, and neither does God require them of you as long as you do not know for certain that you are in grace before him and have forgiveness of your sins and total salvation in Christ through faith before and without all your own works, for faith must be in the heart before works. But when you have taken hold of faith and receive a soft, tender, cheerful and mild heart, you will find enough and more than enough to do. But during your time of despair and while you labor so much with works, the Lord himself asks in Isaiah 55:2, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" That is, do you want to buy grace and the forgiveness of your sins from me through works and attain peace of conscience and salvation by your keeping of the law? Oh, it is only lost money and labor. Therefore, in his holy gospel he offers his rich grace to all souls who hunger and thirst for grace, bidding them to freely take and eat heavenly bread from his table and to draw and drink water of life from the wells of salvation [Isaiah 12:3], in as plentiful an amount as they can, for refreshment of their souls; that is, to eat and drink Jesus spiritually in faith, whereby they receive comfort and consolation, peace and satisfaction, security and salvation.

Behold, here I have undertaken to show you how to obtain a merciful God, the forgiveness of sins and peace of conscience and how to become a bride of Christ. This happens now in no other way than this: When you hear in the gospel that Christ has offered your sins in his body on the tree (I Peter 2:24) and that he was delivered for your offences and was raised again for your justification (Romans 4:25), or similar words of Scripture, the Holy Spirit is present and thereby awakens faith in your heart so that you apply this treasure, Christ, to yourself with all that he is and possesses. And from that moment you are righteous and a blessed child of God. Behold, this is the true betrothal between Jesus and you, that he takes on himself your sins and gives himself and all his fullness to you, as he himself says through the Prophet, "I will betroth thee unto me. . . in lovingkindness and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord" [Hosea 2:19-20].

So now be it known unto you, dear friend, that through Jesus Christ is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses (Acts 13:39). Behold, dear friend, God's mercy shines as the dawn over you and his gracious care as the rays of the sun. His word remains forever, and his salvation is without end. "The Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended" (Isaiah 60:20). "Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains; for the Lord hath comforted his people and will have mercy upon his afflicted" [Isaiah 49:13]. But the troubled in Zion say, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands. Thou art mine and shalt remain my own chosen inheritance eternally [Isaiah 49:14-16].

O almighty, eternal, merciful and truthful God! How great is indeed thy grace, how burning thy love and how sweet thy word and speech to us unworthy ones! Thou sayest in Isaiah 66:12, “Ye shall be borne in her arms and dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you.” “And it shall come to pass, that before you call, I will answer, and while you are yet speaking I will hear” [Isaiah 65:24]. “For I am the Lord, and no one who hopes in me will come to shame” [Isaiah 49:23]. So now I hear clearly, my God, from thy gospel that it is entirely false and in vain to hope in any righteousness, worthiness or merit of one’s own. Therefore, I beg thee, thou author and finisher of faith, that thou grant me a true faith in thy word and thy promises, which are yea and amen in thee. Keep and maintain it in my heart in all manner of distress, temptation and tribulation that may befall me from the devil, the world and the flesh. Strengthen and increase it continually in me. Make me steadfast and constant in it. And confirm me until the end in the faith that I am righteous and blessed in thee, my Saviour, and strengthen me to also live and be satisfied in thee, and then to gladly leave here, and to rise with joy from the grave, washed in thy blood, and to hold an eternal festival of joy with thee and thy elect in heaven. Amen.

# Lars Levi Laestadius

## (1800-1861)

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Lars Levi Laestadius was born on January 10, 1800 in Jäckvik, Sweden. He was ordained in 1826, and the same year, after a brief assignment in Arjeplog, he began his ministry in Karesuando, Sweden's northernmost parish. He experienced grace in 1844, and the "Laestadian" revival ensued as a result of his preaching. In 1849, he moved to Pajala, where the revival continued and where he remained until his death on February 21, 1861. The sermon in this section has been translated from a manuscript, which, though incomplete, was also used in L. Koistinen's collection of Laestadius' sermons.<sup>20</sup> The missing last part of the sermon has been translated from the version published in the monthly *Armonsanoma* in 1911.<sup>21</sup>

### A Sermon of Laestadius Given on the Fourth Day of Rogation in 1857

"Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God? But our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; noses have they, but they smell not." (Psalm 115:2-6)

King David<sup>22</sup> writes in Psalm 115: "Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God?" That is, the God of the children of Israel. When the children of Israel encountered adversities in the world, the heathen were quite ready to mock and say, "Where is now their God?" Yet today, the heathen mock Christians in this way when some misfortune besets them, saying, "Where is now their God?" David has in many places marveled that the ungodly have so much success in this world, but he has also shown where the trust of Christians is when he says in the aforementioned place, "But our God is in the heavens. He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased." He shows here that the God of the Christians is in heaven. Although Christians often have to suffer in this world, their God is in heaven.

But where is the God of the heathen? David says in verses 4-6 of the same Psalm, "Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; noses have they, but they smell not." Thus David now writes of the gods of the heathen. They are worthless gods, which cannot effect anything. But are the gods of the heathen better now than in the time of David? At that time, the heathen had visible idols, that is, images of gold, silver, brass, wood, clay or other substances. Now the visible gods are the liquor flask, ostentatious clothing, beautiful buildings, painted sleighs,<sup>23</sup> cattle, horses and sheep. For Luther says: "That which a person loves the most is his god." The heathen trust in these things the most, and we can say of these idols with David, "They have mouths, but they speak not" and "they have ears, but they hear not." That is, they are dumb, helpless gods, who cannot help in distress. But the invisible gods are innumerable, and the heathen

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<sup>20</sup> L. L. Laestadius, *Rovasti Lars Levi Laestadiusen saarnat puhtaina* (Pieksämäki: 1984), pp. 701-705.

<sup>21</sup> "Saarna 4 Rukouspäivänä (L. L. Laestadius)," *Armonsanoma*, No. 9, 1911 (*lisälehti*), pp. 161-175. It is possible that this version, which contains some minor variations, may be based on a no longer extant copy made by Laestadius himself. See M. Miettinen, *Lestadiolainen heräysliike I. Perustajan aika* (Helsinki: 1942), p.76.

<sup>22</sup> Even if the Bible does not identify David as the writer of Psalm 115, the words of the psalm reflect the common sentiments of believers.

<sup>23</sup> In the places where the manuscript has "painted sleighs" (maalatut reet), the *Armonsanoma* version has "cards" (kortit).

serve them the most, such as the devil of fornication, the devil of honor, the devil of greed, the devil of anger, the devil of drunkenness, the devil of arrogance, the devil of deceit and the devil of envy, which all rule in the hearts of the heathen. The drunkard's favorite god is the visible flowing liquor, rum, or whatever his name may be, which we call the devil's shit, for the devil teaches people to ruin God's grain and to make it harmful to body and soul. The people who drink it become animals. And what is the favorite god of the liquor merchant? Why, nothing other than that round liquor barrel, on which the liquor devil sits astride, as the heathen have painted him in their pictures. What is the whore's favorite god? That which she loves the most, some whoremonger, who deceives her and makes her an animal. What is the favorite god of the slave of the world? Moolah or money, objects, possessions, beautiful buildings, beautiful horses or other worldly vanity, which are of no avail in death. All these transient things are the gods of the heathen. Some also have their belly for their god. Gluttons and drinkers are servants of idols, for they view their belly as their god. "But our God is in the heavens," David says. He is not in the belly, nor in the liver and spleen, nor in the gall and intestines. And since the heathen mock Christians, as David says, and say, "Where is their God?" we can also say to the heathen, "Where are their gods?" They must be in the liquor flask. They must be in the barn or shed. They must be in the whorehouse. Some female devil must be their god, like Diana of the Ephesians. "But our God is in the heavens," David says, although the heathen, mocking the children of Israel, say, "Where is their God?" as the heathen of this time say in mockery of the Christians. "But our God is in the heavens," David testifies on behalf of the Christians." The heathen indeed think that the God of the Christians is in the same place as that of the heathen, that is, in the liquor merchant's house or whorehouse, but it is not so. The God of the Christians is in heaven, and that of the heathen is in the liquor bottle and whorehouse.

Today we must view where the gods of the heathen are and to whom they give honor. But, above all, we must pray to the God of heaven that he would give true enlightenment to all the heathen so that they would come to know their gods, how useless they are in helping their servants in distress. Let all Christians who have previously, in the manner of the heathen, served the gods of this world but have now come to know the worthlessness of the gods of the heathen, confess it openly in the manner of David. When the heathen mock Christians, saying, "Where is their God?" Christians can answer with David: "Our God is in the heavens." And although the heathen do not believe that the God of the Christians is in heaven, they will finally see and confess it when they begin to realize that these deaf and dumb gods no longer avail. But the God of the Christians is in heaven, and he hears the prayers of the sorrowing, penitent and oppressed. For the Prophet says, "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?" [Psalm 94:9] And truly he sees and hears the groans of those who pray with a humble and penitent heart: "Our Father which art in heaven, etc."

The text of the morning service for the fourth day of rogation is found written in Psalm 115:1, and the words are as follows: "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake." Guided by our holy text, we will consider to whom glory is to be given:

1. To whom do the heathen give glory?
2. To whom do the Christians give glory?

1. To whom do the heathen give glory? When King David says, “Not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name give glory,” it seems that David had experienced temptations to want glory for himself from God but soon realized that it wasn’t fitting for him to get glory from God, but let God instead give glory to his own name, for people do not glorify God. The Jews, however, were, in their opinion, zealous for God’s glory because they said to the Saviour, “Give God the glory.”<sup>24</sup> The heathen have also wanted the Christians to give glory to heathen gods, but the Christians have not done so. Since the Christians know the nature of the gods of the heathen, that is, beautiful buildings, beautiful horses, ostentatious clothing, painted sleighs, etc., we cannot give glory to such deaf and dumb gods, but the heathen indeed give them glory. They desire and think that other heathen should give them glory when they display their finery, elegance and objects and ask, “Isn’t this beautiful? Isn’t this elegant?” Other heathen reply, “Indeed it is!” and “If only I had such!”

This now is the glory of the heathen, that they take glory from one another. The Saviour told the Jews, “How can ye honor God, which receive honour one of another” [John 5:44]? Worldly lords also give glory to one another. Pilate honored Herod that he was a better judge and wiser in examining prisoners and inducing them to confess. With this in mind, Pilate sent Jesus to Herod, but Herod again honored Pilate that he was a better judge. And as a result of this mutual show of respect, Herod and Pilate became friends. And how do the heathen now think that they will gain glory from the world? Indeed, with elegance and finery in clothing, buildings, parties and drinking bouts. Some boast of their strength, thinking they will gain glory in this way. Some show their finery and elegance to other heathen, thinking they will gain glory in this way. Some race, thinking they will gain glory by horses. Some engage in drinking contests for the sake of glory, but in this competition and pursuit of glory many a pagan has started burning. Such now is the glory of the heathen. If many do not believe that God also gives drinkers, whores and thieves glory, they indeed believe that at least the world will give them glory. The world will, in any case, praise and extol their finery, elegance and beauty. And what does the world do but give glory not only to people but also to horses and dogs? And to the devil they give the greatest glory because they cry out his name in curses and oaths. But do the heathen still believe that God has given them glory? I have heard and seen heathen become angry when Christians say that the devil has given them glory. From this it can be deduced that even today the heathen believe that God has given them glory. But where is it written in the Bible that God has given the heathen glory? God has not given many people glory, for all men lost their glory a long time ago by the fall into sin. Nevertheless, all the heathen love the vainglory of the world, and virtuous whores, honest thieves and compassionate liquor merchants even seek their glory in court. And this you will come to know, that it is not God who has given the heathen glory, but it is the devil who has done so. He has given the whore glory. He has given the thief glory. He has given the liquor merchant glory. Therefore, they, in turn, glorify the devil when they cry out his name night and day. And now we know to whom the heathen give glory. They give glory to the devil and the world, and for themselves, in particular, they claim great glory.

2. To whom do the Christians give glory? Since David says, “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory,” he had undoubtedly felt the effects of glory previously but soon realized that this glory, which belongs only to God, was not appropriate for him, although God had given David the honor that by the mouth of a prophet he gave him forgiveness of sins, saying, “I have found a man after mine own heart” [Acts 13:22]. God’s praise of a person would be the greatest glory, and the kind of person whom God praises could say that God has given him glory.

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<sup>24</sup> Laestadius is apparently thinking of John 9:24, where the Jews tell the man born blind, who received his sight from Jesus: “Give God the praise; we know that this man (Jesus) is a sinner.”

But David had not lived in such a way that he could claim glory for himself. Therefore, he said, “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory.” The one and only person who has ever lived on earth to whom God has given glory is the Son of God, our Saviour. But all others have received glory from the devil, particularly those who claim glory for themselves, whether it is the glory of the world or of being the best Christian. Christians indeed do not want to gain the glory of this world. They have been taught by God enough to know that the world’s glory is vain. But that glory of being the best Christian tends to cling yet to some. And the prayer of the sons of Zebedee as to who can sit on the right and who on the left in the Saviour’s kingdom, that is, who could get nearest the Saviour, tends to be in the minds of Christians. [For self-righteousness wants to exalt some and press others into the Slough of Despond.]<sup>25</sup> But if the Saviour rebuked the sons of Zebedee for wanting for themselves the glory of being the best Christian, we indeed have had to place the same passage before those who want to claim for themselves the glory of being the best Christian, although there are not many in this Christianity who have climbed to the pinnacle of the temple. There are, however, many who cannot see Jesus because of the crowd, but when they, like Zacchæus, climb the tree of life, there they will see him, and it is to such that Jesus wants to come as a guest.

You who seek to see Jesus and cannot see him because of the crowd and are too short to look over the others, climb the tree of life, and you will see Jesus. Perhaps he will honor you by coming to you as a guest, and that will be glory enough for you. But now if there were so many children around Jesus, that is, children he would bless, and you could not at all get close to the Saviour because of them, would you shove the children out of the way to get closer yourself? I think that Christians who have come to self-knowledge could not push children aside but would stand afar off and cry, “Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on us” [Luke 18:38]. But those who want to glorify Jesus must first become the dunghill of the world,<sup>26</sup> for not a single person will get into the kingdom of heaven with the glory of the world.

Christians would indeed often like to give glory, thanks and praise to Jesus, but there is no power. Therefore, they must glorify Jesus as did the woman who, from love, poured the precious ointment of spikenard on his head or as the Samaritan who fell at his feet and thanked God. But it is especially by their deaths that many Christians have glorified God, as, for example, Peter, to whom the Saviour foretold by what death he would glorify God. By their deaths, Christians can glorify God even today, when the heathen can see what great power of faith God gives them so that they would have the strength to enter death with joy and gladness while heathen and apostates go instead like shameful dogs to hell. Some condemn themselves on their deathbeds. Some complain that God doesn’t hear their prayers. Some say, “Since there was no delving into my spiritual state before, there is no need for it now.” And some do not speak a single word; they don’t even bid farewell before leaving. Some are delirious and curse on their deathbed. Some command many thousands of devils to come to fetch their carcasses. Thus the unclean spirit certainly gets great glory from their deaths, but what kind of glory do they, in turn, get from him? If the heathen would believe that the devil has given them glory, they would cast his glory back to him in this time of grace. But the heathen do not believe that the devil has given them glory.

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<sup>25</sup> The bracketed words are supplied from the *Armonsanoma* version. The Slough of Despond (epäilyksen suo) was coined by John Bunyan in his *Pilgrim’s Progress*, a book used by Laestadius. See the Finnish edition, translated by J. J. Malmberg from German, *Yhden Kristityn Vaellus Autuahan Ijankaikkisuuteen* (Helsinki: 1857), p. 15.

<sup>26</sup> See I Corinthians 4:13 in the Finnish Bible.

Christians give God glory when they confess themselves to be children of God, as Jesus confessed himself to be the Son of God. But here a great dispute occurs with the devil, for the devil of self-righteousness says thus: “Whoever confesses himself a child of God exalts himself, but whoever doesn’t confess himself a child of God is a humble Christian. He gives God glory. But whoever confesses himself a child of God [deceives and] glorifies himself.” A great dispute begins with the devil already when some penitent person has to confess his sins before the world and not before God alone, but an even greater dispute begins with the devil, when a penitent person [who knows his heart is bad] has to confess himself a child of God. Here the devil of self-righteousness is horrified and preaches in the intellect: “Oh really! So you are a child of God and are as black and ugly as the devil himself. [You have bad thoughts, lusts and desires. You have not yet been properly penitent.] Don’t you dare confess yourself to be a child of God [before you perform the proper repentance]. If you climb so high, I will cast you into hell. So! You are a child of God [though you commit sin every day]. If you [still] confess yourself to be a child of God, you will blaspheme God.”<sup>27</sup>

Many a penitent soul, thus confronted, has given the devil glory and said, “I am not a child of God.” If the devil now comes to ask you, penitent devil, whether you are a child of God, you will reply, “I am not.” Then all the servants of self-righteousness will say, “He is a humble Christian. He doesn’t climb as high as these fanatics, who blaspheme God with their confession. They make themselves holy.” But why then did the Jews say to Jesus, “Give God the glory and tell us, art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?”<sup>28</sup> They had, therefore, the belief that Jesus would give God the glory<sup>29</sup> by confessing the truth. They undoubtedly thought that Jesus would no longer dare blaspheme God before the council but would tell them clearly that he is not the Son of God and would glorify God in accordance with their thoughts. But when Jesus boldly confessed himself to be the Son of God, the high priest was so horrified that he rent his clothing, saying, “Now ye have heard his blasphemy” [Matthew 26:65]. And all judged him worthy of death according to their law, for they said, “We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God” [John 19:7]. These servants of self-righteousness found many faults in the life of Jesus, and when he still confessed himself to be the Son of God, it was the greatest blasphemy of God.

The servants of self-righteousness of our time also do the same, who watch for the faults of Christians. And when they, in spite of all, confess themselves to be the children of God, it is the greatest blasphemy of God. And the devil of self-righteousness also preaches to the awakened and penitent: “If you confess yourself a child of God when you have such a bad heart, bad lusts and desires and commit sin every day, you will deceive yourself and blaspheme God and lie against your heart before God because you feel one thing and confess another.” And he also says, “You are hardened because you have a heart as hard and bad as that of the devil.” The devil of self-righteousness preaches these and other such things to the awakened, penitent and believing. And many a doubting soul has believed these sermons of self-righteousness, has given the devil glory and has said, “I am not a child of God.” This denial is also quite acceptable to the servants of self-righteousness, who are always watching for the faults of Christians and say, “They confess faith and have no more conscience than the devil, though they commit sin and iniquity.” And the devil of self-righteousness accuses the Christians night and day, demanding that you become angels and live

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<sup>27</sup> The bracketed portions of this paragraph have been supplied from the *Armonsanoma* version.

<sup>28</sup> Compare Mark 14:61 with John 9:24.

<sup>29</sup> The manuscript ends abruptly at this point. The remainder of the sermon is translated from the *Armonsanoma* version.

according to the law. Do not, therefore, doubt, sorrowing and heavy-laden souls, though you feel that you commit sin and iniquity in weakness and also feel that you have a bad heart, bad lusts and desires. The devil of self-righteousness condemns you through your own heart, and the servants of self-righteousness, who see many sins and faults in you, demand that you give God the glory and confess, "I am not a child of God because I still feel so much sin and evil in myself." For they say, "Is someone like him a Christian, who commits sin? His conscience has never even stirred." What kind of glory will you sorrowing and heavy-laden souls now give to God when self-righteousness preaches thus? You are likely to give the devil glory and say, "I am not a child of God." Do not give the devil glory, sorrowing and doubting souls, but give glory to God and believe and confess boldly with your mouths that you are children of God, and he will take you into his lap, let you suck his breasts flowing with grace, will confess you as his children before his Father, and will place a ring on your hand, a cross on your chest and a crown of glory on your head in the New Jerusalem. Follow the bloody footsteps of Jesus from the garden to the hill of Golgotha, to which he has borne the sins of the whole world and where he has cried out, "Now all is finished" [John 19:30]. He opened the gates of Paradise on Good Friday and testified to the penitent thief, who gave God the glory, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" [Luke 23:43].

Therefore, give God the glory, doubting and heavy-laden souls, and you will be allowed to see the brightness of God's glory. Believe as a sinner and glorify the Lord Jesus with your confession, and with an unveiled face you will be allowed to view the brightness of the Lord's glory and those glorious mansions in the kingdom of glory. Believe and glorify by your confession the King of Zion, who has won the kingdom with his bloody warfare. And into this kingdom he calls all penitent harlots, publicans, whores and thieves, those whom self-righteousness has condemned to hell, those oppressed by the law, those heavy-laden with the burden of sin and those who are laboring. He sends his servants to call the good and the bad to the joyous wedding that he has prepared in this kingdom.

Let those rare souls who have come into living faith and have felt the Father's love through the Son in the Holy Spirit, of whom there is always the hope that they will soon be allowed to see God and the great Crossbearer face to face, pray to the author and finisher of faith that he would also help into living faith the wretches who have true sorrow and longing for eternal life, so that they too could once see the light before eternal darkness overtakes them in the land of the shadow of death, where they sit as slaves of unbelief. Believe and follow the bloody footsteps of Jesus from the garden to the hill of Golgotha. Hasten to gather drops of atoning blood into your polluted vessels before death overtakes you on the road because of your unbelief and you fail to arrive with the believing children of Israel in the promised land, which is on the other side of the unbridged stream and is no longer far from a single one of us. Soon the angel of death will come to cut the branches of the vine from off the earth. Soon visitors will come from heaven. Soon the Bridegroom will come to fetch his elect bride. So keep your lamps burning, for midnight will soon arrive. Soon there will come the cry: "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him" [Matthew 25:6]. Then you bridesmaids can with great joy follow the Bridegroom into the wedding chamber, where you can sing to God and the Lamb a hymn of praise now and eternally. Amen.

# Juhani Raattamaa

(1811-1899)

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Juhani (Johan) Raattamaa was born on September 14, 1811 in the village of Kuttainen in northern Sweden but spent most of his life in Saivomuotka. He served as a teacher and missionary for Pastor Laestadius and, after the pastor's death, became the foremost preacher and elder of the Laestadian movement. Raattamaa was the first lay preacher of the movement to apply Christ's words in John 20:22-23 and to use the keys of the kingdom of heaven, that is, to pronounce absolution. He died on March 7, 1899 in Saivomuotka.

## Juhani Raattamaa's Autobiography<sup>30</sup>

Ever since childhood I have had some fear of the wrath to come, which made me devoted to the reading of God's Word. However, it wasn't until I was 16 years of age that a strong wind blew through my soul and kindled the black coals of hell in my conscience, and God's strict justice threatened me with the eternal pain of hell for the multitude of sins that I had committed ever since childhood. I could no longer conceal my spiritual condition from people. So they started to comfort me with promises of grace, but I applied them to others better than me or to those who perform the kind of repentance done by those who are described in the Bible. When this didn't help, they started to say that my sins were small, and by this I perceived that they were liars, but my relatives were grieved, thinking that the boy had gone mad.

But I failed to understand that this was the Holy Spirit's work of grace by which he draws sinners to repentance, and I started struggling with my own repentance. My sorrows also gradually left me, but the wounds of this affliction remained, and at times they healed and at times they opened up again. I tried to heal these wounds with the world's joy, through drunkenness and vain merriment, but this made them even twice as big and sore. My teacher, the Pastor, worked with me unceasingly and showed me the spring of the children of Zion, as the Bible also shows and testifies. This spring was found in Gethsemane and at the foot of the cross of Golgotha. A sinner can also lie in sorrow at this spring until Jesus says through the Holy Spirit, "Be thou clean," or "Thy sins are forgiven thee." Even after he has arrived at the cross, a sinner truly has to lie on the ground and beg until Jesus reveals himself to him. So the gate becomes strait when you aren't allowed to open it, and you are unable to open it until it is opened. I tried by myself to open the door of grace beforehand with dead faith, but it was nothing more than an illusion, and no repentance came to my life. So God's law pained and seared me. I had already decided to give up the position of schoolteacher because I was unworthy, and I thought I would only sink into destruction. But when the Pastor brought word from the western regions of Lapland that there were some Christians there, it was a marvelous message that brought me great sorrow. When I taught the children in church I felt ashamed and had to hide my tears from them. I could no longer be in the company of worldly friends. I had thought previously that it was a good work when I zealously taught the children at times, but now in me there was nothing but sin. The sin of unbelief started to severely oppress me, but I decided not to flee the throne of grace even if I had to die there.

I held onto the promises of grace, and after awhile I felt a little comfort, but I no longer dared trust in them in certainty of grace, even though sin no longer overcame me that year as it had

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<sup>30</sup> This 1847 autobiography has been translated from Raattamaa, *Kirjeet ja kirjoitukset*, pp. 19-21.

before. However, once when my old friends were sent by the devil to tempt me, I got a little drunk. Then agony and distress came upon me. After a few weeks, the Pastor held prayers in church, and the hymn “In my distress I call on the Lord”<sup>31</sup> was sung. At that time, I had gone to church with great shame, but then I also received great joy. Physical poverty has been a good whip for such a thick-skinned one as I have been.

When I felt the joy and Jesus appeared to me with his love, I had to believe even if I hadn't wanted to do so. And through such struggles God has changed me and has moved me from death to life and from sin to righteousness. I no longer want to live for myself but for him who died for me and has forcibly captured me from destruction. With sorrow I have to recall even yet that I am the chief of sinners and that I progress only slowly on the narrow path of life. I am certainly the worst of the Christians because of the multitude of my sins. I would indeed have internal temptations of sin of which to write, but I don't have time. God bears witness that these things are so. Amen.

Johan Johansson Raattamaa

## **A Biography of Juhani Raattamaa<sup>32</sup>**

### *Childhood*

Juhani Raattamaa was born in the Tornio region of Lapland, in the parish of Karesuando, the village of Kuttainen, in September 1811. His parents were the settler Juhani Raattamaa and his wife Anna. This Raattamaa was a poor man, as his son recalls, but he supported his large family with hard work, cultivating meadowland and fishing. He did not beg, nor did he borrow much but conscientiously met all his obligations to the Crown, the municipality and the pastor.

Juhani says that his own life also began in poverty, tending cattle and fishing. The salary of a schoolteacher from the Crown was quite small, and thus he has had to suffer much poverty and deprivation. However, later he cultivated more meadowland, and the Christians have also financed his travels, so that now in his old age he is free of debt.

His mother often spoke to her children of God, death and the Last Judgment as well as of eternal life and eternal suffering. She pointed out the wages of sin but also told of the Redeemer Jesus and of his love for men. These teachings of the boy's gentle mother penetrated his heart. He diligently read the children's reader, and in solitude he often prayed to God on his knees to spare him from

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<sup>31</sup> See hymn no. 90 (Hädässän' huudan Herraa), verse 1, in the old (1701) Finnish hymnal. The lyrics are revised in newer hymnals but remain unchanged in *Uskovaisten virsiä* (No. 19).

<sup>32</sup> Translated from “Elämäkertoja II, Juhani Juhonpoika Raattamaa,” *Kristillinen Kuukauslehti*, No. 11, 1881, pp. 163-166, No. 12, pp. 177-180, and No. 1, 1882, pp. 1-5. This biography was evidently written by Karl Heikel, the editor of *Kristillinen Kuukauslehti*, on the basis of an 1880 autobiography of Raattamaa that is no longer extant. See E. A. Juhonpieti, *Kirjeet ja kirjoitukset* (Loimaa: 1979), pp. 88, 89. The biography is reprinted in part in L. Typpö, *Kirjeitä virvoitukseksi köyhille matkustajille elämän tiellä* (Tampere: 1907), pp. 168-174. The translation of the words of Laestadius cited in the biography is based on a comparison with their original form in his periodical *Ens Ropandes Röst i Öknen*.

eternal punishment. However, Juhani was unable to take sincere steps of repentance. He himself speaks of this time as follows:

“The inclinations of the old Adam, such as card playing and vain pastimes, made me break the Sabbath. At 15 years of age, I was given to my sister as a farmhand. In that village, the young people were licentious, but I secretly endeavored to repent. I also fell ill with a fever, under which my spiritual anguish increased. I became convinced that I would die and go to hell, and for this reason I groaned in pains of conscience and publicly confessed to the impenitent people whatever sins I recalled having committed. One old man came to comfort me and showed me by examples of the Holy Bible that the penitent have received grace, but I replied, ‘I am not penitent, as were David, Peter and Mary.’ And the old man could not prove me penitent from the Bible. He lent me a spiritual book to read, but for many days I did not view myself as worthy to read God’s word. After a few days, a joyful mood came over me one night. At that time, I told my sister, ‘Now I am fit to read God’s word.’ But ugly, evil thoughts made me unworthy to claim the grace of God. Then I recovered from the physical ailment, but there was distress in my conscience.”

## *Youth*

“At 17 years of age, I was placed in confirmation school. When the school ended, my heart’s greatest desire was to partake worthily of the Lord’s Holy Supper. My conscience demanded that I go to the Pastor to confess my transgressions because a certain Lapp boy, from whom I had won a silver button at cards, was not in the area. Pastor Laestadius merely told me, ‘Don’t play cards any more.’ I didn’t receive any better comfort, and that repentance lasted only from Easter to Midsummer Day.”

At that time, it was the duty of the pastors of Lapland to select and train teachers for the local children. Laestadius selected this Juhani for Karesuando Parish, for he knew that he had a good mind, and the Pastor trained him for half a year. At that time, Juhani says that he came to know his ignorance. So he began to read and study the Bible with great devotion in the cold homes of Lapland and prayed diligently that God would grant him spiritual wisdom to correctly understand God’s Word. At that time, he indeed came to a better knowledge of himself and of the general impenitence in the congregation, for the revival had not yet begun. He also tried to repent of drunkenness, which was a common vice in the parish, but he was unable to conquer sin with his own repentance. When youthful friends offered him liquor, he allowed himself moderation, but at times he drank beyond moderation.

The late Pastor Laestadius wrote of this period as follows: “Juhani exhibited exceptional desire and talent in the teaching of children, but when he got liquor, he was simply unbearable. Alcohol had an adverse effect on him, for when drunk he became a madman at home. I often had to rebuke him for this vice. The neighbors also complained about him, though more from envy than from zeal for a sober and honorable life. For the Lapps felt that Raattamaa was too strict in making their children study, but since they couldn’t raise complaints on such a basis, they had to resort to some other excuse. However, I couldn’t be induced to dismiss Raattamaa, for no one in the whole congregation could teach the children better. If this accursed liquor hadn’t existed, even at that time he would have been the best catechist in all Lapland, but liquor ruined the whole man.”

Raattamaa says he was in this condition six years, “even if [the catechism of] Bishop Svebilus comforted me with the covenant of baptism.” He also says: “I tried to go often to confession and to the Lord’s Supper, but I also found comfort for my sorrowing mind and stricken conscience in a swig of liquor. However, when I sobered up, I had a heavy mind and an afflicted conscience. This period from my twenty-fourth to my thirtieth year was muddled, and I did many shameful deeds, which I still recall with sorrow.”

### *Awakening and New Birth*

According to Laestadius, Raattamaa experienced a new awakening when on a certain Christmas he found a wallet that contained nearly 700 rix-dollars. He hoped to receive a third part of it as a reward, but the owner gave him only five rix-dollars. On top of it all, the Pastor delivered a good sermon to Juhani on “shameless selfishness.” This touched him quite sorely, for the devil of greed got a hard jolt, and the devil of honor an even harder one.<sup>33</sup> It was harder for him to conquer honor than even the lust of drunkenness. Good friends often enticed him to taste liquor for the sake of honor and to please the host. For a long time, even Raattamaa was unable to understand that whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God [James 4:4].

Juhani himself speaks of his conversion then as follows: “It made a vivid and deep impression on me when Pastor Laestadius spoke with me in a gentle and loving manner and recalled how a certain Lapp girl had set him straight. He also said that it is self-righteousness that prevents the penitent from receiving the grace of God in Christ. This tender speech aroused in me a hope that God might be graceful even to me for the sake of the name of his only begotten Son. From that moment, like the prodigal son, I came to myself [Luke 15:17], and I felt the love of God the Father, that my immortal spirit wouldn’t perish. My sins weighed heavily on the Son of God and are the iron nails that the soldiers drove into his hands and feet on the mount of Golgotha. This was followed by deep sorrow in my soul over my sins, and the awful sin of unbelief revealed itself. I also feared that I had committed the sin against the Holy Spirit. However, I didn’t despair, as I had at 16 years of age, but I clung firmly to the intercession of the Lord Jesus, who prayed: ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do’ [Luke 23:34]. During moments of prayer and devotion, night and day, I also promised God that I would teach transgressors his ways so that sinners would repent, for general impenitence and drunkenness had overcome the men and women of Lapland. I was in this condition nearly two years. Occasionally I was comforted by the gospel. Otherwise I would not have had the strength to live and preach repentance to others.”

“But when, in faith and spirit, I was allowed to view the blood-red, thorn-crowned King, power issued from Him, and Christ’s suffering effected a living power in my soul. I believed my sins forgiven in the shed and sprinkled blood, and this was followed by a knowledge of the risen and

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<sup>33</sup> Martti Miettinen has determined from judicial records that Raattamaa found the wallet while leaving church on Christmas of 1842. Raattamaa demanded a third of the money in it, and only when the owner was leaving to request a summons did Raattamaa agree to return all the money except for the five rix-dollars that had been offered as a reward. The owner asserted, however, that part of the money was missing and summoned Raattamaa to give an explanation in court. The matter was not dealt with until February, 1844, because Raattamaa, relying on pretexts, did not appear at the 1843 session. The court decided that after one year he should take an oath of innocence, which he did. See Miettinen, p. 43.

living Lord Jesus.<sup>34</sup> That which I had sought afar was indeed near and effected joy and peace in my soul. I had thought even previously that I believed Jesus had died and risen from the dead, but now I was ashamed of my unbelief and realized that previously I hadn't believed from my heart after all. Then alone in my schoolhouse, when I had gone to bed, the enemy of the soul grabbed me by the feet, but I was not alarmed. My mouth drew a smile and I thought, 'Come right up and face me. Christ lives in me!' He ceased trying to frighten me, and I slept in the serenity of God's peace."

### *The Mission Schools*

According to Laestadius, Raattamaa had already begun to preach of Christianity in the winter of 1845, but he did not have a real effect until January of 1848 in the village of Lainio in Jukkasjärvi Parish. After the Missionary Society in Stockholm had asked whether a mission school could also be established in Lapland, the Consistory in Hernösand ordered the pastors of the Tornio region of Lapland to find room and board for the children with some settlers at the expense of the Crown so that they could receive instruction. Thus a mission school for the instruction of children was authorized by the gracious permission of His Majesty, the King of Sweden. Therefore, Pastor Laestadius went to Lainio in December of 1847 and agreed with landowners there in regard to the care of Lapp children during the school term. They didn't realize that this school meant the end of their liquor trade. They only thought of the money that they would earn, and so they agreed to accept the school, and a written agreement was drawn up.

Therefore, Juhani Raattamaa began teaching school in Lainio.<sup>35</sup> Some students barely knew the alphabet. He appointed a more advanced student to teach the beginners. He himself taught those who had elementary reading knowledge. At first, he had to be quite careful that the listeners would not be frightened away. He explained the history of Christ's suffering to the children. In the evenings, residents of the village also gathered in the building, which was a chimneyless hut. Prayers were held there, and then Raattamaa read a sermon of Laestadius. The effect was that many listeners left the school angry, but some stayed to listen. Having read the sermon, Raattamaa conversed with the remaining listeners late into the night. A general curiosity was stirred among the Lapps of Jukkasjärvi to see this strange school, where children were said to be going crazy. And it did seem insane to outsiders when some of the children suffered pangs of conscience, others jumped for joy and still others became weak and their legs couldn't hold them up.

Raattamaa had worked about a month on the hard field that he had cleared<sup>36</sup> when certain prominent liquor traders of the village were also pricked in their hearts. At the beginning of the school term, a hard war began with the liquor dragon, which had his henchmen in the schoolhouse. The more learned ones tried to defend the benefit and need of liquor with Bible passages from the books of Solomon and Sirach,<sup>37</sup> but Raattamaa was adept enough in the Bible to overcome them

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<sup>34</sup> Laestadius could not have spoken of the Lapp girl until early 1844, after his own conversion, which occurred on January 1, 1844. Raattamaa's conversion did not occur until early 1846.

<sup>35</sup> This first mission school was established in 1848. See *Ens Ropandes Röst i Öknén*, p. 99.

<sup>36</sup> Laestadius defines the name Raattamaa as meaning one who clears the land and breaks the soil. See *Ens Ropandes Röst i Öknén*, p. 91.

<sup>37</sup> Laestadius, who is being cited here, does not always clearly distinguish between canonical and apocryphal books. See Proverbs 31:6-7, Ecclesiastes 9:7 and the apocryphal Ecclesiasticus 31: 27-28.

with other Bible passages. Finally, one merchant after another made the desperate decision to dump his liquor onto the ground. At first, this sacrifice to an unknown God aroused horror and abhorrence in the Lapps, for they felt that it was a terrible sin to pour the gifts of God onto the ground. Some asked as did Judas, “Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor” [John 12:5]? The wise and intelligent drunks reasoned thus, but it was no use kicking against the pricks. Gradually the Lapps themselves came to notice that liquor did not benefit anyone but greatly injured and corrupted mankind. They came to see that liquor was the foremost reason for the wretchedness and poverty of the Lapp people, but the lust for liquor was too strong and the temptation to deal in it was unconquerable until a thorough awakening of the conscience made them loathe firewater.

The effects of liquor are baneful in general, and they were most dreadful in Lapland, where the general moral deterioration and vulgarity were aggravated by it. The suffering of innocent children because of liquor was the most heartrending sight of all. When mothers lay unconscious a half or whole day drunken, innocent little children could cry until their navels ruptured. Wasn't it, therefore, Jesus, the friend of innocent children, who heard the crying of these infants when he awakened a pious and God-fearing friend of temperance in the person of Juhani Raattamaa, who cleared the spiritual field and broke the spiritual ice from around the cold hearts in the north? Wasn't it Jesus, the friend of innocent children, who heard the cry of the infants from the ground even as the Lord heard the voice of Ishmael when his mother Hagar had cast him to the ground to cry himself to death? How many of these infants had already cried themselves to death after the angel of death or the filthy spirit of liquor had raged among the people for centuries? How many mothers had indeed already cried themselves to death when this filthy spirit had incited spiritual swine to treat their wives as though they were animals? And these poor human wretches even sold all the clothing off their backs in order to quench their insatiable craving for liquor. The filthy spirit of liquor is a real devil in a marriage and a murderer of children.

Raattamaa preached powerfully not only for temperance but above all for true, living Christianity. He worked tirelessly night and day. He dozed only a few hours toward morning. It was quite remarkable that he was not entirely overcome by exhaustion, but he had an excellent constitution and good health. He won over the hearts of the children entirely. He took the smaller ones into his lap, caressed them and spoke to them in a moving way. He never had to resort to the switch. He had the most hard-hearted ones confined in the dark as punishment. However, some hearts were so hard and unbending that he could not get them to melt. And the hearts into which Raattamaa could not find a path were also unbending and entirely inaccessible to others.

In order to promote temperance and Christianity and block the real source of poverty, the mission school was moved to the village of Kengis in Pajala Parish in 1849. Here Juhani Raattamaa again had an excellent opportunity to work in the Lord's vineyard. Curiosity drew listeners from the villages in the upper part of the parish. Lapps also streamed in from Jukkasjärvi, being more receptive to the teaching of Christianity than the previous year now that the liquor dragon had received a mortal wound. Former assistant missionary Carl Grape also began to give temperance speeches in Jukkasjärvi and taught the Lapp children with greater zeal and boldness than had been possible previously. The Jukkasjärvi Lapps had almost no knowledge of Christianity. Many who were over 20 years of age could not read adequately. Now they had a fervent desire and will to be allowed to learn to read, so that poor servants, who had only five or six reindeer, offered one of them to the school just in order to learn to read at the school. And was it not a divine miracle that Jukkasjärvi Parish, which was deeply submerged in the liquor flood, became so free of all liquor in

two years that at the beginning of 1850 not a drop of liquor was left there after the last big liquor merchant, Juho Ylimentalo of Övre Soppero, had poured his 30 kegs of liquor to the ground?

Juhani Raattamaa then worked awhile in Gällivare Parish, and the liquor dragon was driven out entirely, and evangelical Christianity with virtue and temperance was planted there. Thus this Christianity spread among all the Finnish and Lapp people in Sweden, and then it spread generally among the Finnish people in Norwegian Lapland, Finland and North America. So the main concern of J. Raattamaa has been to keep Christianity united, of one mind and in love. He has also prevented separation from the state church whenever such a tendency has appeared. Raattamaa has traveled to preach in Finnish Lapland and in Ostrobothnia [Pohjanmaa] as far as Oulu, and the work has produced a great blessing.

### *New Life*

Raattamaa continues his own life story, saying that although he enjoyed peace of conscience and even joy in the Holy Spirit, the corruption of sin through flesh and blood began to alarm him:

“Therefore, I fasted and prayed for weeks, thinking, ‘Doesn’t a true Christian become better after all?’ The old man didn’t improve even with fasting, for that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit [John 3:6], and through the Spirit the deeds of the flesh are mortified [Romans 8:13]. Let us be satisfied, therefore, with the grace of God, viewing in faith and spirit the Crucified One, by whose power I have mortified the deeds of the flesh, so that gross sins have not overcome me. Evil thoughts, wicked lusts and desires have indeed often wounded me. I have also been unable to deny myself and have been oppressed by doubts, so that I have frequently needed the testimonies of Christian brothers and sisters of the forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus. For God has made Jesus Christ, who alone is righteous, our advocate before the Father. So I have needed and still need this pilgrim’s staff on the journey to the Fatherland, this forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus, for I am but a weak traveler.”

“During the second mission year, a sweet spirit moved in my heart, and the sweetness of this peace was followed by love and courage to preach of repentance to impenitent sinners and to present to the awakened the Lord Jesus in a gentle and loving form so that the penitent would be comforted.”

“However, during the third year, when I was sent out from my own parish, great bouts of joy came over those who had experienced grace, so that the sound of joy and love was heard in the meeting place. Then the devil of unbelief assailed me because I had never been in such jumping and singing. I spent weeks in prayers and supplications night and day in this troubled state. Then an answer came from on high from the Father of Light, that he is satisfied with the merit of his only Son. And I believed that I had a reconciled Father in heaven. I also wrote down the greatest sins of my youth and sent what I had written to my own congregation to be read in the meeting place together with requests for forgiveness, even though I had already requested forgiveness orally.”

“The spiritual movement had spread for six years already before I really understood the freedom. Since then, I and some brothers and sisters have put the keys of the kingdom of heaven into use, by which troubled souls began to be freed and prisoners of unbelief began to lose their chains, and they rejoiced in spirit.”

“There would be much to tell in regard to the feelings of sin and grace, but this has already been told orally to the public generally and to the beloved brothers and sisters separately. I have considered the witness of the Holy Spirit with my spirit as the answer of God, and in the serenity of this peace of God I have often been allowed to breathe the air of God’s grace and the power and glory of the world to come. I have also heard a great chorus of hallelujah songs, which I will never forget, and in my heart I sang in one voice with them. But the red dragon, which wages war against the Lord Christ and his doctrine, has also been seen.”

“The liquor merchants who have not repented have, with their friends, waged persecution, and, as in the past, they still concoct all kinds of lies against living Christianity both orally and in writing. I have received my share of such persecution, but it isn’t strange, for all who preach of the righteousness that is received by faith in the Lord Christ will be persecuted. The preachers of righteousness who rebuked the world of sin and judgment in the past were also thus persecuted, and so it is yet today.”

“I am believing the sins of my youth and the weaknesses of my old age forgiven in the name and blood of Jesus, which was shed for the forgiveness of sins. And now I stand at the edge of the grave in the faith and hope that by the blood of the Lamb I will remain victorious until the end. Amen.”

## **The Keys: When and Where Raattamaa First Used Them**

On the evening of his resurrection, Christ appeared to his disciples, saying, “Peace be unto you; as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.” Then he breathed on them and said, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained” (John 20:21-23). These words, which are rejected by most Protestants, are approved by the Confessions of the Lutheran Church and by most Laestadians. During the first years of the revival, however, Laestadius did not exercise the authority given by Christ to his disciples to loose penitents from sin in his name. Raattamaa, according to his own testimony, as cited in the 1881-82 biography, first proclaimed individual and unconditional absolution six years after the beginning of the revival. After his “discovery” of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, direct absolution began to be used by believers everywhere.

The first use of individual absolution was described by Pastor Laitinen in 1917 as follows:

There was once at services an awakened servant, whose time to return home had come. The hour of departure approached, and her sorrow grew because she had to leave with her load of sin. Raattamaa then asked her whether she believed they were the people of God. She said that she believed. He then asked whether she believed it to be the grace of God if they, on behalf of God, testify the forgiveness of sins to her in the name and blood of Jesus. She promised to believe that too. Then Raattamaa laid his hands on her and declared to this sorrowing soul the most precious testimony that can be uttered on earth, and the effect was immediately evident in the servant’s great joy and rejoicing. So she, praising God, left for home rejoicing in the manner of the royal chamberlain of Ethiopia [Acts 8:39]. From that time on, Raattamaa said, he was convinced that the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven are to be kept in use in the congregation of God for the salvation of men and that repentance and forgiveness of sins are to be preached boldly among all the people.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> A. Laitinen, *Muistoja Lapin kristillisyydestä* (Oulu: 1985), pp. 26, 27.

As for the year in which this absolution was proclaimed, there is a variety of opinions among researchers, many of whom, claiming to be Laestadians, are embarrassed by the fact that the revival began without the confession that has become such a prominent aspect of their doctrine. Hjalmar Westeson accepts an old tradition that it occurred in 1848 in Lainio, where the mission school was first established, after Raattamaa had read about the keys in a sermon (first Sunday after Easter) in Luther's Church Postil.<sup>39</sup> Seppo Lohi supports another popular view -- that the keys were in use under various formulations from the beginning of the revival. He asserts, with Olaus Brännström, that Laestadius actually proclaimed absolution specifically "in the name and blood of Jesus" in an unpublished sermon delivered in Pajala on the fourth Sunday after Trinity in 1849.<sup>40</sup> However, the basis for this assertion is removed by Lauri Koistinen, who, after studying the manuscript sermons of Laestadius, declares: "Copy no. 118 (Sermon on the fourth Sunday after Trinity, 1849) of the Koller collection is a complete forgery."<sup>41</sup> Martti Miettinen, on the basis of impressive research, arrives at the conclusion that the keys were first used in Markettavaara of Gällivare Parish in 1853.<sup>42</sup> Aulis Zidbäck, who believed that Laestadius and Raattamaa had differing methods of salvation -- at least until pressured to revise his views by the Association of Peace -- sticks with Westeson,<sup>43</sup> but Uuras Saarnivaara agrees with Miettinen. Pekka Raittila appears to leave the issue open.<sup>44</sup>

As for Raattamaa's own statement that he put the keys into use six years after the revival began, this is confirmed by the underlying chronology of his own account in the biography. In the second paragraph after the subhead "New Life," he mentions "the second mission year" (1849). In the third paragraph he mentions "the third year" (1850). In the fourth paragraph he no longer counts by mission years but from the beginning of the revival, saying:

"The spiritual movement had spread for six years already before I really understood the freedom. Since then, I and some brothers and sisters have put the keys of the kingdom of heaven into use, by which troubled souls began to be freed and prisoners of unbelief began to lose their chains, and they rejoiced in spirit."

The year in question here is, in other words, the fourth mission year, 1851. Raattamaa is not likely to be rounding off the years in regard to an incident that is so significant and in which he played the leading role. Thus he does not say "five" but rather "six" years had passed since the beginning of the revival. It must also be borne in mind that the revival did not begin immediately with the conversion of Laestadius in Åsele in January 1844, even if his sermons then became sharper. According to Laestadius' own account in his periodical, it was not until the following winter that "premonitions" of revival began to appear. People became concerned about their spiritual condition and consulted the pastor, but Laestadius didn't dare pronounce absolution, fearing that he might free them from their contrition prematurely. He also writes that the revival was "just beginning" in the fall of 1845 and that later the same year, on December 5, a Lapp

<sup>39</sup> H. Westeson, *Ödemarksprofetens lärjungar* (Stockholm: 1930), pp. 26-28.

<sup>40</sup> S. Lohi, *Sydämen kristillisuus. Lars Levi Laestadius ja lestadiolaisen herätyksen alkuvaiheet* (Oulu: 1989), pp. 313-329, and O. Brännström, *Den Laestadianska själavårdstraditionen i Sverige under 1800-talet* (Uppsala: 1962), pp. 177, 209, 212.

<sup>41</sup> *Rovasti Lars Levi Laestadiusen saarnat puhtaina*, p. 866.

<sup>42</sup> Miettinen, pp. 260, 261.

<sup>43</sup> A. Zidbäck, *Pohjolan suurin maallikkosaarnaaja* (Helsinki: 1941), pp. 24, 25. See Zidbäck's later views in *Ole vapaa vapaaksi ostettu lauma* (Oulu: 1985), pp. 8, 24, 33-44.

<sup>44</sup> U. Saarnivaara, *He elivät Jumalan voimassa* (Suolahti: 1983), p. 39; *Muistoja Lapin kristillisyydestä*, p. 36.

woman finally experienced grace and “jumped high above the ground,” at which time an earthquake occurred. According to the same account, Raattamaa, though not yet converted, “began to speak about Christianity” in the winter of 1845.<sup>45</sup>

In a November 14, 1891 letter to America, Raattamaa writes that “the keys of the kingdom of heaven have indeed been in use over 40 years already in Swedish Lapland.”<sup>46</sup> Again, Raattamaa did not write “about 40 years,” as though rounding off numbers but said “over 40 years” because he knew specifically when the keys had come into use, that is, between November 14, 1850 and November 14, 1851 -- six years after he “began to speak about Christianity.” This period agrees with an October 11, 1881 letter in which Raattamaa writes to Emanuel Törmälä: “Forty years have already passed since the dog of the wall of Zion first began to bark at the grace thieves in the Tornio region of Lapland, but the preaching of the gospel and the forgiveness of sins have been preached purely only 30 years in Tornio Lapland and on the banks of the Tornio River.”<sup>47</sup> The 40 years here are evidently to be calculated from the time that Laestadius became awakened as the result of a chest ailment that prompted a fear of death. Although the awakening that preceded his conversion is usually placed in 1842, an October 1841 letter to Göran Wahlenberg indicates that he was expecting death as early as the fall of 1841.<sup>48</sup> The 30 years take us back once again to 1851. This coincides, moreover, with the most heated and final phase of the 1849-1851 debate between Laestadius and his detractors over his refusal to grant absolution to an impenitent young woman who had given birth to an illegitimate child, for which he was finally officially rebuked on March 20, 1851.<sup>49</sup> By this time, this issue had become quite prominent in the writings of Laestadius and would, of course, have been discussed with Raattamaa and other assistants.

As for where direct absolution was first used, Miettinen reports the account of Raattamaa as told to preacher Erik Johnsen,<sup>50</sup> that he was in Gällivare, about to leave for home. His reindeer was already harnessed and waiting at the door of the house. Many people were gathered inside, including one young woman who was groaning in pangs of conscience. Raattamaa and the others preached faith and the gospel to her, but she grasped neither faith nor comfort. Raattamaa put on his traveling clothes, bade farewell to those present and went out the door, but then he turned back and asked the woman, “Do you believe that we are the people of God?” She answered boldly, “I believe with all my heart that you are the people of God.” Then Raattamaa said, “Surely you will then believe what we tell you on behalf of God, since you believe that we are the people of God.” The woman replied, “I believe.” Raattamaa then laid hands on her and pronounced absolution, and she became so happy that she began to praise God. Raattamaa then drove home to Saivomuotka, wondering whether he had acted properly. He told Johnsen, “And when I had arrived home and removed my traveling clothes, I took and opened the New Testament. It opened to the twentieth

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<sup>45</sup> *Tidskriften Ens Ropandes Röst i Öknen*, pp. 43-53, 97.<sup>45</sup> Uninformed confessionists have acquired a dramatic setting for the event which many view as the origin of their religion by shifting Laestadius’ account of the earthquake (p. 52) to Raattamaa’s first use of the keys.

<sup>46</sup> Raattamaa, *Kirjeet ja kirjoitukset*, p. 390.

<sup>47</sup> Raattamaa, *Kirjeet ja kirjoitukset*, pp. 246, 247.

<sup>48</sup> *Lars Levi Laestadius’ väg till nya födelsen*, p. 122.

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, *Tidskriften Ens Ropandes Röst i Öknen*, pp. 398-437.

<sup>50</sup> Erik Johnsen (1844-1941), also known as Junsan Erkki, lived in Lyngen, Norway, where he was the leader of the Erikians (Erikianere). In 1992, these Laestadians, disagreeing on the issues of marriage after divorce and the meaning of “days” in the Biblical account of creation, divided into two groups: Fundamentalists (fundamentalistene) and Liberals (liberale). See Thor Fremmegård, “Kort historisk bakgrunn og oversikt over Læstadianismen,” *Fast Grunn*, No. 4, 1997, p. 227.

chapter of John, where it is told how Jesus breathed on his disciples and said, ‘Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, etc.’ Only then did I see that this is indeed the command of Jesus.”<sup>51</sup> Miettinen claims that when he confronted Westeson with this account, Westeson preferred it to his own version because he trusted Johnsen as a reliable source and, moreover, Luther’s Church Postil, which Raattamaa is supposed to have read prior to the first use of the keys, was not yet available in Finnish at the beginning of 1848, when Raattamaa was in Lainio.<sup>52</sup> Westeson’s sources may have erred because the mission activity, with which the “discovery” is connected, did begin in Lainio.

Miettinen admits that the first time the mission school was held in Gällivare Parish was in 1851 in the village of Sammakko, which agrees with a May 12, 1851 letter of Laestadius to Peter Wieselgren, in which he writes that the mission had been established in Gällivare in the winter of 1851.<sup>53</sup> As mentioned above, however, Miettinen believes that the keys were not used until the Gällivare (Markettavaara) mission of 1853, in early spring, because there is no mention of their use in descriptions of meetings before 1853, not realizing that the “discovery” and initial use of the keys does not necessarily imply their immediate use by others or their general use on all occasions even by Raattamaa. In fact, Miettinen even repeats Paulaharju’s account of how Maria Parkajoki pronounced absolution secretly to certain penitents in Kitkiöjärvi, where Laestadius was preaching severe law, as late as the summer of 1853.<sup>54</sup>

According to Miettinen, who studied old records and receipts related to mission activity, Raattamaa, whose work had to accommodate the migratory life of the Lapps, was away from home from October or November until the end of April.<sup>55</sup> The actual school term lasted from December or January to April. If Raattamaa proclaimed absolution just before leaving for home, he must have done so on the very last day of the services in Gällivare. If he remained at the mission school through Easter, as was his custom, he may have selected one of Luther’s sermons for the Easter season for reading, if only privately, and the one mentioned by Westeson above deals specifically with the giving of the keys of the kingdom of heaven to the disciples on Easter evening. Perhaps more significantly, however, the same matter is explained by Laestadius in a sermon given on the first Sunday after Easter, 1851. If Raattamaa left directly for home after the Easter services in Gällivare, as Johnsen claims, he would have had sufficient time to discuss the matter with Laestadius before the following Sunday, April 27, 1851, when Laestadius said in a sermon:

Since the Jews, Turks and pagans are now so angry with the disciples of Jesus, particularly because of their criticism, it is to be surmised that the Jews, Turks and pagans do not believe that the disciples of Jesus have the power to remit and retain sins. These Jews, Turks and pagans believe instead that the disciples of Jesus are false prophets and fanatics, who do not grant peace of conscience to honorable people. Nevertheless, the disciples of Jesus have the power to forgive the sins of the penitent and to retain those of the impenitent. For Jesus himself has said, “Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Miettinen, p. 256.

<sup>52</sup> Miettinen, p. 257.

<sup>53</sup> L. L. Laestadius, *Lars Levi Laestadius’ brev till Peter Wieselgren* (Uppsala: 1946), p. 271.

<sup>54</sup> See Miettinen, p. 261, and S. Paulaharju, *Kiveliöitten kansaa. Pohjois-Ruotsin suomalaisseudulta* (Porvoo: 1961), p. 298. Paulaharju’s dating of this incident in 1854 is, according to Miettinen, an evident error.

<sup>55</sup> Miettinen, p. 83.

<sup>56</sup> *Rovasti Lars Levi Laestadiusen saarnat puhtaina*, p. 278.

Despite the fact that direct absolution was not used until 1851, after Raattamaa himself had come into faith, it is inconceivable to many so-called Laestadians of today that anyone can be converted by the general preaching of the gospel, as in the house of Cornelius (Acts 10). With the growth of the Laestadian movement and its acceptance as a legitimate revival movement, the doctrine had to be modified to accommodate the large numbers of nominal converts who had no awareness of the total nature of their depravity, as described, for example, by Apostle Paul in chapters 3 and 7 of the Epistle to the Romans. Careless statements of the elders, which equated the gospel with confession and absolution, contributed to the new focus and reliance on confession and absolution as the “pilgrim’s staff,” which became the new savior or the sole method of purification from their occasional lapses into sin. Such persons could not appreciate a gospel that unlocks the gates of heaven for unworthy and totally depraved wretches by the preaching of the free, full and unconditional forgiveness of sins (Luke 24:47, Isaiah 55:1-3). Unfortunately, smug “evangelicals,” who opposed the error of these “confessionists,” fell into the opposite extreme of rejecting confession entirely.

Warren Hepokoski

## **The Last Moments of Juhani Raattamaa<sup>57</sup>**

Saivomuotka  
May 15, 1899

Dear brother and faithful worker in the Lord’s vineyard, Aatu Laitinen,

May the grace of God be multiplied to you and your family. I thank you for the letter that we received already in December, in which you requested that a few lines be written, and we have not had the opportunity to do so, for he was also ailing from time to time. Even he said that we should write, but for me too it has always been harder than other work, and so it was always put off, which I now regret, but please forgive me even for this. I always need to have much forgiven. We indeed spoke with son-in-law Kalle and Eeva, that you should be informed of the death. I send you herewith two of the last letters of the deceased.

I will also inform you, in regard to his departure from the world, that he did not have any particular pain and had full understanding the whole time but grew weaker. He was in bed over a week. On the last night, I asked him, “Where does it hurt?” He replied, “I do not have pain anywhere. I feel just fine.” In his last hours, I read to him the letters and greetings of the Christians, and he said he heard them and answered them thus: “The Lord bless them all!” And then he fell as though into a sweet sleep. And now he is crowned with the crown of righteousness, for he has fought a good fight, kept the faith and finished his course [II Timothy 4:7]. He has also left us a good example in that he was zealous in prayer even when alone and in asking for forgiveness and giving forgiveness until the end. But now he has been allowed to leave his pilgrim’s staff on the edge of the grave and to enter Paradise, where the corruption of sin no longer oppresses as it did here, and he is able, with full love, to greet all the brothers and sisters and teachers and disciples for

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<sup>57</sup> Translation of an article written by Raattamaa’s second wife, Karoliina: “Juhani Raattamaan viime hetkistä,” *Armonsanoma*, No. 12 (*lisälehti*), 1911, pp. 233, 234.

whom he was often lonesome here, and where he no longer needs to shed tears of sorrow and longing. We too are in that faith and hope, even if in many weaknesses and shortcomings, but in the grace of the forgiveness of sins we also believe that we will come together in the glory of the Lord. You, Brother, having preached much here, will be glad to hear the joyful tidings that I can also impart, that in these villages many have become Christians and have started traveling in the truth. Accept with your wife and family our greetings of love and remember even me in your prayers with a forgiving heart, and I request that you, brother, write a few lines of comfort.

Karoliina Raattamaa

# Abram Tapani

(1834-1910)

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Abram (Aapo) Tapani was born on November 11, 1834 in Finland, in the village of Muonio, then known as Muonioniska or Muonion Niska, but he also lived and preached in Sweden and Norway. In 1876, he made a trip to America with fellow preacher Heikki Parkajoki. Tapani died on November 6, 1910 in Muonionalusta, Sweden.

## Tapani's Reply to Questions from Norway<sup>58</sup>

Muonion Niska  
June 1, 1878

Dear Brothers, Kalle Henriksen, Jakob Björkström and T. H. Lilleng, who remain ever in precious remembrance: May the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be ever with your spirit, now and always, until the end.

By this letter I greet you from my heart, informing you that I have received with heartfelt love the letter that you wrote in December, and I thank you for the letter, from which I see that you always remember us too with love. And it is precious and joyous to hear that the flock of the Lord is always spreading and multiplying among you and that you are struggling in unity of the Spirit, for love and harmony strengthen Christianity against the devil and the world. And that great War Hero always wages war in the forefront of his flock in scarlet garments and defeats the enemies of the people of the Lord and gains the victory. He himself has warred and conquered sin, death, the devil and hell, and we are all victorious in him who has made us strong, Jesus Christ.

As for the matters that you brought up in your letter for the elders to study, I have informed elder Raattamaa and the others, and there has been an examination of these matters here. And as for your question about confession and enumeration of sin, elder Raattamaa answered that public confession of sin does not have to be broader than secular law permits. Neither is sin paid for or removed by the sword of secular law punishing the body. Nor do we consider it correct to say that anyone would be saved only by confession of sin, even if he were to confess all his sins to every person. Neither is confession of sin that which purifies the heart and conscience, but it is the innocent and bloody merit and righteousness of Jesus, received by faith, that purifies the heart and conscience from all mortifying works to serve the living God [Hebrews 9:14].

It can by no means any longer be called secret confession, even for those entering from the outside, when with veiled words they confess before the congregation that they are violators of all God's commandments and then even confess their sins to many by name and so broadly that consciences become free.<sup>59</sup> Here too, we view this as public confession, but as for the transgressions of brothers, for them there is secret confession, according to the rule of the Lord Christ, which he has taught in chapter 18 of Matthew: Let the brother be reprov'd and counseled by

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<sup>58</sup> Translated from a copy of the letter made by Olli Koskamo, which is now in the Oulu provincial archives.

<sup>59</sup> Tapani can only mean here too, as he has already stated so clearly, that the conscience is freed not by the act of confessing but by the absolution that is received. In a November 13, 1875 letter to H. Lahti, Raattamaa writes that "confession of sin is done correctly even if one confesses before only one Christian and then more broadly, as need demands, one receives assurances [vakuutuksia] in the congregation on behalf of God in the name of the Lord." In the same letter, Raattamaa also cites Christ's treatment of Peter's sin in John 21:15-17 as an example of veiled words. See Raattamaa *Kirjeet ja kirjoitukset*, p. 163. Tapani is apparently rebutting the charge that converts were confessing their sins secretly rather than publicly. Private confession was evidently viewed as inappropriate for "those entering from the outside," who were expected to confess publicly. See, for example, L. L. Laestadius, *Dårhushjonet. En blick i nådens ordning* (Helsinki: 1949), vol. 1, pp. 241-243.

his brother between the two of them, and let him forgive his sins, and then, when two or three are present, if the guilty one does not submit, tell the congregation, and even when he has been reproved and counseled by the congregation, the word preached by the congregation must yet be allowed to work awhile. And be slow to bind but quick to forgive sin, for Christ does not reject his congregation for every kind of fault.

As for the other matter that you brought up, about those men who travel to Norway from here and elsewhere and preach about Christ and your demand for certification from the elders as being necessary, which they do not have: We cannot forbid any from preaching anywhere, who declare the gospel of Christ, because the Apostle does not forbid even those who might preach Christ from strife, envy and contention as long as Christ is made known, for Christians must try the spirits whether they are of God, in accordance with the advice of Apostle John, and, in any case, the sheep hear the voice of the shepherd. And not a single shepherd is allowed to start gathering a separate flock for himself, but all shepherds must gather their flock into one sheepfold, to that great Shepherd of Israel, who has given his life and shed his blood for his sheep, and, of course, all the preachers on the shores of Norway should also be bound together by love, allowing themselves to be governed by the congregation, and let all the builders and workers of the Lord work in brotherly love so that the whole building would be framed together. And may now the whole flock of the Lord in Vadsø and on the shores of Norway, purchased at a precious price, remain in unity and joined together. Always gather to view the bleeding Parent in the garden and on the hill of Golgotha. Struggle in love and unity of the Spirit this brief time. Always sprinkle the hearts of the people with blood. Soon the flock gathering the blood of Jesus will be transferred to Mount Zion.

May the whole flock of the Lord in Vadsø and vicinity, purchased at a precious price, be of good cheer now. We confirm your sins and all weaknesses forgiven by the innocent and precious blood of Jesus, which has flowed down from the cross. Soon the reward of all who strive in faith will be paid abundantly in the great wedding hall, where there is only the joy of victory and singing of amen, hallelujah, with one voice. I now greet with heartfelt love all you dear brothers and sisters living in Vadsø and vicinity, though I cannot list each of you by name, and I unceasingly remember you with heartfelt love. And God the Father sees in you nothing but the righteousness of his Son, our Lord Christ, in which you have clothed yourselves by faith, and always clothe yourselves in Jesus Christ and remain sprinkled in your hearts by his blood until the evening of life. And I greet Brother Abram Elko with heartfelt love. The greatest greetings I send to you and your wives and households. Be diligent in the work of the Lord, to which you have sacrificed yourselves. Soon the sowers and reapers will rejoice together. My wife also greets you with heartfelt love. Johan Raattamaa asks that heartfelt greetings be sent to you and to the whole flock of the Lord on the shores of Norway. The flock of the Lord greets you from here. And it is our joyous hope that soon, with burning hearts, we can greet each other in the great wedding hall. And I ask that you pray for me.

Your greatly deficient brother,  
Abram Tapani

# Erkki Antti Juhonpieti

(1814-1900)

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Erkki Antti Antinpoika Juhonpieti, known also as Erik Anders Andersson, was born on March 25, 1814 in Pajala, Sweden. He was a teacher and missionary for Pastor Laestadius, and after the death of the Pastor, he was a beloved preacher and elder among the believers. He bade farewell to this world on November 2, 1900.

## Autobiography<sup>60</sup>

My birthplace is the village of Antti in Pajala Parish, 18 miles up the Tornio River from the village of Pajala. The place is known as Moses' farm. My birthday is March 25, 1814. My father was a good reader, and he also had a good understanding of what he read and he harassed pastors at children's reading schools, and so they didn't dare have him read or ask him questions, for it had to weigh heavily on a pastor's honor when a hearer of the word tied him up with the Bible. He was also a very good manager of his household when he was sober, but he was so heavily addicted to liquor that he couldn't resist it when it was available. And when there was plenty of liquor, he was in a good mood and always debated with someone from the Bible. And he held prayers, was a good reader and singer, and thus he lived and died, and there was no change even at his time of death. Sobering up from liquor, he always became severely ill and lay in bed a day or two, and then he seemed to have a penitent attitude, but when he recovered, he was as before. He died in 1835 between the name days of Lauri and Perttuli.

My mother was born in Lautakoski, 12 miles up from Antti. She was mistress at Moses' farm for 20 years. And although she was a daughter-in-law for 11 years, our late grandpa said that he never saw any expressions of anger even once. And I am their seventh child. Six were older and six younger than me. And as I also recall, her lifestyle was always Christian. She sorrowed much over Father's drinking, and she spoke to her children about salvation very frequently. She also spoke of penitence and contrition of heart. And when she went to her deathbed on Sunday morning, our late father said that on Thursday evening he asked, "Don't you want a pastor, since we have a spiritual pastor?" For thus it was said of the late [Ingemar] Lindstedt, who was a temporary preacher at that time. Our late mother replied, "No, Jesus will give me Communion." And she indeed died then on Friday morning. Her name was Priita Maria Heikintytär Lautakoski, and Father's name was Antti Mooseksenpoika.

Their outward instruction has remained in my memory throughout my life, for they never wronged their neighbor. They also often warned their children not to do wrong, and if we misbehaved in some way in town, we were punished severely. Father was very harsh in punishing, and so we lost our love for him. Mother was also very quick to note wrongdoing, but she was more moderate in punishing, and so an enduring love for her remained, and the love of Mother still burns brighter than the love of Father. And throughout life, the goal has been not to do bad or wrong to

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<sup>60</sup> Erkki Antti's autobiography was first published in "Elämäkertoja III, Erkki Antti Antinpoika Juhonpieti,"

*Kristillinen Kuukauslehti*, Nos. 2 and 3, 1882. It was reprinted in an edited and revised form in Typpö, pp. 175-184. The English translation is based on the original version as republished by Raittila in Juhonpieti, *Kirjeet ja kirjoitukset*, pp. 80-89. This is apparently one of a number of autobiographies acquired by Heikel in the fall of 1880. See K. Heikel, "Några ord med anledning af biskop Landgrens artikel om læstadianismen och bigtläran," *Teologisk Tidskrift*, 1881, pp. 214, 215.

anyone, although I have been a slave of sin. All their offspring have been honest, and those who lived until the revival all turned to Christianity.

During childhood, in my father's house, we had a very good home and a very good income, even if Father was a notorious drunkard. He was mercilessly severe with us in his management of the household, but he was honest in all conduct when sober, and even when drunk he did nothing bad other than to rage because no one could follow his orders. Therefore, we had to always be like slaves. Mother was very quiet and was also enslaved. They took heed that the children learned to read when we were small. While Mother lived, when we were with her in the bedroom, she often spoke to us of heaven and hell and also of the joy in heaven and of the suffering of the damned in hell. Her outward life was also as well balanced as ever was of Christians, and the pricks from this have remained in my conscience throughout my life. When Mother died, I was nearly 11 years of age. Father remarried, and then we came under even heavier bondage. Since even Mother was gone, we had no refuge. Hard years of crop failure came, and so poverty came to the home.

Finally, in my nineteenth year, I left home to become a hired hand, and so I ended up entirely in the world. I also knew how to live so that the world, in turn, was pleased with me, and so I fell all the deeper into the world. But in the midst of the course of sin, the Spirit of God always followed in my conscience with the question: What will follow this life? Mother had said thus and so. And often such distress came upon me that I had to go to weep in secret. Sometimes I was also visibly conscience-stricken, but how could I know what to do when there was no guide? I had to remain in bondage to sin since I did not have the Holy Spirit due to unbelief. Card playing and dancing were my favorite habits of outward sin, and when they were not available, I secretly practiced such sins that I am ashamed to even mention.

However, then the powerful cry of Laestadius began to be heard. Even if the message was brought in such a terrifying form, my mother's words had affected me so that when I reached 30 years of age, the Spirit of the Lord again said in my conscience, "Now you are 30 years old, and even if you live long, there are hardly another 30 left, and these 30 will have passed as though stolen. What will follow this life?" And so I decided that my life must change. From then on, I began to read books more, searching for the path to heaven, but sin overcame me time and again. The labor for my salvation was indeed serious, but I found no better path even by reading than this, that if I could live without sin, God might be merciful. But after I had striven in repentance for a time, sin again overcame me. At times even this thought came, that God has not created me for heaven after all since I cannot live any better, but I will try anyway, for it is also bad to go to hell. And I did so and I read all the religious books from cover to cover, whatever Finnish ones were then available.

I did this nearly five years, but when that madness, as it was called, began to be heard, I had by reading come to understand that true Christianity is always considered madness in the world. And I thought: This is true because it is madness in the eyes of the world. And then I decided in myself: Let this day be my moment of true conversion regardless of whether the world considers me mad or wise as long as I am right before God. And then I began to pray constantly that God would make of me the kind of Christian that could be saved, regardless of how it may appear to others, as long as I am right before God. At that time there wasn't a single Christian here, and even Laestadius was still in Karesuando. And I always prayed for this in secret, and then my register of sins opened in greater detail to me, and I became the chief of sinners, so that I wondered how the earth could bear me, and unbelief accused me that I have committed the sin against the Holy Spirit, which is not forgiven, neither in this life nor in the life to come, since I have neglected so many knockings of God, nor

can God any longer care about me. So a bitter penitence over the squandered time of grace came to me. At that time, a weight of 10,000 talents lay on my own shoulders, and the bondage was much more cruel than in childhood with my father and stepmother. Sin had become exceedingly abundant, and secret Christianity no longer availed, for it couldn't remain secret.

I was then in my thirty-fifth year, and on Epiphany a penitent man of this same village, Erkin Heikka, visited me, and we conversed about salvation as we understood it. He left for home in the evening, and I had great concern over salvation, for death and judgment were right before me. Then the Saviour appeared crucified before me, and this sight effected in my conscience an extreme agony to be saved if there were still time before death intervened to cut the thin cord, which was stretched over the burning fire and brimstone of hell, on which I was standing. And I greatly trembled from consternation over whether this thin cord would break and no helper would come and I were to fall into the deep. I viewed the waves rolling in flames of brimstone and the unfortunate ones writhing there, so that I cannot write this without weeping. When I recall the disaster out of which the eternal Lover has snatched even me, tears of sorrow still tend to flow. And when I recall the current time, what I and the other Christians have become through the precious blood of Jesus, I cannot restrain tears of joy and gratitude. In that distress I read and prayed that God would lend help if he still had a place in me.

One day I was alone in the Vanhatalo rear cottage, where I was living at the time, and was reading a book entitled *Armon järjestys autuutehen* [The Order of Grace unto Salvation].<sup>61</sup> After the "First Conversation" had stripped me naked of my own holiness and I was reading the end of the "Second Conversation," the promises of grace of the gospel opened to me, that if you believe on the Lord Jesus you are saved. But now came unworthiness, with the question: How is it fitting for me to believe when I haven't yet been truly penitent or repentant? I will become a hypocrite, among other things. But the Spirit of God, the author and finisher of faith, entered me through the word that was read, saying that if you don't believe you will go to hell no matter how penitent you might be. Fear was great, but there was also a little hope. Then I took firm hold of the promises of grace, and to the degree that I believed I felt peace and rest. I also felt joy and was allowed to see Jesus in the glory of victory the first time when I could believe myself saved. I don't recall anything else, but I do remember that I was joyful, and for gratitude I was walking the floor, and I went to the main house to tell the others about the great grace that had come to me, for I felt clearly that, when by faith my heart was broken by the blood of Jesus, the fire of purification pervaded my whole being three times, and for about a week I knew nothing of sin.

However, then when I was again lowered into the consciousness of corruption, many doubtful thoughts came. I wondered if I was even on the right road. Since then, I have often also been injured by my own sinful corruption and have even received wounds. Impenitent people and my former friends in sin have mocked, insulted and even hit me. But God doubtless has meant even this for my good because he has allowed it to happen. But in all these, under temptation, trial and tribulation, God has again marvelously strengthened me, by both powerful feelings of grace and revelations, so that if I were to have to write about them, there would be much to write about. But I will mention anyway that several times I have been shown the blessedness of heaven to such a degree that, as a result of the joy, I didn't know whether my spirit would ever return to this world.

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<sup>61</sup> The original version of this book, *Evangelische Gnadenordnung in vier Gespräche*, was written by David Hollaz (died 1771). This author is often misidentified with his grandfather of the same name, orthodox Lutheran theologian David Hollaz (1648-1713). See the entry on Hollaz in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Tübingen: 1912), vol. 3, pp. 116, 117.

Also at other times, under the feeling of God's love, I have often thought that I am going at last to the wedding of the Lamb.

Under feelings of grace, in the initial phase of Christianity, I was allowed to see some prophets. I have also seen Laestadius, the apostles, and finally the Saviour in his great glory of victory. And at that time, I was allowed to hear identical testimonies, first from Laestadius, then from the apostles, then from the prophets, but the viewing of the Saviour affected my inner being so that I could no longer look at anything, for I lay entirely powerless, like a heap of foam. It was as though the love of God melted me so that for a long time I didn't know whether I had a body any longer.<sup>62</sup> Some brothers who were held in esteem were oppressing me at the time this last revelation was shown to me. During the struggle of faith, I have felt the corruption of sin in my members in so many ways that I cannot enumerate them. I have also felt the peace and love of God, sometimes in less and sometimes in greater measure, as God's wisdom has determined for me. But I have kept the faith, though feelings have fluctuated, for the foundation of salvation is not in feelings, but the precious merit of Jesus is complete redemption from both the punishment of sin and the fulfillment of the law.

At times, there comes a longing for the feelings of grace. At times, when God grants his peace for a long time, the devil makes me yearn for the feeling of sin. So inconstant am I even yet, though God has tried to teach me in so many ways. For these and other such sins I always need to receive forgiveness and still always need the testimony of the Christians of the forgiveness of sins. Although I believe that the Spirit of the Lord has not allowed me to live in the manner of pagans, the corruption of sin in my members is so powerful that many matters and words are said that should not have been uttered. And also that which should have been done is neglected.

These matters, my beloved, I have recalled for you because you requested it. Forgive, my beloved, my deficient recollections, for my mouth and pen are deficient in explaining the works of God, but I have nevertheless tried to fulfill your heartfelt request.

And now, my beloved, I complete this childish writing with the testimony that the Lord knows I do not lie. I wish you fortune, with me, on the journey to the beautiful shore of the Fatherland. Perhaps these will be the last farewell lines in this world, but I bid you welcome to the wedding of the Lamb. I will not bid a long farewell, my beloved. Tomorrow we will be there and meet in the wedding chamber with hearts burning with the flame of love. Then we will no longer bid farewell, for the children will be gathered at home forever. Now, my beloved, let's be of good cheer! Sins are scrupulously forgiven to you and to all of us who believe, and I also testify all sins, even doubtful thoughts, forgiven in the name and precious blood of Jesus. And pray for me and always bear a forgiving heart even for me. I am such a mischievous child of God that I don't know whether God has another child as bad as I, but I believe that I am nevertheless a poor child and that I am also in the Parent's house. Heartfelt greetings of love to all the brothers and sisters, to all in general who gather the blood of Jesus and to the flock of believers. You are in dear remembrance, my beloved, you too who live on the Tornio River. I firmly believe that soon we will indeed arrive in the place where we can be together without separating and play the harp of God, saying, "Amen, hallelujah, the victory has been won by the blood of the Lamb!" I am convinced that we can join together at the wedding of the Lamb. Amen.

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<sup>62</sup> A letter written by Erkki Antti in the fall of 1872 to Johanna Matinheikki contains the following passage: "Last Sunday morning I was shown the late Pastor first, then the apostles, then the prophets, and finally the Saviour, and then the immortal spirit was about to separate from the mortal body. But this they all, except the Saviour, showed with their being and demeanor, that they were all sinners and have been saved by grace and that we too will soon be allowed to join them at the wedding of the Lamb." See Juhonpieti, *Kirjeet ja kirjoitukset*, p. 56.

After God was able to teach me to believe, despite all unworthiness, in the forgiveness of sins, the Holy Spirit entered me and I could no longer refrain from speaking about Christianity. I saw that the whole world is going to hell in the vain hope that they have been reared in Christian doctrine and have learned it after the letter without change of heart or mind. And when the late Laestadius came to be our pastor in early spring, I spoke before him and before everyone the words that the Spirit gave me to say each time. So the late Laestadius was pleased with me and started to want me to be his companion and driver to reading schools and inspections and as a teacher of children. Then one summer, when I had been a Christian perhaps two or three years, the Christians of Pello came to the Pajala church on Midsummer Day and began to ask the late Pastor to provide them a schoolteacher, saying that they too need to be saved. So Laestadius said, "Let's have Erkki Antti conduct school for you." But to me it seemed impossible to even think of me. Who am I for such a precious office? And I said, "I, dear Pastor, lack the gifts to make me suitable for such a position." But he bound me to it with words of the Bible. Finally, I had to agree to go, but I thought that even the Pastor will now see that I don't have the gifts needed for this work. However, when I had held meetings for two weeks in Pello, those people, who were submerged under the law, were freed by faith in the Lord Jesus to enjoy the power of the forgiveness of sins and freedom and peace in God.

After that, I was called ever further down the Tornio valley. There, people also started coming from Finland, and the Lord has effected awakenings mightily even by my mouth in both Finland and Sweden and also in Norway. The scribes and pharisees have indeed tried to raise opposition by means of secular law, fists, words and testimonies of the Holy Bible, curses, accusations, abuse and condemnation. But the words of the wise Gamaliel are true. Since this Christianity is of God, the nets of the pharisees and scribes cannot fathom the depth of the wisdom of God. David says, "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed" [Psalm 2:1-2].

This is all for now except to send heartfelt greetings of love to the members of the congregation of God in general and to each one in particular. I also testify to all of you even the forgiveness of all the sins of summer. Let us always believe, my beloved, all sins forgiven through the power of that blood that flowed on Golgotha for the forgiveness of all our sins. I ask you to pray for me.

Your brother in faith,  
Erik Anders

## **A Letter of Erkki Antti<sup>63</sup>**

Dear Brother in the Lord!

Grace be with you and your household and the others who love the Lord Jesus Christ now and forever. Amen.

The Bishop has been here holding his inspection to see if he can sink his teeth in somewhere to bite the believers. His companion was like the very devil himself, who tried to oppress our flock.

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<sup>63</sup> This undated letter, first published by Aatu Laitinen in *Valituuta kristittyin kirjeitä* (Oulu: 1884), vol. I, pp. 28-30, has been translated from the texts in Typpö, pp. 98-100, and Juhonpieti, *Kirjeet ja kirjoitukset*, pp. 70, 71. As the letter indicates, it was apparently written in 1877 after the inspection of the Pajala congregation, carried out by Bishop Lars Landgren on June 16-17, 1877. Raittila seems to believe the recipient was Juhani Raattamaa. (See Juhonpieti, *Kirjeet ja kirjoitukset*, p. 70.)

The emotional outbursts at the meetings of the Christians were said to be the howling of wolves, although he himself was the true mother wolf. Unbelieving, impenitent whores have given birth to many illegitimate children, but their activity was certainly not considered the works of the devil, even if some were rebuked a bit with beautiful, pretty words: “It isn’t really nice if illegitimate children are born.”

Last winter, exhaustion tended to trouble many Christians, and the reason for it, in my opinion, is that in our congregaton the spirit of self-righteousness doesn’t seem to reduce the pace at which it infects young saplings with its leprosy. The older ones would, in any case, always fare better, but the young unruly types, who cannot at all distinguish between bad and good, even if it is explained to them, are easily apt to erect embellishments of self-righteousness, and since there are always such who cast forth morsels of self-righteousness, the faith of these poor children cannot remain free. I have not really been home more than four Sundays this whole summer, but even those who complain that my doctrine is too lax to keep Christianity united do not appear to be able to maintain unity.

For many years already, the doctrine has been stirring and circulating that those who have become Christians in the correct manner cannot fall away, but my understanding is that all are fallible. From where could they rise who have not fallen? Much patience and longsuffering is needed in traveling through this world, of which I do not have enough, and for this reason I ask for forgiveness for this and other shortcomings of mine, and I scrupulously believe that in the name of Jesus you forgive me all my faults.

I am believing and I hope that I will no longer have to struggle long with this sinful sack of worms, for the Spirit of the bloody Bridegroom has said by the mouth of John: “I come quickly, and my reward is with me” [Revelation 22:12]. The bride replies: “Amen, come, Lord Jesus” [Revelation 22:20].

I have, in any case, dear brother, been able to avoid involvement in pagan deeds and carnality, but I have no refuge in sinlessness, for impatience often tends to prevail, even when there isn’t much call for it, and makes me utter bad words, and neither is my warfare against sin praiseworthy. I need indeed, therefore, to live from the grace of the forgiveness of sins, and how can I show life to others from anywhere else but where I myself receive life and grace? The view of some is indeed such that everyone must pine long and greatly in pain of conscience before it is appropriate to testify the forgiveness of sins to them, but I do not think thus, and I urge all to proclaim the forgiveness of sins to the penitent. My understanding is that we are never able to sufficiently preach of faith and the forgiveness of sins to awakened people. I am indeed bold, my brother, for since I cannot converse with you orally, I put my imprudent and prudent thoughts on paper, sending them to you to read.

The frost has severely ravaged the fields, and thus many are concerned about their livelihood, but I have urged them to believe that God has done well here too and loves his children, for even in this way he seeks to have them flee into his refuge. Oh, if all people would only heed the day of their visitation so that Jesus would not have to weep over them, as he did formerly over the city of Jerusalem! Remain in the gracious protection of the Lord!

Erkki Antti

# Iisakki Huhtasaari

(1826-1903)

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Iisakki Huhtasaari, born on June 8, 1826 in Övertorneå (Ylitornio), Sweden, served as a teacher and missionary for Pastor Laestadius. After the Pastor's death, he was a preacher and prominent elder and preached in both Sweden and Finland. He died on August 3, 1903.

## Autobiography<sup>64</sup>

A brief account of the phases of my life in its natural and spiritual aspects during the journey in the tents of Kedar:

I was born on June 8, 1826. My father was Iisakki Antinpoika of Hietaniemi in Ylitornio Parish, a man who loved temperance and virtue. My mother, Anna Kreeta Juhanintytär Kuttanen of Matarengi congregation, was temperate and industrious in the natural realm. However, both parents lacked living knowledge of the Lord Jesus. They had a farm in Haapakylä, Matarengi congregation, Ylitornio Parish.

Already in my childhood, during elementary reading lessons, I often felt a great longing to be a child of God and to inherit eternal life, which I could not claim because sin was on my conscience. The first sin that bound my conscience was a lie that I told my mother from fear of punishment. When a certain neighbor lady, a believer in the Lord Jesus, spoke to me often of the love of Jesus, eternal life, the vanity of the world and the consequences of sin, it effected fear in my conscience because of sin and a longing to become a child of God.

In my eleventh year, I fell ill and experienced a fear of death, under which I prayed to God to have mercy on me. I prayed for weeks but didn't receive any reply from God, for my prayer was not in faith in the name of Jesus but the labor of self-righteousness, from which there grew a presumption of the grace of God, though no change had occurred in my soul, and if death had come I would have perished eternally in my presumption. In 1840, at 14 years of age, I became awakened to really know that I was under condemnation, separated from God, though I was a youth. This happened at the time of the death of my beloved father, who I could not believe was saved. Then I began to pray to God in secret, desiring ever more conviction for sin, though I often sobbed and writhed in pangs of conscience. I tried to avoid sin but couldn't do so and found no peace for my conscience anywhere. Youthful lusts overcame me, causing me to sin, and so I neglected my whole struggle. At 16 years of age (1842), I attended confirmation school, where a pastor, though void of the Holy Spirit, explained to the children from history the high value of the Sacrament and the condemnation for unworthy participation, which fell quite heavily on my conscience. I made decisions to begin serving God and to avoid sin, following the pastor's best instruction "to read avidly and to live virtuously," which I indeed tried to do, and I succeeded to the extent that the power of the law gradually subsided in my conscience and I became rather holy in my opinion, though unregenerate. This self-righteousness lasted eight months, but my conscience had no true peace. There was only misery and a constant longing for separation from the world. I once participated in the activities of other young people, who took pleasure in sin. Then all the

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<sup>64</sup> This translation is based on the text published in *Kristillinen Kuukauslehti*, No. 4, 1882, pp. 49-54. A revised version is published in *Typö*, pp. 186-191.

righteousness that I had gathered collapsed, the law revived in my conscience, and unbelief entirely overcame my heart so that I didn't even dare pray any more to God. Sin ruled my members, and the law, the justice of God, burned my conscience, so that I often writhed in agony. I felt that I was nothing more than a victim of hellfire for eternity. I would have exchanged places with the lowliest worm of the earth, which would not have to rise up to judgment.

There was darkness in Norrbotten Province at that time. Both the pastors and the common people wandered in spiritual blindness. The blind led the blind to hell. My situation was miserable. I had to commit sin with an awakened conscience. No one preached of faith in the Lord Jesus, by which we are justified, but only of a holy life, and since it was impossible to live holy, there was no hope but to go to hell. I tried to calm my conscience by not thinking of death or eternity, and so I sought amusement in sinful activities, dances, card playing, and a life of pleasure. Worldly honor kept me from drunkenness and extravagance.

Thus I continued, but at the beginning of my twentieth year I felt a hardness of conscience. Sin no longer bothered my conscience as it had before. Sin, being practiced, became a habit, in which I, a wretch, would have gone my own way, but God, the beloved Father, awoke an elect instrument in Norrbotten, Lars Levi Laestadius, who then preached powerfully of repentance and forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus in the Karesuando congregation. He then moved to the Pajala congregation, and from there the following news was heard: "A marvelous effect is occurring in people there. The pastor there is preaching of awakening. And sin and the punishment of sin, God's grace and the forgiveness of sins are being discussed, and the ungodly are condemned to hell." However, most people said it was an outbreak of fanaticism and that people were going crazy. When I heard all that, I wanted to meet them and to hear what they were saying, but when I went I didn't believe they were instruments in the hand of God to give me a new awakening. In December 1849, I met them in the Pajala parsonage, 60 miles up from where I lived. When they spoke to me the first words of Christianity, of penitence and becoming a child of God, these words pierced my heart like a sword, and I could not say anything in opposition. I viewed these people as fortunate, as angels, and myself as entirely unfortunate and hardened, to whom God's grace no longer belonged.

My conscience then became grievously restless and troubled, and I didn't even dare think of God's grace or prayer, but I thought that eternal hell was mine. Neither was there anyone around to whom I could have expressed my trouble. This lasted until spring, and my anguish continued to grow in my despair. In April 1850, I heard someone reading the book *Sana syntisille ja sana pyhille* [A Word to Sinners and a Word to Saints], from which a spark of hope was kindled that God might have mercy on me, a wretch, after all. Then I made a decision that even if I had to travel as a worm along the earth to find the grace of God, I wouldn't heed the world at all. The same day, I felt a strong work of God in my soul, and so I went to another house, where my former companions in sin were gathered. I informed them openly of my state, that I am unworthy and owned by eternal death together with all of them, who are living in their sins. Some of them began to mock, saying that I had gone crazy, but most of them began to weep when I spoke to them of God's justice and man's unfortunate state because of sin. From then on, I began to pray to God alone, kneeling, whenever I had an opportunity. I read all the books I could find, and I worked for my salvation in order to win the grace of God, but in vain, for I didn't understand faith, nor how to receive by faith the grace of God for the forgiveness of sins in the blood of Jesus. I finally grew tired in my work, and my heart grew hardened, and I thought I was eternally lost after all. There was, however, an insatiable thirst and a groaning after grace in my soul, but there was no one to preach the gospel to me and others.

In May, on Pentecost Monday I partook of the Lord's Supper, and though the pastor read the absolution to the penitent correctly, I was unable to claim it for myself because my heart felt hardened. When I came home, I felt burdened because I couldn't accomplish anything. It was all over except for a groaning in my soul. On Tuesday night, the revelation of God's grace occurred, and I felt a heavenly joy and an assurance of the forgiveness of sins and the right of sonship with God. Then it was shown to me that all of nature, the sun and all the birds of heaven, thanked God on my behalf. And my spirit shouted praise for the mercy. For two weeks I was like an angel, so that I felt no temptation, but only pure grace. My body felt empty. Then worldly thoughts, lusts and desires began to be felt. The effects of original sin began to stir, and this made me afraid that I had fallen from grace. However, I knew nothing by myself [I Corinthians 4:4]. When doubts troubled me, I prayed and groaned, and Jesus appeared to me in spirit in the garden of Gethsemane, sweating blood, suffering the punishment of sin from love for me. At the same time, Jesus appeared transfigured as a victor on my behalf on the cross, which made my heart melt from the feeling of love, with which I was entirely intoxicated and felt myself so secured by the victory of Jesus in the heart of God the Father that nothing could tear me away from it.

Since then I have been able to find all my security in the blood of Jesus, by which I have been purchased, washed and cleansed, by which all my sins are blotted out and all my weaknesses are forgiven. In this most precious struggle of faith, I have often been allowed to enjoy the power of the world to come. I have also wanted to declare it to others, though in great weakness. God also awakened my companions at that time, and we were able to have conversations together and to preach of repentance and forgiveness of sins to those who felt their sins, and the Lord always added believers to us.

In June 1851, I entered into the state of matrimony with a Christian spouse and I began to run a farm, in which God has given me fortune and blessing in children and other temporal matters. In 1862, when the spiritual revival was stirring among the people and spreading on the shores of both Sweden and Finland, I too, a weak servant, was asked to travel and preach the gospel of peace. I have also been invited to the congregations on the shores of Finland, where, traveling, I have seen many joyful victories when many have been freed from the bonds of death by the preaching of the gospel, for which praise be to the Lamb! Now I have been a confessor and follower of the Lord Jesus over 30 years. I have been married a little over 30 years. We have had 15 children, of whom God, the beloved Father, took six away while young from these tents of Kedar to the true home. Nine are living temperate lives. The eldest is 29 years old and the youngest is in his third year. The four older boys are Christians, and I am happy that God has blessed our fruit of the womb with a spiritual blessing. In the ages of youth, manhood and old age, God's grace is wholesome. In the time of youth, youthful lusts and worldly pleasure are powerful in drawing away hearts. In old age, greed and worldly care are the most powerful. At all times, the confessor and follower of Jesus needs to be in warfare and to keep the faith and to be vigilant in faith and to look to the author and finisher of the faith, who is lifted up from the earth and whose blood has been shed for the forgiveness of sins, by which the victory has been won. By this means, I too have gained the victory and have remained victorious. In the struggle and victory of faith, I have at times been allowed to enjoy an abundant foretaste of the life to come.

By the blood of Jesus, I am free and secure. The Spirit witnesses with my spirit that I am a child of God and an heir of eternal life. This is told by a traveler to Mount Zion.

I. Huhtasaari, 1882

# Abram Hietanen

(1833-1896)

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Abram (Aapo) Hietanen was born on February 5, 1833 in Muonio (Muonioniska), Finland, and moved to Michigan in 1888. On March 7, 1896, he died of asphyxiation in Boston, Massachusetts, with fellow preacher Johan Roanpää, while on a trip to Cape Cod, where they were to preach. It is assumed that the men blew out a gaslight in a room in which they were spending the night.<sup>65</sup>

## Autobiography<sup>66</sup>

I was born in 1833 in the village of Muonioniska at a farm known as Hietanen. My father's name was Olli Juhaninpoika Örne or Hietanen. My mother was Maria Heleena Rikinä of the same village. My parents had five daughters and three sons. The daughters were Kristiina, Elsa Maria, Eeva and Loviisa. I was the fifth child and the eldest of the sons. After me there came Kreetta Ulriika, Kalle and the youngest, Olli. My father was of a quiet and gentle nature. Mother was ill-humored by nature. My father practiced religion and often spoke to his children of the joy of heaven, saying that a person must live virtuously, read books and pray to God, and then God will take him into heaven. And every evening, when Father was at home, he said evening prayers for his children. However, in spite of this, he also drank somewhat, which even I criticized in his religion. In my fifth year, my father made me outer garments and fur shoes from the hides of reindeer calves, and also gloves, and took me with him for companionship on his daytime trips. On such occasions, he always spoke to me of heaven and warned about cursing, stealing and other sins and said that God didn't care to have in heaven a person who commits sin. His maternal uncle was one of the old pietists, who had spoken to him about salvation, which awakened my father's senses and affected his conscience.

My first experience of the reproofs of the Spirit of God is as follows: At a farm known as Lahti there was a girl my age from whom I stole a certain toy and brought it home, but my conscience accused me for the wrongdoing. At home, I didn't dare show the object that I had taken but hid it and didn't dare visit the neighboring farm for many days because I feared that I would be rebuked for my bad deed. Then after a year, this neighbor girl died, and I was very lonesome for her. At another farm, there lived an uncle who had a girl a bit younger than me, who was much inclined to do what her parents forbade, and when the question arose as to who had done a misdeed, she said I had done it, and her parents believed her. My uncle was short-tempered and always threatened to punish me. I wondered what I could do to my uncle because he threatened me though I was innocent. He had a foal, which I decided to kill from a lust for revenge, but my conscience intervened, saying that I would not get to heaven. This intention of mine frightened and terrified me

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<sup>65</sup> J. O. Lindström, reporting the death of the two preachers, writes: "Let us comfort our hearts, dear brothers and sisters, with this hope of living faith that this living road that has been placed under our feet will soon take us too to that great assembly where we can sit at the Communion table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We recall that our departed brothers often preached to us about that assembly. And when at times the homeland shore was revealed even to them, they played the harps of God and said, "Lord Jesus! How great are the services that we are already in by faith!" And Brother Roanpää often said, "Lord Jesus! Brothers, Look! Jesus stands in his bloody form among us!" Similarly, Stephen saw heaven opened and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. See "Ilmoitus kahden saarnaajan kuolemasta Ameriikassa," *Sanomia Siionista*, No. 8, 1896, p. 158.

<sup>66</sup> Translated from "Elämäkertani," *Sanomia Siionista*, No. 6B, 1896, pp. 114-120.

in my conscience with the thought that if I were to commit such an act, I would become miserable in this world and even in eternity.

In this my sixth year, Father sent me for reading lessons to a certain childless pastor, which was very disagreeable to me because I was a poor learner and lazy, for when I didn't know my lesson I had to sit in the parsonage and read for many hours. In my eighth year, my leg was injured, and I didn't dare utter a word about it to my parents at first. I was ailing about half a year, and when Father saw that I was becoming lame he took me to a certain woman for treatment, which turned out so well that I recovered.

I was ten years of age when my father drowned on our beach under the influence of liquor. His sudden departure gave me great sorrow, and I decided that strong drink would not touch my mouth, but such promises did not last long, for when I visited my good friends, I had to be as much a man as the others. At 13 years of age, the revival began in Karesuando, where Laestadius was the pastor. The first missionaries then came to Muonio during the Midsummer period and preached to people of repentance from an ungodly life. That winter, great awakenings also occurred in my village of birth, but I had trust in how I would be saved because Father had taught me to pray and live righteously.

At 17 years of age, I attended a confirmation school conducted by the pastor who had taught me as a child. He had also been awakened by the preaching of Laestadius. During the first week, when the pastor explained the Ten Commandments and the spiritual nature of the law of God, my conscience testified that I had transgressed all the commandments, and I no longer had any righteousness or refuge, but the holy and righteous law of God condemned me to hell. I wept in solitude and prayed to God at times for an awakening of conscience and at other times for the forgiveness of my sins. The pastor didn't have enough light to preach the gospel and faith, but he taught to pray to God. Two weeks passed, and the pastor promised to go to church the next day for the renewal of the baptismal covenant, but I had decided in my conscience that I wouldn't go yet, for I felt myself unworthy of going to the Lord's Holy Supper. So I decided to postpone my confirmation and to practice repentance for one year in order to become a worthy partaker of Communion. After a year had passed, I went to school again. Now the promise of a good repentance before God and my conscience had to be reviewed to determine how successful I had been. Quite clearly, I had lived a whole year without God in all kinds of sin. I went, in any case, to renew my baptismal covenant, though feeling great unworthiness, but when I went to Communion I felt a great comfort and even obtained an assurance of the forgiveness of sins. My sister, who was awakened, condemned me to hell in this condition, and so I became ill in conscience and fell into open impenitence.

Another year passed, and a school came to the Swedish side.<sup>67</sup> At that time, the Christians could not hold services, but Johan Raattamaa was the government teacher for the children of Lapland. He spread word that a children's school would be held, where adults could also gather, and people were there from eight different congregations. I went with many others to the school, where great awakenings occurred. The awakened were taught at this school, and the distressed were guided into confession of sin, and I was among those who had not yet done so. Public confession of all sins occurred there, and afterward it was asked whether Jesus was in the heart. Whoever made this confession was assured that he was now a child of God. I also confessed and was again comforted. On returning from the school, I went to the pastor to confess my sins, for I had to confess a sin of theft to him. The pastor pronounced forgiveness and taught me to pray to God for forgiveness. I

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<sup>67</sup> This mission school was established in Muoniovaara in 1852. See Miettinen, pp. 240, 259, 260.

was comforted, however, because there was no longer sin on my conscience, and I believed that living children of God never feel any sin. But when the feelings of grace ended, I felt strong sinful impulses and lusts in my flesh, and so faith again left my heart, and I didn't dare tell anyone about my feelings. For the devil preached that true children of God don't have such feelings since I hadn't yet heard anyone speak of them, and so I went into the world. Sin overcame me. I could not overcome sin by prayer, for sin was more powerful. Much time passed with me practicing my own repentance, praying to God -- and living in sin.

Old Raattamaa was allowed to hold services only under the name of the children's school, but not at all on the Finnish side, and there were no preachers other than Raattamaa and Erkki Antti. Now Erkki Antti came to Muonio, and permission to hold services was received from the pastor. I was at the services two days. At that time, full gospel was preached, but I didn't dare believe. In my conscience there was the testimony that you have to hear God's voice before you dare believe, but since that voice came by man's mouth I didn't view it as God's voice. I fled to the woods with my great pangs of conscience, and innumerable devils loomed before me, and there was trembling in my conscience and fear that these devils would take hold of me. I came home in the evening and got word from the services that many had become Christians and that my presence was desired there. I thought to myself, "What would it avail? If God has elected me, surely he will give me forgiveness of sins; otherwise I will not believe."

I went anyway, and when I arrived at the porch of the meeting place, great joy was heard from inside. I entered, and some young people took hold of me there and ecstatically preached to me the need of repentance and the forgiveness of sins in the Saviour. As I heard their words, I thought that if my heart were at least such that I could weep it would be easier to repent, but when my heart feels immovable and harder than a rock, how is it possible to believe with such a heart? They just kept preaching, and since they wouldn't release me, I decided that I would confess that I believe because I thought, "There is no other way to get free of these crazy people." And so I said, "I believe." My confession brought great joy to those gathered at the services, but to me great sorrow because I had even committed a great sin, for I could not find a true sense of sin in my heart nor any feeling of God's grace, and so with sorrow I left the meeting place. On my way home, being in great sorrow, Jesus appeared before me on the cross with open wounds. I also saw an innumerable multitude walking past Jesus, mocking him, and the blood that flowed from his wounds felt hot as it penetrated my heart, and thus my heavy sorrow changed into unspeakable joy and enjoyment of salvation, and a life and confession of faith ensued, which I have practiced, if only in weakness.

Thus God has in great grace and love drawn me into the knowledge of his Son and has to this day kept me in it, though I am one of those prodigal sons who has made all those trips of which the Saviour has spoken [Luke 15:11-32]. I am also quite like doubting Thomas, but I say with the Lord's Apostle, by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been meager [I Corinthians 15:10]. Praise to God, who has regenerated us according to his will by the word of truth and has kept us in truth by the powerful and bloody arm of his might. For this we say thanks in humility of heart to the Lamb, who as payment for his great pains is worthy to receive praise and glory. We are indeed still quite slow and incompetent at this, but this we know and believe that when we can move from the militant congregation to the rejoicing congregation, to the land of perfection, then we too, with the others who are saved, will know how to thank God and the Lamb properly.

Your brother,  
Abram Hietanen

# John Pollari

(1865-1945)

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John (Johan) Pollari was born on May 29, 1865 in Veteli, Finland. He was granted the grace of repentance at 16 years of age and immediately began preaching to others. In 1893, he moved to America, where he continued to preach in the Apostolic Lutheran congregations. After living a short time in Lanesville, Massachusetts, he moved to Maple, Wisconsin, where he spent the rest of his life. He died on September 13, 1945, in Champion, Michigan, where he was preaching at the time.

## Pollari's Greeting to His Brothers and Sisters in Faith<sup>68</sup>

Yli-Veteli  
June 5, 1888

By this letter, I greet my beloved brothers and sisters who share in the grace of God, you who have entered the sheepfold through the bloody door and have become partakers of the sufferings.

I inform you of my faith: This is the eighth year that I have been believing, but many troubles and adversities have met me on the journey because Christians here are rare. The Spirit of the dear Father has supported me here in the wilderness, so that David's saying is fulfilled, when he says, "If I make my bed in hell, thou, Lord, art there with me" [Psalm 139:8]. Last winter, the Spirit of the Lord was able to have an effect in Veteli. When I started to cry for repentance, the viper was indeed also aroused to emit his poison, but he hasn't succeeded in killing everyone with it. A number of new people of God have been born because a stronger one has come and robs the spoil from the strong. Thus, all of us workmen in the Lord's vineyard can be secure because we have a good and powerful leader, who is the Lord over the devil. For he smites the earth with the rod of his mouth and slays the ungodly with the breath of his lips [Isaiah 11:4].

The Lord Jesus stands ever ready among us so that, if there are deficiencies, our troubles are always mitigated. And complaints over shortcomings can always be made to him without shyness. Lay aside fear and timidity. Step up to the cross so the warm blood can warm your cold hearts. When you feel timidity, you can be bold, for the first men and women of Galilee were also timid, but hardened people are so bold as to go before a just God and to be at the foot of the cross of Jesus. However, it is indeed clear what kind of men they were who killed Jesus. They moved with spear in hand and were not timid in mutilating the body of Jesus, though the rocks split and the graves opened. The sorrowing disciples watched their master from a distance but were near enough to the cross to hear from Jesus the words, "It is finished" [John 19:30]. And this message will be heard among the Christians until the last day, that sins are forgiven. Brothers and sisters, believe these words at all times. I greet all the brothers and sisters and ask that you pray for me.

These words are said by your brother in faith,  
Johan Viktor Pollari.

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<sup>68</sup> Translated from *Kristillinen Kuukauslehti*, No. 10 (*lisälehti*), 1889, pp. 166, 167.

## The Reasons for the Divisions of the Apostolic Lutherans in America<sup>69</sup>

The reasons for the divisions of the Apostolic Lutherans are many, and in this little booklet I would like to present them for all conscientious persons to study and judge alongside the Holy Bible. This dispute began already in the first days in Calumet when believers came from Norway and Finland and chose Korteniemi as pastor. Then came Johan Takkinen, and I don't know if there was a dispute over doctrine yet, but it was perhaps a matter of envy and lust for glory, and he started an attack against Korteniemi. A heated dispute resulted, and Takkinen and his friends began to write all kinds of evil about Korteniemi to Lapland, perhaps seasoned with lies. Thus, Takkinen gained power, and Korteniemi was dethroned with the approval of the elders in Lapland. But now when other believers started to come from Finland, perhaps Takkinen feared that they might, in turn, start to overthrow his rule. Thus, a careful examination of newcomers began so that no secret intrigues would undermine and damage his throne. This was an examination of how repentance had been done, whether sins had been carefully confessed, and how well one loved the elders of Lapland. And this enumeration of sins was generally demanded in those days.

With this doctrine, in particular, Takkinen began pressuring people, but now some came from Pudasjärvi, Finland, who had come to know the pure gospel, which Paavali Ervasti preached, and many others also. These did not submit to Takkinen's strict doctrine of confession and control, and so he began to condemn them as heretics. Once again he started to write all kinds of evil to the elders, and again the elders approved his activity.

Now the others also started to write to other places in Lapland and Finland and received support for their side. So two groups emerged, and one of them left Takkinen's church and rented some hall, where they preached and took communion. These were then called Hallites, and their leaders were Peter Strolberg, Johan Mullo, Peter Berg, and others, who were accused of false doctrine, heresy, and even of having the holy flesh doctrine, and among them the holy flesh doctrine indeed emerged, even if not all the Hallites were in this doctrine, but those who were in it led many of them into rebaptism. However, Mullo, who was accused of starting this holy flesh doctrine, said that he had never said that his flesh was pure, but he did tell how it got started: When Takkinen had preached that people should believe as they are, crooked, false, and hypocritical, Mullo said lightheartedly that they believe as pure. Then he and Peter Berg made a trip to Finland, and when they returned, this holy flesh doctrine had appeared in the hall group. Mullo said immediately that the devil had given birth to a bastard.

Although the hall group was separate, there was an internal dispute within Takkinen's church, for his strict doctrine of control caused great dissatisfaction, but Takkinen started to pressure people into obedience through the power of the elders. Then a doctrinal dispute began, for Takkinen demanded obedience to the firstborn, and, in his opinion, these firstborn were the elders of Swedish Lapland. This was the whip that he swung and with which he ruled. In his opinion, those who were obedient to him and these firstborn were in the congregation of the firstborn, but those who dared show opposition were condemned to leave this congregation, and it was said that such have no part in heaven, that they are heretics. The others claimed, however, that Christ is the firstborn, not the elders of Lapland, and that those who believe in Christ have come to the congregation of the firstborn, as the Apostle shows in the twelfth chapter of Hebrews. So there were many differing

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<sup>69</sup> Translated from J. Pollari, *Apostolis-Lutherilaisten hajaantumisen syyt Amerikassa* (Duluth: 1920).

views. The vine, according to Takkinen, was in Lapland, and he and those like him were the branches.

There was no preacher who dared rise against Takkinen, but when Eliel Juola came from the old country, Juola rose against him, and Takkinen's power was overthrown, and Johan Roanpää was elected pastor. Takkinen was angered by this, and he and his friends raised a lawsuit to recover the church, and this resulted in a church dispute, which lasted many years, but the minority lost. Takkinen, angered by this, left the whole church, taking the communion dishes with him, and so they built that so-called little church, which is still supported by a few old people.

After this, Pastor [Arthur] Heideman became the pastor of the larger church in Calumet, where he has been for almost thirty years, during which time the Lord has greatly added those who will be saved to the congregation, and things have even been rather peaceful. Then from Pudasjärvi came Paavali Ervasti, who preached the pure gospel, as did Pastor Heideman, and at that time the aforementioned Hallites returned to the old church, but now an internal rebellion began because some of the members of that church started to demand that the Hallites publicly ask for forgiveness for their false doctrine, and the Hallites, in turn, demanded that the others ask for forgiveness for condemning them. Thus, there were legalistic hearts on both sides. So Mullo and his friends started to work against the preachers of that time, who were called to preach in Calumet, such as [Antti] Rajaniemi, [Matti] Tauriainen, the Wuollet brothers, Pekka Raattamaa and [Johan] Mursu. Then came Johan Perä, whom Mullo so influenced that old Perä started to fiercely attack the above preachers. He, supposedly, found as a good reason that the fear of the Lord had been rejected, and he preached the fear of the Lord. The others rose against this, fearing that a legalist doctrine would emerge from this word.<sup>70</sup> Thus Perä caused great divisions, and Mullo and his friends started demanding the Ten Commandments, saying that they must be preached in Christianity, but the others opposed this, saying that the law is not for the righteous, etc.

Now the idea emerged that a general conference should be held to examine the disputed articles of doctrine, and it was decided to hold it in Calumet. All the parties, except Matoniemi's, participated.<sup>71</sup> Three different groups were present, for although Mullo's group was connected with the church, it was spiritually separate. The little-church group fully participated in the reconciliation meeting. Its pastor at that time was Kalle Ojala, and it was indeed a large group. [John] Lumijärvi, [Herman] Nikulas, Alex Paulson and many other preachers belonged to it, and they still had Takkinen's old doctrine of strict confession and legalistic doctrine of control, but they effected a reconciliation in Calumet, as the minutes of the meeting show, and so it was decided to hold another meeting in New York Mills, and when they arrived there, a terrible dispute occurred. I was there too, and so I saw that there wasn't any internal reconciliation after all, and the reason was that Kalle Ojala and his group had not abandoned the old leaven in doctrine, nor had Mullo and his group.

So now Mullo and Kalle Ojala and their groups had joined together and rose against the gospel as before. For this reason those who love the gospel stopped supporting these meetings, which are now held annually by the supporters of Ojala and Mullo and even the Reawakenists and are

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<sup>70</sup> The minutes of the 1908 Calumet "reconciliation meeting" contain the following passage cited from a letter from Pollari that was read at the meeting: "The fear of the Lord is necessary for Christians on their journey even until death, as Peter says in the seventeenth verse of the first chapter of his first epistle, 'that you would pass the time of your sojourning here in fear,' and as the Holy Bible teaches us in great measure." See *Pöytäkirja tehty Amerikan Kristittyjen kokouksessa Calumetissa, Michigan, Kesäkuun 15-16-17-18-19 p. v. 1908*, p. 8.

<sup>71</sup> Pollari fails to mention that after Takkinen's death his supporters had divided into two groups: the Old Firstborn of Olli Matoniemi and the Little Firstborn of Kalle Ojala.

deceitfully declared to be general Christian conventions, although the participants are only a small group of corrupted hearts who have made shipwreck in regard to the faith and have lost their good conscience, if they ever had one. However, by this I do not condemn all who attend the conventions, for some go out of curiosity and others from lack of understanding, and so they are beguiled from simple faith and start to fear grace and end up groaning under the bondage of the law, as Paul tells the Galatians, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” [Galatians 5:1]. Thus, the Apostle teaches to believe at all times that the law has been fulfilled and that the punishment for sin has been suffered, and, as the Prophet says, we have received double from the hand of the Lord [Isaiah 40:2]. Isn’t this enough? However, now among us “evangelicals,” as we are called, a new dispute has emerged, which became evident at the convention in New York Mills, for three preachers took a position from which they accuse both sides. They do not approve the evangelical side, nor do they support the others in their convention affairs. But from this middle party, a totally legalist doctrine has developed, as did from the others, and they go about with the same accusations, trying to overthrow the gospel in the manner of the previous legalists, for they sharply condemn this gospel as carnal and say that it gives birth to carnal Christians. But it is no wonder, because this is how it has always been, for Paul says that some think of us as if we walked according to the flesh, but we do not war after the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in the Lord, etc. [II Corinthians 10:2-4]. And now the evangelical preacher is accused of rejecting instruction and confession of sin and giving people permission to live as they list, but this accusation is not true, for we respect all God’s words and want to follow them, but for the sake of God’s glory and the salvation of our souls, we will not allow God’s Word to be taught falsely, as in this case of confession of sin, which is again today a major subject of dispute, used to oppress weak beginners and others.

We demand, in fact, that all people become so sinful that they confess, as did the prodigal son, that they have sinned against heaven and before God. But the father didn’t ask, “What sins have you committed?” Neither did he command the servants to examine him, but he ordered that the best robe be brought and ordered that he be clothed [Luke 15:11-32]. We do not preach the forgiveness of sins to the holy or sinless, neither generally nor individually, but to sinners we are obligated to declare the forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus, and whoever believes is justified by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God has set forth to be a mercy seat through faith in his blood [Romans 3:24-25].

This spirit of the law and self-righteousness has appeared ever since paradise. It is the spirit of unbelief or lack of faith, which appeared in Cain when he offered from the works of his hands because he didn’t believe the promise that the woman’s seed would crush the head of the serpent. The same is true of Ishmael, who became a mocker, and throughout the prophetic era this false worship was the greatest sin, which the prophets so strongly reprove. It is also true of Pharisaism at the time of Christ and in the apostolic era. That doctrine of the law is what corrupted the purity of the gospel. And in Luther’s time it was popery. Whenever God has started to awaken people -- and the revival has been great and powerful at this time -- ever alongside has been this spirit of self-righteousness, which has always caused dissension, for it started to appear right at the time of Laestadius, who says that when self-righteousness himself becomes a Christian, he puts the others into a kettle and stands on the lid himself, for not even all the awakened believe the gospel, and so they remain under the law.<sup>72</sup> This is precisely what the argument is about today, and this is why we

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<sup>72</sup> See Sermon on the Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity in L. L. Laestadius, *Uusi Postilla*, p. 424.

must now preach so much about how to become righteous and remain righteous, for the devil wants to corrupt the doctrine of justification with the doctrine of doing good and avoiding evil and even by enumeration of all sins, from which one creates a law for the conscience, as did the Pope, who said that God does not forgive any sin unless each one is named separately.

This doctrine becomes such a snare that one does not know when all sins are forgiven, which Luther sharply opposed as a false doctrine, and we too oppose this kind of false confession doctrine, which corrupts the doctrine of justification or righteousness by faith. However, by this we do not deny that one with a troubled conscience may confess what is bothering him so that he might hear the words of absolution and consolation for his troubled conscience.

### **Letter Written by John Pollari to John Koskela in 1935<sup>73</sup>**

Dear Brother John Koskela,

There came an irresistible desire to write to you about some passages of scripture on which we have differing views so that we could reach agreement and no disagreement would arise between us and the listeners, for you know that for over ten years we have had differing opinions on some passages of scripture, but since we have been in agreement on the doctrine of justification, it hasn't done any greater harm. However, now it appears that differing views are already beginning to emerge among the listeners also. So my conscience compels me to discuss even these matters.

The first differing understanding is the effect of eating from that forbidden tree. You understand that by eating from it they acquired the knowledge of good and evil. I understand that they knew good and evil even though they had not yet eaten, as the Lord says, "Wasn't Adam like one of us, knowing good and evil?" [Genesis 3:22, Finnish Bible]. And I understand that this good will is the law of the conscience, which remained from the grace of creation, and to the extent that the law can awaken a sleeping conscience, to the same extent the demand of justice arises in the conscience. Therefore, I do not consider this demand as the devil of self-righteousness but as the effect of God's righteousness and holiness. Although man cannot fulfill this demand in a spiritual condition of unbelief, nor even after coming to faith, I consider this effect as divine before faith and after faith. Therefore, I do not dispute against this good will. So I struggle against evil, not against good. All devilish stirrings are active in me, such as hate, envy, slander, greed, hypocrisy, lewdness, and other vices, and then the devil of self-righteousness would make me doubt because of these stirrings. I struggle against them, but in all these things I have remained victorious because of Christ, who is my righteousness before the Father. Although I know I am guilty, I believe that atonement was made for transgressions on Good Friday on the cross of Golgotha. Thus, because of the atonement of Jesus, I enjoy peace of conscience. So I thank God through Jesus Christ. So then with the mind I serve the law of God but with the flesh the law of sin [Romans 7:25]. In the new birth, my mind became godly minded. I have a will but I cannot fulfill it. The good that I would, I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do, but it is not I that do it but sin that is in me and dwells in me, says St. Paul [Romans 7:18-20].

Another cause of differences of opinion is, as it seems to me, that you consider it dangerous to teach Christians good works and to avoid evil, though neither do I approve of binding consciences

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<sup>73</sup> The copy of the Finnish letter in author's collection lacks a specific date.

with them when they are taught in a legalistic spirit. But since the apostles have not been afraid to teach these counsels and instructions to Christians in all outward manners, not only to Christians who came from paganism but also to enlightened Christians such as Timothy and others, why should we be afraid to speak of them?

We also have differing understandings of other passages of scripture, such as your view that Paul's conduct was wrong when he was a Jew to Jews and without law among Gentiles. If I were to start criticizing Paul's conduct, I would lose my foundation. I wouldn't know what to follow. For Paul says, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" [I Corinthians 11:1]. You may assert that you don't care about Paul, that you follow Christ. So be it. And when we follow Christ, Peter says that he left us an example, that ye should follow his steps, etc. [I Peter 2:21]. For we must view Christ not only as a Redeemer but in many respects as a pattern of conduct, as John says, "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk even as he walked" [I John 2:6]. John is, of course, referring to the love with which Christ loved us, as Paul says, "Let everyone have the mind that was in Christ" [Philippians 2:5].

And again last winter and fall in Menahga, that disturbed me when you quoted Paul's statement: "Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof" [Romans 13:14]. You understand it of spiritual fornication and I understand it of fleshly. And then in Trenary, you said that you have a terrible sin, such as fornication, and then you said that it was spiritual fornication. I do not consider myself a spiritual whore. I am a pure bride of Christ.

And then there are yet other statements that I cannot approve, such as your use of the statement that you do not care about anyone else but one man, by which you mean Christ. Where do these statements belong: "Be obedient to your teachers and follow them" [Hebrews 13:7]? Of course, Paul means true teachers. You tear people away from love of the preacher. And Jesus says, "He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me" [Luke 10:16]. The office of the Holy Spirit must not be despised. And you also said that if the bread of heaven comes through a preacher's heart, it gets spoiled, but if it comes directly from heaven, it is pure. Doesn't the Holy Spirit work in our hearts? We are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

And that expression isn't in the Bible either, which you use, that nothing is heard from heaven other than grace and peace, and Paul says that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven [Romans 1:18]. Of course, he means on the unbelievers, for the wrath of God rests on unbelievers.

In regard to the last services in Marengo and Menahga, I was more satisfied with you than previously, except for two statements that you made in Marengo: "To preach anything other than Jesus is law." By this statement you overturned all other statements in the Bible as law except Jesus. You spoke of other things too -- the sinfulness of man and the behavior of a Christian. Was that law then? And nothing offended me in Menahga other than that effect of eating from the forbidden tree, which I refuted openly in my sermon.

And as for favoring that other heresy, for which you rebuked me, I have become certain that in Holmes City you approved their accusations against us. If this is true, I will now tell my understanding, that through such derision you have built that heresy, from which you must repent or else punishment will follow.

Said as a brother by John Pollari

## Letter of John Pollari Published in *Päivälehti* in 1935<sup>74</sup>

### Response to Letter of Toivo Pajala

In view of the fact that Toivo Pajala has undertaken to explain the passages in the twentieth chapter of Revelation which speak of the first resurrection and the millennial kingdom:

*Valvoja* ceased publishing Pajala's writings because its readership could not approve of his writings or his interpretation of the aforementioned Bible passages. Leander Viinamäki rose in sharp opposition and refuted Pajala's views, and so Pajala resorted to *Päivälehti* and has written in two issues. Issue No. 24 was the latest one. I assume that *Päivälehti* will allow me to reply to Toivo Pajala's article. *Päivälehti* certainly has readers who do not approve Pajala's understanding. I, the undersigned, sharply protest his view.

The understanding that there are two resurrections of the body is contrary to the Bible. This leads one astray, as does also the concept of a millennial kingdom, which Pajala has. Apostolic Lutheranism, of which Pajala is also a member,<sup>75</sup> has never held such a view. Neither have the Evangelical Lutherans. This view is held by other sects, which have never approved Lutheran doctrine, such as Anabaptists or Baptists and Adventists or Sabbatarians, etc. They have this expectation of a millennial kingdom, but they too disagree among themselves, which is apparent in their literature, which they disseminate with great haste throughout the world, and they spread their poison with this self-righteousness so that the brightness of the gospel is darkened by the smoke of the pit, as the ninth chapter of Revelation shows.

Since I have said that Toivo Pajala's view is wrong, I must show from the Bible that this is true. First, I will say that a method of Bible interpretation that contradicts clear passages of scripture is false. If parables and revelations are explained so as to contradict clear words of scripture, then the Bible becomes like the books of the world's researchers. One says this and another that, and even they themselves aren't certain but only make suppositions. But the Bible is God's Word, and God alone is true in his Word. Read I Corinthians 15:21-27, which I will quote here. Verse 21: "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." Verse 22: "for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Verse 23: "But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." Verse 24: "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power." Verse 25: "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet."

The aforementioned passages refute the doctrine of two resurrections of the body. Note verse 23: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end. Christ was the first in the resurrection, and the others will not rise with their bodies until the last day, when Jesus comes in the clouds of heaven with great power and glory. Then all the dead will rise, and Jesus will not come any longer to reign on earth, for he will reign until the end comes. Then he will give the kingdom to the Father.

Someone might say that when Jesus died, many bodies of the saints rose and appeared in the holy city after his resurrection (Matthew 27:53). This was a witness of the victory that Jesus won by

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<sup>74</sup> Translation of a clipping in author's collection that lacks a specific date.

<sup>75</sup> Pajala, a Conventionist, was later baptized by immersion and became a Pentecostal pastor in Ontario.

his death, that the power of death was overcome, the head of the serpent was crushed. Read I Thessalonians, chapter 4, verse 13 to the end.

Then Toivo Pajala refers to those who groan under the altar and whose blood calls for vengeance. However, it is clear that their bodies did not rise, for it is said that they should rest yet for a little season, etc. (Revelation 6:11). And Toivo Pajala does violence to Revelation 20:4, saying that they rose with their bodies. It does not speak here of the resurrection of the body. The souls of those who were beheaded for the Word of God lived and reigned with him a thousand years. These passages certainly refute Pajala's two resurrections. But since Pajala appears to be faced with insurmountable passages, I will offer good advice on how to solve them: Since you said that such passages do not involve the doctrine of our soul's salvation, repent of your delusions and believe all your sins and lack of understanding forgiven in the blood of Jesus, which has been shed as blood of redemption. And there is forgiveness of sins in that blood, which flowed on the cross of Golgotha from the holy body of Jesus.

Written in friendship by John Pollari.

## **Pollari's Warning to His Children<sup>76</sup>**

I, John Pollari, on reaching 80 years of age this year, on May 29, 1945, want to leave a wish by means of this record for my sons and daughters-in-law and my sons' children: My wish is that God would bless your lives with happiness in time and eternity, that, first of all, he would grant you health and bestow on your lives virtue, sobriety, harmony and mutual love and forgiveness, but, above all, a knowledge of sin, which comes from the law, which is the Ten Commandments, and also a knowledge of grace, which is revealed in the gospel, which is a sweet message for a sinner and transgressor to hear, namely, that Jesus has fulfilled the law on our behalf with his perfect obedience. But this fulfillment of the law was not sufficient for our salvation because we were transgressors of the law, and the law curses its transgressor, and so we had merited a curse and death. Therefore, Jesus had to become cursed on the cross of Golgotha and die that death that was on us, so that the blessing of Abraham would come to us. Whosoever believes this is saved; he is happy in time and eternity. Believe you are reconciled from your sins by the suffering and death of Jesus, and then we will meet one another in heaven, as Jesus explains to Nicodemus in the third chapter of the Gospel of John, "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." In the name of Jesus, amen.

John Pollari

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<sup>76</sup> Translated from a photocopy of a handwritten document that appears to be a script or transcript of a phonograph record. It is said that Pollari's children were not in faith at the time the recording was made.

# Leonard Typpö

(1868-1922)

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Leonard Typpö was born on January 29, 1868 in Rautio, Finland. From about 1889 to 1895 he lived in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, where he also used the name Leonard Karlson. He began preaching in America, and in Finland he was also quite active, not only as a preacher but also as a writer and publisher. Typpö was a member of Parliament from 1911 to 1921. He died on June 27, 1922.

## Grace and Truth<sup>77</sup>

I have often studied the content of the words “grace and truth.” Can a person live from grace without truth? And again, can he walk in truth without grace? And can these concepts, grace and truth, be separated from each other? The Evangelist writes, “And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:16-17).

To live in grace and truth is to live in Jesus, to be grafted into him, as a branch into a vine (John 15:5). Christ cannot be divided, nor can his works be divided in such a way that I could take one good work from him and despise another. If someone thinks that he can choose grace and reject truth he will lose both, and in place of truth he will have a false presumption that he owns grace. Similarly, if someone scorns or despises grace, he may think he has truth, but he has neither of these. We ourselves have nothing. We have lost all good in the fall into sin. We have become entirely naked and incapable of doing good. But we have all received of his fulness. “And ye are complete in him (Jesus), which is the head of all principality and power” (Colossians 2:10). For whoever has the Son of God has eternal life. He has grace and truth, for both of these have come by Jesus Christ. Grace and truth go hand in hand and cannot be separated from each other without losing both. The person who lives in grace has truth, for Jesus dwells in him by faith, and thus he has grace and truth. That which we lacked we have received in him, “who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” [I Corinthians 1:30]. We lacked wisdom. The devil was able to darken our understanding in the fall. The Father made his only begotten Son wisdom for us. From the face of the Son, the light has shined through the gospel in the Holy Spirit into our dark conscience and heart. The righteousness or perfection that was created for man was lost in the fall, and so we became polluted by sin and captives of death. But the Son of God has bestowed on us his innocence and perfection, which he, in obedience to the law, made for our righteousness, his Spirit for sanctification and his blood for redemption: “In whose blood we have redemption” (Ephesians 1:7) and “cleansing from all sin” (I John 1:7).

The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth have come by Jesus Christ. The truth and perfection demanded of us by the law given by Moses was fulfilled by Jesus Christ as a man on behalf of us men. The law has not brought truth, nor has truth come by the law, but it has revealed the truth, that which God demands of man. When the law awakens and opens the conscience, then nakedness, poverty, helplessness and sin become evident, and also condemnation for sin. Now the awakened person does not find in himself the truth demanded by the law. The law does not give the truth it demands but condemns the one who has transgressed it. There is no grace in the law.

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<sup>77</sup> Translated from L. Typpö, *Armo ja Totuus. Ynnä Kristillisiä kirjeitä* (Tampere: 1904), pp. 8-15.

Therefore, the law cannot give life to one condemned to death. The law only makes room for the Lord Jesus, for the grace and truth that he bestows on a poor sinner. Without grace, a captive who is condemned to death and destruction is not helped into life and freedom. Without truth and innocent righteousness, a person polluted by sin and incapable of doing good will not become perfect before God and his law. In the Lord Jesus there are both of these, grace and truth. They have come by him. And whoever, as a penitent sinner, receives grace by faith of the heart also receives truth, for God imputes righteousness to faith (Romans 5:1).

Therefore, grace and truth follow each other, and the Son of God has brought them to us. This gift of God, given to us in Jesus Christ and received from God by a faith effected through the gospel, reveals itself in new obedience and repentance of life. As the Apostle says in Titus 2:11-12: “For the grace of God that bringeth health to all hath appeared, teaching us to reject all ungodly conduct and worldly lusts and to live virtuously, righteously, and godly in this world” [Finnish Bible]. First of all, God’s grace brings health and heals the wounds of the conscience and the sickness of the soul. It strengthens, gives power and grants joy of heart and peace of conscience, so that by this grace the child of God is in an entirely blessed state. Secondly, grace (after it has first brought health) teaches us to reject all ungodly conduct and then makes it clear that worldly lusts should also be rejected and mortified so that we would no longer live in the lusts of the flesh, willfully committing sin. After this, our life in this world is virtuous, righteous and godly, when the sinful desires that dwell in our members are to be mortified and the sin and burden that so easily beset us are to be laid aside. God’s grace does not corrupt anyone. Neither does it work against the will of God nor leave man in carnal liberty, nor darken the conscience, nor make sin permissible. The knowledge of God’s grace separates us from love of the world, and sin becomes something cheap and to be rejected and laid aside. God’s grace and truth strengthen the heart by faith, in the Holy Spirit, to stand firmly in the faith of the Lord Jesus. When many kinds of winds of doctrine are blowing, the glory of grace from the love of God and from the knowledge of Jesus strengthens the heart so that it can reject everything and sing, “Now Jesus is mine; it is all I require. Oh, unlimited mercy, unfathomed love!”<sup>78</sup>

The Lord’s Apostle Peter writes in I Peter 1:13, “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and set your full hope in the grace offered to you by the revelation of Jesus Christ” [Finnish Bible]. Here I often run into difficulty in myself, in setting full hope, full confidence and full trust in the grace of God and in holding onto it by faith alone, as unworthy, as helpless and as poor as I feel myself to be. It would be easier for our reason and self-righteousness to have something of ourselves to set as a foundation so that it would not be necessary to believe in such poverty and nakedness, entirely from grace. But, my beloved, nothing of our own is acceptable here. “For by grace are ye saved, through faith” [Ephesians 2:8]. And just as we have been saved by faith, by the same faith we remain saved. Let’s believe against our reason and our own heart that we have full salvation, that the bloody merits of Jesus are ours, which lack nothing and need no supplemental human works. “Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not” [Isaiah 35:4]. When trust is obtained by faith, in the knowledge of Jesus, the loins of the mind are girded, and this is followed by true sobriety, to war against sin and false doctrines, and so victory comes.

Jesus is our only banner, hope, salvation, and the goal of our struggle. So we can say in truth, “When the Lord is my helper I will not fear what man can do unto me” [Psalm 118:6]. We have full hope in the grace of God. And this grace is new each morning, for it is offered by the revelation of

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<sup>78</sup> See song No. 64 (Jo mahtaisin yötä ja päivääkin kiittää) in *Uskovaisten lauluja* (Marengo: 1948), and the translation, No. 292 (Now all through the day and the night) in *Songs of Believers* (Hancock: 1981).

Jesus Christ. Therefore, in the revelation of Jesus there is life, since in it there is offered grace and forgiveness of sins, which we can receive by faith of the heart, for faith is the hand by which God's gifts of grace are received and retained. A person is born of God in the faith of the gospel, and he lives by the same power until death, as the Prophet Habakkuk says, "His soul which is lifted up is not upright in him, but the just shall live by his faith" (Habakkuk 2:4). The matter is entirely clear: Since life flows from faith on the Lord Jesus, life is not effected by law and works. Whatever is of faith is not of works. We do not care to listen to the teachers of works, distorters of the gospel, who mix the gospel with law, and thus with their confused doctrine lead sensitive consciences and hearts astray from the true source of life and peace, namely, the full redemption of Jesus. We want to keep and extol this faith that God has effected in us through the gospel. God calls this faith: that we cling to his grace with a firm heart for the forgiveness of sins, sonship and the right of inheritance, which he has prepared for his children. Let's remain here, my beloved, unwavering and fully secure. Let's keep our eyes turned away from ourselves to the Mediator, the Lord Jesus. His perfection, bloody suffering and death are our own with his victorious resurrection. No work should be set alongside the Lord Jesus, for he is the only reason for our salvation. He himself is salvation. But doubt often arises in you against this salvation. Where does it come from? Answer: From having your eyes turned to your own heart. Your own poverty and deficiency have become the object of your attention, and so you search for salvation from yourself, which indeed you will not find. And if you were to find perfection in yourself, in penitence, repentance, obedience, love and life, where then would you put the perfect redemption of Jesus? Surely to adorn your own works. The redemption of Christ is not a patch for an old garment, nor is it an additive to old wine in an old bottle, but Christ is complete righteousness for a poor sinful wretch who is stripped entirely of his own works. In him there is full forgiveness of sins, life and salvation for those who have no former (self-made) righteousness in their tills but believe today as they did the first time, entirely from grace. Then the new wine fills the heart. The warm and shining sun of grace melts the heart. Now we own everything: grace and truth, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. The grace of God does not become a reward for my merits, nor does truth become an additive to my truth and sincerity.

It does not behoove us to trust in ourselves, as our self-righteous nature demands, but let us believe on the Lord Jesus, and then everything is ours. We are free children and heirs in the Father's house. We do not live in the forced labor of slaves but, moved and guided by love, as children and heirs, we do good, willingly suffer, forgive our debtors, flee the pollution of the world, and preserve faith in a pure and good conscience, and thus our life is from grace and our conduct in truth. Faith is a firm conviction that relies on an unmovable foundation, against all feelings, and is much more certain of those things that God has promised than of those that we see and feel with our senses. As certain we are that we see the sky and clouds over us, just as certain can we be of God's grace and truth toward us. As certain as we are that we see the sun and the natural light over our heads, with as much and much more certainty can we view by faith the sun of righteousness and the day of salvation. As long as we see that the order between day and night has not ceased, we can be assured of God's covenant of grace in Jesus Christ. And as long as the mountains have not receded nor the hills fallen, we can be secure in the same covenant [Isaiah 54:10]. Just as certain as we are that we have been born into the world, we can be certain that we are reconciled by his death and have thus obtained grace from grace and salvation as a gift. O eternal love, how great and fathomless you are, as revealed to us who are helpless, naked and sinful! We guilty and indebted, you Lord Jesus, sinless and pure -- you took all our sins, bad deeds and iniquities on yourself and

suffered the heavy punishment and bloody death in our place and for us so that we could live free of sin and the condemnation of the law, death and hell, by the grace of thy bloody merits, without our merit, work or worthiness. “He blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it” [Colossians 2:14-15].

He has reconciled us before the law. The law has received its demands. God is pleased with this. He has turned his pacified face toward us. His wrath has ended. The bottomless sea of grace and mercy is open. He passes by the transgressions of the remnant of his heritage and casts them all into the depths of the sea [Micah 7:18-19]. The accuser is no longer in heaven, but the innocence of our Redeemer Jesus is before the face of the Father. Always lift your eyes in faith, therefore, children of grace, to view the great atonement, the bloody offering on the cross. There the debt that the law demanded of us is paid. Now we are entirely free of debt, holy and righteous. Though sin still dwells in us and badness clings to us, this does not condemn us unless we stop believing and deny him whose blood speaks better things than that of Abel [Hebrews 12:24]. For “we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins” [I John 2:1-2]. When we are clothed with the innocence of the Son, Jesus, God the Father does not see the corruption dwelling in us. “Not imputing their trespasses unto them” [II Corinthians 5:19]. Unto whom? Answer: Unto those who believe the “word of reconciliation.” Be of good cheer and fully assured, O bride of the Lamb: Your sins are forgiven, and soon we can appear entirely pure before the throne of the Lamb to sing, as victors with victors, amen and hallelujah to God the Father and to the bloody Bridegroom Jesus. Thanks and praise and glory. Amen.

# William Lahtinen

(1876-1912)

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William Lahtinen, also known as Wilhelm Peura, was born on April 23, 1876 in Viitasaari, Finland. After living briefly in Salla and Taivalkoski in 1902-03, he moved to America in 1903. In 1905, he was living in Cokato, Minnesota, where he became pastor of the Apostolic Lutheran Church. During a trip to Finland with his wife Anna and adopted daughter, Martha Agnes, the little girl fell ill and died. On their return trip, the Lahtinens died in the Titanic disaster on April 15, 1912. It is said that Anna initially entered a lifeboat but left it to remain with her husband.

## In Memory of Martha Agnes Lahtinen<sup>79</sup>

We inform our friends in America, Finland and elsewhere that on the tenth day of March our dear daughter Martha Agnes had the good fortune to be transferred from this land of many enticements of sin, temptations and troubles at the young age of about four and a half years. When we arrived in Kemi on our trip to Finland, she fell ill with encephalitis, which broke down her earthly tabernacle in three weeks, releasing her glorified spirit to God, who had also given it. It was joyous and comforting to see how her heart was moved even to tears when we spoke to her of the blessedness and joy of the children of God in the company of the angels and elect before the throne of God.

Although her physical condition was quite weak at the end, and she had pains, she bore her share of the world's tribulation with contentment. But now she is free from all suffering. She no longer has pain or illness, nor does she find it difficult to breathe, as she lamented in her suffering here. No longer does her breast heave with heavy sighing but rises gently in praise to the Lamb. In health, she often reminded us too of our departure, singing, "Virgins in Zion, be ever vigilant, that your lamps will be burning when the bridegroom arrives."<sup>80</sup> And in that faith and hope we also travel, that when our earthly journey ends, we will meet Martha in the flock of victors.

She left a heartfelt longing not only in our own hearts but also in those of her countless friends, big and small, of whom, during her brief sojourn, she had acquired many in both America and Finland. However, we rejoice that she was allowed to leave before the devil could tempt her with the enticements of sin and to trouble her soul with many forms of distress. And our time of loneliness will not be long. Soon we too will be transferred to the land of the saved, and then "no one will lament in that great wedding hall, where the din of hymns of joy will resound in our ears forever."<sup>81</sup> We leave you, all the children of God, in the care of the word of his grace. Remember us too in your prayers.

Anna and Wm. Lahtinen  
Minneapolis, Minn., USA

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<sup>79</sup> Translated from *Siionin Lähetyslehti*, No. 4, 1912, pp. 66, 67.

<sup>80</sup> See song No. 130 (Neitseet Siionissa), verse 1, in *Uskovaisten lauluja*.

<sup>81</sup> See song No. 19 (O Ylkä Jeesus, rakkahin), verse 19, in *Uskovaisten lauluja*.

## Memories of William and Anna Lahtinen<sup>82</sup>

Little Martha died of brain fever in March 1912 while on a trip to Finland with her parents. Because of her illness and death, her parents had to change their original plans, and as God willed, to take passage on the Titanic in April, and hence received a watery grave in the Atlantic Ocean from whence God will call them on the last day. My mother related these incidents to me often, never without tears and tenderness; for it was during the time of the preaching, life and death of William Lahtinen that her heart had been opened and filled to overflowing. Even in her last years, about 55 years after these events took place, she spoke so vividly of them, and especially of the farewell services when the Lahtinens were preparing to leave for Finland. During a discussion in a Christian home where many were gathered, little Martha came to her father and asked, "Father, will the money be enough for the whole journey?" (She was only four years old and had heard her parents' concerns about the trip.) Her father took her into his arms, and with tears and deep emotion said, "Yes, dear child, there is enough for the whole journey." (Implying God's grace and providence for the spiritual journey.) And so there was, and the journey was but a short one for them all. My mother found comfort in these words at the end of her long journey, even after so many years. May God teach us all "to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom." (Psalms 90:12)

Mrs. Carl Kulla

## William Lahtinen's Farewell from the Titanic<sup>83</sup>

"Behold, I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Revelation 3:11). This promise of Jesus, "I come quickly," is a comforting message to a poor child of God who struggles amid the trials and tribulations of the journey and often feels timidity and doubt because of his sinfulness and is afraid that he will faint on the way. The devil shows our lifetime as long and our strength as small, and thus he often troubles the spirit of the righteous with heavy feelings of doubt. Despite this, we believe these words of Jesus to be true: "I come quickly." The early departure of many of the righteous again testifies to us that God's promises are true and firm.

That which comes to mind first of all is that sad Atlantic disaster in which, as far as we know, at least two of the righteous were allowed to end their pilgrimage in this land of sorrows. They were William Lahtinen and his wife Anna, who were known to countless numbers of the Lord's own even in Finland, both free-spirited and beloved children of God. Marvelous and unsearchable are the ways of the Lord. Shortly before leaving Finland, their little daughter fell ill and died, whose departure was mentioned in the April issue of our magazine. Now both of them have been allowed to follow their daughter, both of them in their very prime of life. Thus the Lord transfers his own, one after another, from misfortune and temptations into the enjoyment of eternal peace, which the storms of this world no longer disturb. Our departed brother labored diligently with the gifts

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<sup>82</sup> From C. Kulla, *The Streams of Life* (Brush Prairie: 1984-85), p. 296.

<sup>83</sup> Translated from *Siionin Lähetyslehti*, No. 6, 1912, pp. 107-109.

granted him by God for the salvation of immortal souls, comforting and assuring God's own to continue to journey in faith awhile yet until we can enjoy the reward of victors. He also urged unbelievers and those who have fallen from grace to take heed of the Good Shepherd's loving call while there is still time, before the period of grace passes and hardness arrives. Even in his last moments he preached to his traveling companions the forgiveness of sins in the blood of Jesus, enjoying with his wife the sweet peace of God in their souls, as Brother P. Raattamaa says in a letter written to a certain brother in Kemi, "Survivors of the shipwreck tell that Brother Lahtinen stood on the deck of the ship, surrounded by his traveling companions, to whom he declared the death of the Son of God and the forgiveness of sins." We believe that they are now in the flock of victors, for Jesus urges and promises, "Be thou faithful until death, and I will give thee a crown of life" [Revelation 2:10]. In memory of our precious brother and his wife, we publish below his last letter, written on board the Titanic:

Atlantic Ocean  
April 10, 1912

Dear Brother,

May grace, mercy and peace grow and be multiplied by the knowledge of our Lord Jesus. I can hereby greet you, Brother, with heartfelt love. I often recall the time when I was celebrating with you. Those were festive moments when the eternal Lover refreshed our souls by his gospel. Oh, dear Brother, how dry my heart has become again! There is only a frail longing and recollection of those precious moments that I and we were allowed to experience. But I have the hope that the love is not yet grown cold in the Bridegroom's heart because he sent greetings by the hermit of the Isle of Patmos, saying: "I would thou wert cold or hot" [Revelation 3:15]. And the heart of the bride has always been refreshed by the warmth of the Bridegroom's love, not by her own, for, my beloved, we can go to the table of grace in faith, beholding the heart of the Lover opened for us on Golgotha. There, fountains of grace have opened for travelers in the wilderness, and this Hero has not wearied in all his agony and pain, but he shall see the joy of the travail of his soul and be satisfied [Isaiah 53:11]. There is no comparison to that love. Therefore, I too, a weak traveler, appeal to that inextinguishable love even in feelings as cold as these. And I believe that soon my heart will warm, when the face of the Bridegroom appears. No longer will there be any veils before me. Be of good cheer, dear brother, and all the children of God can be of good cheer. In all phases of feelings, think of your worth and value, that you are worthy to go to the wedding of the Lamb.

Greet all the beloved in Kemi. You remain in unforgettable memory.

Your friend, W. Lahtinen

## Letter in Memory of William and Anna Lahtinen<sup>84</sup>

Marengo, Wisconsin  
September 21, 1912

Grace, peace and love be multiplied among us through the knowledge of the living Lord Jesus, for to know him is the only joy for a poor traveler on the path of life. This love of God is indeed marvelous. When we became partakers of it through faith in Jesus it enkindled a longing for Jesus and love for all the children who love him, particularly for those who yet declare his love to us. I cannot conceal the heartfelt loss that I have felt over the sudden departure of our brother William Lahtinen and his wife Anna, who perished in the Titanic ocean tragedy. I believe that though they said their final farewell to this fleeting world in the raging waves of the Atlantic, their immortal souls were transferred to the shore of peace.

Oh, the feeling that fills my soul when I think of that moment! How it must have felt to step from such a tempest into the land of eternal peace! How sweet the love and warmth of the homeland must have felt when they were able to enjoy it from the midst of the world's storms! For them it was only a victory to move away from this foreign land so soon, for everyone who has felt the joy that is in the home of the children of God also feels he is a stranger to this world and is always longing to soon reach home. And we do believe that soon we too will be allowed to enter the eternal wedding hall. It is no wonder at all that the bride longs for her Bridegroom, for she is already dressed in a garment of righteousness and is ready and waiting for her Bridegroom, who has promised to come quickly. We know for certain that Jesus loves us because he has earned this garment for us through such suffering as to give himself to be crucified and to shed his blood to the last drop. And though he endured such great suffering for us, his love wasn't extinguished, but when he rises from the grave of death he still brings greetings of peace to his own.

We wear this garment of the Bridegroom awhile now in the expectation that soon we too will be transferred to the place where all the tears of loneliness of the children of God will be dried. Now we only ponder that moment when the trumpet will sound and we will be transferred from this cold floor. There, all the saints can meet one another and can sing that eternal hymn of praise that they would often like to sing here already, but the cold air of this earth and the many assaults of the devil prevent it. But when we can finally bid an eternal farewell to the temptations of the devil, we too who here are so poor in this regard will have the strength to sing.

This departed brother of ours was often among us, reminding us of God's eternal decree of grace and guiding even the lowliest traveler on the path of life to take a close look at the eternal and perfect offering of atonement [Hebrews 10:14], saying that by this offering we have been reconciled with God and that by it we can enjoy the freedom into which the Son of God has purchased us. He assured us also that the children of God can be free, as it is indeed in accordance with the Bible that those whom the Son has purchased into freedom are free indeed [John 8:36]. Now the bonds of our brother's tongue have been loosed so that with a full voice he can freely sing the new song of which he often spoke here, complaining of cold air and many enemies. But now the devil can no longer oppress or besiege him as he did here. For here he too had to suffer the

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<sup>84</sup> Translated from *Siionin Lähetyslehti*, No. 7, 1913, pp. 179-182.

temptation of the devil, who tried to destroy the freedom and peace that he enjoyed by faith in Jesus. However, God strengthened him by his Spirit so that he could move victoriously into God's paradise. We remain yet in faith, secure in the wounds of Jesus, awaiting the arrival of the Bridegroom, for in Jesus is my trust, since I see and believe that Jesus greeted his own with peace even when they struggled with death in the dark of night. Other friends couldn't reach there to comfort them, but the resurrected Friend can help even in distress and take us to heaven.

Since I am still young, this writing might have shortcomings, but read it with much forgiveness, for the great heartfelt longing that came to me and countless brothers and sisters in faith in Finland and America compelled me to write.

The righteous then His praises keep repeating,  
The harvest of the Spirit gladly reaping,  
While with His love the Bridegroom maketh drunk,  
And leadeth us where living rivers run.

There'll be no tears of loneliness to grieve us,  
When hosts of holy angels come to greet us.  
In heaven's choirs then we'll harmonize,  
For joy because the bride has home arrived.<sup>85</sup>

Hulda R. Mattson

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<sup>85</sup> See song No. 132 (Oi veljet, siskot, iloitkaa jo tästä), verses 10, 11, in *Uskovaisten lauluja*, and the translation, No. 153 (O brothers, sisters) in *Songs of Believers*.

# Pekka Raattamaa

(1849-1921)

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Pekka Raattamaa, a son of Juhani Raattamaa, also used the given names Petter, Petteri and Pietari. He was born in 1849 in Saivomuotka, Sweden, and in 1883 he moved to New York Mills, Minnesota. He became a preacher already in Sweden, and in America he was invited to preach wherever Apostolic Lutheran congregations had been established. He died in 1921 in Nashwauk, Minnesota.<sup>86</sup>

## A 1900 Letter of Pekka Raattamaa<sup>87</sup>

New York Mills  
June 14, 1900

Dear Elder, Erkki Antti Antin Poika,

I greet you with God's peace through our Lord Jesus, and I thank you for the dear greetings that I have received in the letters to Matti Pekkala. My poor spirit has been greatly refreshed by their contents, for the voice of the Good Shepherd Jesus is in them, and the words have fallen as the dew of heaven on my poor and thirsting soul, for I do not live in the smoke of Sinai because I, a wretch, am so greatly sinful from head to heels that I cannot stand a single moment under Sinai's flame. Therefore, I need my own Jesus, who stood on my behalf before God's justice, pure and innocent, and drank the bitter cup for my sake and gave as a gift a garment that Sinai's flame cannot ignite. Under the protection of this mediator, Jesus, the penitent thief went to paradise. Oh, that I were always vigilant, and this great night watchman would always stir me to know that beloved heart that was rent by compassion. Here is an image that renders all temporal things bleak. Here is a teacher who chastises the old man, and in the light of this sun my old man, with his good and bad, has to fall to the dust of the earth, so that a groan rises from the chest with the traveler of old: "My proud, gruff disposition was reconciled by thy humility, etc."<sup>88</sup> And nothing but that meek and quiet Lamb of God is left as a reason for salvation.

That group that separated in America due to Johan Takkinen's false doctrine and poor conduct has, as a savior, confession of sin and rectification of wrongs, etc. Those Reawakenists in Finland appear to be the same type. God have mercy on them, who reject Jesus, the living spring of water, and intend to be saved by such puny methods, prepared by man, which are not quite sufficient for my use at home in family life, where I need them all. Thus, nothing of them remains for the journey to eternity. Therefore, I claim the reconciliation of Jesus by faith, and I want to stand on the covenant that the entire Holy Trinity has confirmed, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, to whom be glory, and I will praise him eternally for confirming my weak and deficient promises.

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<sup>86</sup> Raattamaa was born on October 9, 1849 and died on April 3, 1921. The death date of April 5, 1921 on the gravestone in New York Mills contradicts the death records of the Itasca County Courthouse and is evidently an error. Accurate data is given in P. Raittila, *Lestadiolaisuuden matrikkeli ja bibliografia* (Helsinki: 1967), p. 163.

<sup>87</sup> The original Finnish letter is preserved in the collection of Pastor Oskar Haapaniemi of Övertorneå. Erkki Antti's full name, as usually rendered, is Erkki Antti Antinpoika Juhonpieti.

<sup>88</sup> Finnish lyrics: Minun ylpiän, ynsiän sisun' sovitti sun nöyryytes. See No. 148 (Jesu elon' autuuteni) in the old (1701) hymnal or No. 31 in *Uskovaisten virsiä*.

Now I recall the days of my youth, how unfortunately things went. I received deep wounds. Oh, the foolishness! Again I recall, dear Elder, how tenderly you cared for me in my spiritual youth. Therefore, I still ask forgiveness from you, dear Elder, for my foolishness and all the sins that grieved the children of God. I promise to believe that forgiveness is granted in heaven. I wish you, dear Elder, many happy moments as you tread the last steps here in this foreign land. Our Lord Jesus has sent greetings from the Isle of Patmos by John: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, etc." [Revelation 14:13].

My father went to paradise, to the joy of his Lord. The weary traveler indeed finds the rest precious, now that the great mystery of God has opened before him. Accept, dear Elder, the warm greetings of my heart, and may the God of peace and consolation strengthen you in this current storm also, to stand firm on the precious cornerstone of Zion. This house of salvation will not fall, whether it blows from the east or the west. Your work is not in vain in the Lord. Large is the flock everywhere that follows the Lamb of God along the bloody pathway and has not departed to seek the dry scraps of Sinai. The large flock of God's children greets you. Convey my greetings to all the beloved of God. Thanks be to God and the Lamb eternally. This was written by a poor traveler on the path of life to his old and dear teacher, who from a small lad has been at his feet, which are still like precious pearls in my heart.

Petteri Raattamaa

[P.S.] I send greetings with my wife and whole family. Greetings from Johan Mursu. This year's crop prospects are poor. In other respects we are healthy as usual. Thanks be to God. All the preachers here are in agreement except for those who emerged as preachers at the time of the litigation over the church. Address: Petteri Raattamaa, New York Mills, P.O. Otter Tail Co., Minnesota, U.S. of America. This is my first letter to you. I have written innumerable letters in my thoughts, and even this one is so poor. It didn't turn out any better; please be forgiving.

## **A 1911 Letter of Pekka Raattamaa<sup>89</sup>**

New York Mills  
January 14, 1911

My dear brother in faith and family,

I wish you God's peace and every blessing from our Lord Jesus Christ until the day of sorrow ends and the heart crushed by sorrow is filled with joy and gladness in the land of peace. I am in fairly good health, as is my family. Day by day, I have by faith trusted through Jesus in the promises of God in the hope that in the evening the dear Father will receive even me into his house, though I am but a poor sinner. Faith seems so weak that I have to cry from the dust of the earth for grace, for grace and forgiveness by the bloody atonement of my dear Jesus, and thus I proceed on this earthly journey. O blessed hope that faith has engendered! O my traveling companion, the Lord will not let us come into shame.

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<sup>89</sup> Translated from *Armonsanoma*, No. 4, (*lisälehti*), 1911, p. 74. The recipient is not identified.

I greet all the beloved children of God. First of all, my brother, I and my family greet you and your family. Pray for me, my beloved friends, that I too, a wretched old man, would arrive in the land of peace. Bear for me a forgiving heart. I bid farewell in the hope that we will indeed meet at the wedding of the Lamb.

Your brother,  
Petter Raattamaa

## **A 1912 Letter of Pekka Raattamaa<sup>90</sup>**

New York Mills  
July 3, 1912

Dear Brother in faith, set for the defense of the gospel, Kalle Heliste:

I wish you God's peace through our dear Lord Jesus. Oh, how my heart was comforted when I saw in the minutes of the Oulu meeting how the dear brothers stood firmly on behalf of the Word of God and the truth of the gospel!<sup>91</sup> It seemed that if I had been there I would have embraced you. However, I too, though a slow and poor traveler, want to be faithful to him who has loved me to death. And why would I not be faithful to him since he fulfilled the just and holy law of God and atoned for my great sins by his blood. Beloved Jesus, faithful Jesus, holy and righteous Jesus! Oh, how he has comforted me in sorrows! How he is indeed dear and tender! At this very moment I lower myself into his strong arms. He carries me in his lap. Even when I am unable to pray and faith seems weak, he is an intercessor on my behalf before God the Father, as he promised to his disciples at the Last Supper. May the powerful God, eternal and almighty, strengthen you, my beloved and wonderful brothers, to stand on behalf of the truth of the gospel. For that old harlot sends her pimps throughout cities and villages in a spirit of deceit and in a garment of deceit. Now the harlot has put on the white coat of Laestadius and Johan Raattamaa. They are trying to seduce Jesus' bride into the spiritual whoredom in which they themselves live. There is no lack of whoremongers in America either. From Finland too, there came two men.<sup>92</sup> I did not see them, but their business was to get money into three purses: for the Home Mission, for the poor and for China. The offense of the cross had ceased for them. They were not persecuted with the cross of Christ, for the old harlot received them warmly because they emitted a putrid odor, and they had lamb for their food. May God have mercy even on them so that they would become aware of their wretched condition.

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<sup>90</sup> Translated from *Siionin Lähetyslehti*, No. 3, 1913, pp. 54-56.

<sup>91</sup> Heliste was the first to raise his voice against the Reawakenists at the 1911 Oulu Reconciliation Meeting. See *Pöytäkirja Lestadiolaisten ryhmien sovintokokouksesta Oulussa Maalisk. 22-23 päivinä 1911*, pp. 19, 20.

<sup>92</sup> Reawakenist envoys Mikko Saarenpää and Juho Pyörre visited America in 1910-11 and 1912-13.

There would indeed be much to say, Brothers, but there is such great inadequacy. Read this letter with much forgiveness. I want to travel with you to the end, and I only want to be able to close my eyes in the name of my and our Lord Jesus. I greet all the dear children of God, especially those who were at the Oulu reconciliation meeting. I hope that I can greet you at the wedding of the Lamb of God.

Your least esteemed brother,  
Petteri Raattamaa

### **A 1918 Letter of Pekka Raattamaa<sup>93</sup>**

New York Mills, Minn.  
April 14, 1918

I wish you God's peace through our beloved Lord Jesus Christ and many joyous moments in traveling through the bleak wilderness to the homeland. You are correctly believing who claim salvation from grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, gathering blood drops of Jesus by faith for the forgiveness of sins. This I too need each day because nothing extra has accumulated in the till. Since sin ever adheres and slows me down, my trust is to look always at the scarlet Hero who has triumphed on Golgotha, where sins are submerged in the sea of grace in Jesus' blood and the whole damage of the fall has been rectified and paradise has been opened. We are led to do this by the power of Jesus' resurrection. I read this certificate of grace in these my evening moments in the hope that the dear Father will receive even me into his house, me the very greatest of sinners.

Pray for me, my beloved friends. I am subject to sufferings, being ignorant and arrogant, and for this reason the Father chastises me. My wife is in the hospital. I write in my sorrows to my friends in the hope that grief will change to joy once we arrive in the land of peace.

Some say that full gospel has been preached only 16 years in this time of visitation. These are human delusions. But it is good if even now someone has grasped grace for himself. Perhaps there is still reason for even the best of us to descend deeper into the broadness of grace. At least there is for me, a paltry one.

I say, however, that the full gospel has been preached 70 years according to the Scriptures and has been believed, and God has answered from heaven with the baptism of fire, which has caused voices of joy and gladness to begin to be heard from the flock cleansed by the blood of Jesus. When in the preaching of the forgiveness of sins, as commanded by Jesus, the Holy Spirit testified the forgiveness of sins, that was full gospel. And God impressed living faith into the heart, and the Holy Spirit testified so powerfully that the current of purification pervaded one's whole being. Thus one started running from house to house to testify of this work of God, which angered the world and caused it to start speaking all manner of evil, telling lies, because of the name of Jesus. Good fruits became evident to all. A holy life came into view. All wrongs were corrected. People confessed sins and ceased from them. These are the fruits of living faith.

This gospel has been preached by men and women, young and old, even beggars and illiterate persons. Thus God has conveyed his work in low places in order to bring the wise to shame. Even in this time of visitation, people by the thousands have gone to paradise with joy. The evil

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<sup>93</sup> Translated from *Siionin Lähetyslehti*, No. 9, 1919, pp. 193-195. The recipients are not identified.

adversary has been envious of this and has raised dreadful storms. In all ages, when a holy fire has been ignited, the devil has tried to extinguish it.

I greet all the beloved children of God. Remember this wretched old man with much forgiveness. My hope is fixed on the coming of that happy day when I can go to dwell in heaven.<sup>94</sup>

Your brother in faith,  
Petter Raattamaa

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<sup>94</sup> Raattamaa is quoting the song “Kosk’ tulee onnellinen.” See song No. 107, verse 1, in *Uskovaisten lauluja*, and the translation, No. 204 (When comes that blessed morning) in *Songs of Believers*.

# William Alajoki

(1865-1932)

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John William Alajoki, known more commonly as William Alajoki, was born in Kalajoki, Finland, on April 18, 1865. In 1887 he moved to America, where he settled first in Brainerd, Minnesota, but in 1891 he moved to Menahga, Minnesota, where he served as pastor of the congregations in Menahga and the surrounding region. He also preached in other localities in America and Canada until his death on October 4, 1932.

## A 1913 Letter of William Alajoki<sup>95</sup>

Menahga, Minn.  
Sept. 15, 1913

J. Kanninen, a brother in faith and partaker of grace, who remains in heartfelt memory:

My memory began soaring on the wings of my feelings over the ocean, viewing the flock of the Lord, now scattered here and there, who, sharing the same grace, await the adoption, the redemption of our body [Romans 8:23]. When all the children are gathered home to rejoice with the Parent all lonesomeness and yearning will end. Here in these earthly conditions we must travel through many kinds of weather, but it is a comfort that there is calm and pleasant weather in the homeland, whence the south wind has occasionally blown. It has felt delightful in our hearts. Words fail me, and my tongue is unable to tell of the delightful weather of the homeland and of its rich abundance of peace and joy. For good reason the heart is filled with gratitude to the dear Parent for his great grace, which he has revealed to us by his Holy Spirit, namely his marvelous light, and he has kept us in that light. The child does not know how to travel if the Parent does not convey him. When he views his journey, he notices how innumerable many times he has made efforts to go astray, but the dear Parent has taken care and has not allowed us to follow the path of our own hearts, for all of which let him be praised.

I have often recalled those moments when we were here together.<sup>96</sup> That refreshed my spirit the most that the brothers did not travel here with formal Christianity gathered from Finland, learned and molded into shape, but with the Christianity that is always new and fresh, not sour and putrid, as is the case with the stuff that is gathered into a bin for distribution as needed. For even if it were correct, it tends to have a stale taste and odor, nor is it wholesome nutrition, for even if some do not have poor metabolism such food makes them ill too, as events have borne out.<sup>97</sup> Human nature finds it so terribly repulsive to travel about preaching so poorly that you have nothing of your own. It is always scheming and is never satisfied with anything. But I ask and pray to the dear Father that he would convey me and the other preachers of his Word so poorly that the child would give honor from his heart only to him for everything. He can impoverish the rich and help and strengthen the poor and oppressed. He alone cares for and rules all things.

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<sup>95</sup> Translated from *Siionin Lähetyslehti*, No. 11, 1913, pp. 302-305.

<sup>96</sup> Juho Kanninen and Herman Ahola visited America in 1912-13.

<sup>97</sup> That true words can be used falsely is shown by God's statement to Job's friends, who had assailed him with words that are true in other contexts: "Ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath" (Job 42:7). Thus Luther is able to say, "Whoever offends in one matter is false in all, for all scripture is used to serve lies, to change them into truth. Wherefore, if you lie, you lie even when you tell the truth." See *Die Promotionsdisputation von Joachim Mörlin, 10 September 1540*, in the Weimar edition of Luther's works, vol. 39, II, p. 127.

I received your letter, Brother, a long time ago already, for which I give heartfelt thanks. I wanted to reply previously, but my life is so hectic. There is more activity than ability to carry it out, especially in the summer, as is now the case, when soul and body tend to become exhausted. But it is a comfort that the workday is short and the rest long. I saw in *Siionin Lähetyslehti* that you, Brother, will travel next winter in many localities of Christianity. May God, the dear Father, grant you power, Brother, in the strength of his glory. May he comfort you with his peace and help and protect you in all the intrigues and temptations of the adversary, which are many and innumerable, by which he oppresses the poor traveler on this wilderness journey. But we also have a powerful Helper, my beloved, when we trust in him, requesting help, strength and wisdom from him to detect the treacherous intrigues of the devil. We, my beloved, have no power of our own on which to depend. Many mishaps have occurred thereby, all sorts of which we have witnessed with grief on this journey -- many great lapses to the right and left, all because glory has not been given to God alone in all things. I recall the former times, how many idols have fallen. There is so much idolatry in us. We read the history of the nation of Israel, wondering how they always went to serve idols, but the same fault exists even in our time. Preachers have been made into idols, and when they have gone astray many have followed them, nor are there yet many Pauls, who would have the boldness to say, "Neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase" [I Cor. 3:7]. I tell you, therefore, my dear Brother, that my heartfelt wish is: Give glory to God in all things. He alone is authorized to receive it and also desires it from all his children. Man is such a wretched creature that he seeks to become a participant in the works of God. One's own ego finds a way to sneak into the matter. May the Lord grant you understanding in all things.

I and my family have been healthy physically, and by grace we have claimed salvation in the hope that the journey will end successfully, which at times even seems delightful to the weary traveler when the Spirit of the Lord reveals the delightful peace of the homeland.

God has again blessed us even temporally with good growth for our fields, and the whole crop will be good. We have a great debt of thanks, but we are deficient even in this regard, as in everything else that is good.

Heartfelt greetings from my family, old and young. I leave you in the care and protection of the grace of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth [Genesis 14:19], who manages and rules all things by the power of his Word. After a brief moment we will meet on the beautiful homeland shore. I wish you a successful journey to the wedding of the Lamb. I greet you with heartfelt love.

Written to pass the time on a rainy day by your brother in faith,  
John Wm. Alajoki.

## A 1914 Letter of William Alajoki<sup>98</sup>

Menahga, Minn.  
February 1, 1914

Dear Brother in the Lord, Antti Kääntö,

May the peace of God and the power of the blood of our Lord Jesus comfort and refresh your heart on this wilderness journey, where the Adversary oppresses the weak follower of Jesus to make him exhausted. But the powerful War Hero of Israel, who has purchased us for his own by his blood, protects his children in the bosom of his grace. The sheep and lamb who is the very weakest can be of good cheer. Our Lover has said, "Neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one" [John 10:28-30]. We can securely believe these words on all days, in all phases of feelings. Always believe, dear Brother, all your sins forgiven, even as God has forgiven them. There is no cause for doubts because of our own sinfulness and poor feelings. God has forgiven our former sins and our present corruption. Our entire journey is in the grace of the forgiveness of sins, which we need to pray for and believe. Innocent blood was shed for our faults from the holy body of the Lord Jesus, and now this voice is heard from heaven, from the heart of God: "Be of good cheer; the debt is paid; the war is over; everlasting peace and freedom are available as a gift." Oh infinite love, that we poor and wretched ones, corrupted by sin and incapable of doing any good, have been raised by Jesus above all heavens to inherit all the riches of God! Great is the reward. It pays for us, dear Brother, to follow Jesus. "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come and will not tarry" [Hebrews 10:37].

I have been healthy and have been traveling on Minnesota's Iron Range. God's flock of children remains scattered here over the earth until the great celebration begins. In faith I have struggled in the hope that the journey will end successfully on the beautiful shore of the homeland, to which God in his grace is conveying even me, his weak child.

Convey greetings from me to the children of God there, and accept for yourself heartfelt greetings from myself and my family. Remain in the peace of God.

Your brother in faith,  
a companion in tribulation and in the kingdom,  
John Wm. Alajoki

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<sup>98</sup> Translated from *Siionin Lähetyslehti*, No. 12, 1914, pp. 368-369.

# Juho Kosonen

(1877-1937)

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Juho Kosonen was born on September 19, 1877 in Sääminki, in the Savo region of Finland. In 1908 he moved to Savonlinna, and by 1914 he was living in Viipuri, the main city of Finnish Karelia. At that time, according to his own words, he had been in faith over 19 years. His preaching caused many to abandon the Reawakenist heresy, which had gained a position of dominance in Karelia. He also opposed the doctrine of compulsory confessionism, which, by the time of his death in the fall of 1937, had gained a strong foothold throughout Finland and elsewhere.

## Juho Kosonen's Greeting to the Children of God<sup>99</sup>

Viipuri  
February 10, 1914

A desire came over me to greet, by means of this *Siionin Lähetyslehti*, all the children of God, of whom many are even known to me personally in Finland and also in Russia, but known in spirit are all who are believing according to the scriptures on him who justifies the ungodly. Such a faith is reckoned to the believer for righteousness. Thus I too believe even at this moment, though in great weakness. But the author of faith has promised to be strong in the weak and has fulfilled his promise even in me, for over 19 years already my face has been turned toward the home in heaven. The power by which I have journeyed is not of me but of him who has atoned even for my sins in his own body on the tree and has given his blood as the price of redemption for me and all the children of God. In addition, he has given his Holy Spirit as an eternal token of betrothal, who leads us into all truth and protects us from all dangers and mishaps. We can, therefore, be quite confident that as long as we believe our sins forgiven every day and moment in the name and blood of Jesus we will reach our destination and receive the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls, that salvation which the prophets have already inquired into in spirit and which awaits us too when we finish our temporal journey in faith. Let us be of good cheer, all the Lord's Zion, and let us believe all our sins forgiven in the name and blood of Jesus. Remember me too in your prayers with much forgiveness.

Written by your least esteemed brother,  
J. Kosonen.

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<sup>99</sup> Translated from *Siionin Lähetyslehti*, No. 7, 1914, pp. 212-213.

## Juho Kosonen's Confession of Faith<sup>100</sup>

“We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle” (Hebrews 13:10).

This verse of scripture tells of two kinds of servants of God, who served God in accordance with the instruction of his Word.

The tabernacle servants received precise instructions from God through Moses concerning the tabernacle and the sacrificial worship performed in it, which this Epistle to the Hebrews explains. Adherence to these holy statutes was impressed and implanted in the minds and hearts of the people through preaching, and everlasting life was promised to those who conscientiously carried out these statutes. In this way, people were reared into self-merited righteousness on the basis of the Word of God. Viewed outwardly, it seemed to be a perfectly good religion. When a violation of the statutes occurred, it was patched up with a sin offering. After this was done, there was a heave offering and an offering of thanksgiving, and then a good conscience was restored.

In the Apostle's explanation, however, this is all condensed into a shadow of things to come or an empty form, which was not able to satisfy the conscience by making the person who performed the ceremony perfect. Now the Apostle says that such servants of God do not have the right to eat of this altar. Well, why not? Because the seed of blessing that had been promised to Abraham was bypassed, and religion was established in man's work. Therefore, right down to its foundation, it was a false faith, which could not save a single person.

It is true that God has given his holy instructions even in the New Testament, as, for example, confession of faith, as the Apostle says in Romans 10:10, “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” If we start confessing now to earn salvation, thinking we can't be saved otherwise, righteousness is then founded on works, and faith is bypassed. It's another matter, however, if confession occurs as it did in the case of the two blind men whom Jesus healed and even commanded not to tell anyone anything about it. When Jesus left, they began to declare his miraculous work in all that country (Matthew 9:31). By no means did they confess in order to receive sight, for they had already received it before they confessed. The attitude here is not one of earning, when the whole confession is done to glorify God, but, conversely, a person who thinks he earns something by confessing disgraces God and injures his soul. So thin are the veils with which the enemy of the soul tries to obscure the doctrine of faith!

There are many other instructions given by God in the New Testament, as, for example, “He that forsaketh his evil works shall have mercy.”<sup>101</sup> Here too, if one starts carrying out this commandment with the idea of earning salvation, it will become a self-made redeemer and a firm foundation for self-righteousness. This is merely a form of true Christianity, to which we are urged and drawn by the self-righteousness inherent in our nature.

It is difficult to distinguish between the confession flowing from faith and the confession done in an earning attitude, though they are led by different spirits. The one is the spirit of bondage, and the other is the Spirit of free children, and God placed enmity between these spirits already in paradise. The Lord's field workers should indeed have their eyes well anointed in order to see clearly, so that

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<sup>100</sup> The Finnish version of this document was obtained in 1969 from Kosonen's friends, who claimed that it had been written for publication. It was subsequently published by Hugo Hepokoski in “Ns. kosolainen laestadiolaisuus,” *Amerikan Uutiset*, 22 Aug. 1969.

<sup>101</sup> See Proverbs 28:13.

they would not comfort those toiling in a spirit of bondage into false peace and thus become murderers of souls.

Indeed, there is no lack of these holy instructions, such as vigilance, obedience, love, etc. It is said of Abraham, “By believing Abraham became obedient” [Hebrews 11:8]. It is not said that Abraham became a believer through obedience, even though our corrupted nature always teaches that if I can be really obedient and humble, maybe then even I might become a believer. It is never satisfied with the written Word of God.

Such is this corrupt nature of ours, which we have inherited from our forefathers, but now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference (Romans 3:21-22). Here is that cornerstone and rock of offense that is placed in Zion. Here a person is emptied of all his own virtues and vices. Sins and righteousnesses are placed in the same wastebasket, and justification occurs on the basis of the redemption performed by God.

Oh, how hard a lesson has been given to a human being, so unworthily to find redemption in Jesus and to become a child of God in this way, as one songwriter says:

Heaven's great method in vain  
You seek in this way to attain.  
Wisdom from reason will never do.  
Become a child is all you do.<sup>102</sup>

Juho Kosonen  
Viipuri  
February 8, 1937

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<sup>102</sup> Original lyrics: Tuo taivaan konsti suur, sitä hukkaan etsit juur siellä, jossa järjen avul, viisaaks pyritään. Jonka sitä mieli tekee lapseks tulkoon hän. See No. 77 (Ei yksinkertaiseks) in Oskari Jussila's *Siionin Laulut ja Virret*, fourth (1928) edition. The notorious twelfth (1961) edition, published as part of an unabashed drive to eliminate “Pollarite songs,” contains, as No. 85, lyrics that are radically revised.

# Antti Itänen

(1861-1938)

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Antti Vihtori Itänen was born on December 3, 1861 in Teuva, Finland. In 1892 he moved to Michigan, and in 1900 to California. There he lived first in San Francisco and later in Fort Bragg, where he worked as a tailor and served as a pastor.<sup>103</sup> In about 1917, Itänen moved to Astoria, Oregon, where he died on August 30, 1938.

## The Scourge of Idolatry<sup>104</sup>

The prophet Micah preached during the time of three kings in the kingdom of Judah, but the idol worship established by King Ahaz in his country ruined the effects of the Word of God. When the King visited Damascus, he saw there an altar of an idol that pleased him. He made a diagram of it and sent it to Jerusalem, to Uriah the priest, and commanded him to make an altar after the same pattern. The Lord's altar was set aside, and the King offered sacrifices on the altar that had been set up in accordance with the diagram he had made, and he also commanded that the people bring offerings [II Kings 16]. Thus, with one blow, he undid the many years of work of his righteous father and of the Prophet Micah. What good were the people's offerings when they were offered on an altar made after the pattern of an idol's altar, and the Lord's altar was set aside? At this time, Micah wrote: "Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage; there is no cluster to eat; my soul desired the firstripe fruit" (Micah 7:1).

There is in man a strong impulse toward idolatry. Then too, in the fruitful vineyard of Judah, idol worship, which is enticing to man's fleshly nature, succeeded in corrupting the precious work of God. At that time, even the best fruit was as a briar. Whatever the prince asked for, the judges carried out in dispensing justice (Micah 7:3-4). When the favor of man and seeking the approval of others find their way into Christianity, the one who tells the truth is despised and hated. During the time of Ahaz, the congregation of Judah was shattered. Its remnants were then gathered by Micah.

The congregation of Corinth was also in this danger. Paul had laid the foundation as a wise masterbuilder [I Corinthians 3:10], but in Corinth, preachers, mortal men, were made idols. Therefore, the congregation began to dissolve so badly that the one who had laid the foundation had to plead: "Yet as a fool receive me" (II Corinthians 11:16). He gathered the remnants of the congregation that had been scattered by mixed fellowship and reminded them how the Lord had been strong in his weakness when the Corinthians had heard the gospel the first time by him, though his words were now despised in Corinth.

Thus in Corinth, when mortal men were adopted as idols and everyone followed his favorite preacher, it led to carnality. This is also what happened in Galatia, where Paul had been so loved because of the gospel which he had brought to them that those who had believed the gospel would have even plucked out their eyes and given them to him if it had been possible [Galatians 4:15].

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<sup>103</sup> Itänen is listed alone as the "preacher" of about 50 Laestadians in Fort Bragg in V. Rautanen, *Amerikan Suomalainen Kirkko* (Hancock: 1911), p. 31. According to a 1946 obituary in *Minnesotan Uutiset*, preacher Erkki Luoma (1867-1946) had, at the time of his death (October 5), served as "pastor" of the Fort Bragg Apostolic Lutheran Congregation nearly 35 years. If this is true, the two preachers may have shared pastoral duties in Fort Bragg.

<sup>104</sup> Translation of "Epäjumalisuuden turmio," *Siionin Lähetyslehti*, No. 3, 1926, pp. 40, 41.

But when they started to run after a doctrine pleasing to man, Paul, a preacher of truth, became so hated that he had to ask: “Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth” (Galatians 4:16)? The doors in Galatia were closed to Paul when mortal men became idols and when, as a result of speeches that appealed to human nature and self-righteousness, the truth of the original gospel of God, from which power to believe was first received, was rejected. Man is inclined more toward any human doctrine and its bondage than to endure the unveiled glory that shines from the face of Christ into the conscience, for it enlightens the conscience. This is endured by none but those remnants in the vineyard, for whom the most important issue is only that Jesus would dwell by faith in the heart. Their ears do not itch for the speeches of the preachers who extol men. They take careful heed that their faith is in accordance with the Holy Bible, built on the precious cornerstone of Jesus. May the dear Father guide us therein for the sake of the merit of his Son.

A. V. Itänen  
Astoria, Oregon

### **Antti Itänen’s Letter to a Believing Niece<sup>105</sup>**

Astoria  
July 12, 1926

Dear child Hanna,

We greet you with God’s peace. Thanks for the letter you sent us. God bless you by his Son Jesus and keep and bear you in his fatherly arms in accordance with his promise in this exalted and precious struggle of faith. The God to whom you have devoted your youth and the Jesus to whom you are betrothed as a bride in your youth is faithful and will keep his promise. For his own honorable name’s sake he will bear and care for you even when you are old and gray haired. His will is to be able one day to celebrate an eternal wedding with you and the other elect. And this God of ours delights in mercy. You have to wonder already, who has a God like ours, who even forgives sins and passes by the transgressions of his children [Micah 7:18]? Just exercise yourself, dear child, in patience and longsuffering and forgiveness, and thus bear fruit hundredfold, as good soil.

May, in any case, the holy and blessed blood of the Bridegroom Jesus always water the soil of your and my dry hearts so that we would continue to bear fruit, and let those precious blood drops, which dripped so beautifully from that precious sacrifice that God gave for us be our only adornment. I hope for this from my heart. O Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, grant us thy grace and blessing.<sup>106</sup>

God’s peace,  
your old uncle and aunt

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<sup>105</sup> The recipient of this letter was Hanna Itänen (Mrs. Alex Törmä) of Berkeley, California.

<sup>106</sup> See hymn No. 1 (O Jumalan Karitsa!), verse 3, in *Uskovaisten virsiä*.

# Sam Kovala

(1879-1965)

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Preacher Sam Kovala (also known as Samuel Kovalainen) was born in 1879 in Iisalmi, Finland.<sup>107</sup> In about 1901 he moved to America, where he worked as a miner in Michigan. In 1907 he moved to Highbridge, Wisconsin, where he was a farmer and served as pastor of the Apostolic Lutheran congregation in Marengo but was invited to preach in other localities as well. In 1946 he moved to Sebeka, Minnesota. The following sermon has been translated from a tape recording. Kovala had already begun to speak when the recorder was turned on, and so a few introductory words are missing. The sermon was evidently delivered on the Iron Range of Minnesota. This is indicated not only by the context but by the fact that it was recorded by songwriter Kalle Johnson, who lived there.<sup>108</sup>

## A 1952 Sermon of Sam Kovala

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:10-22)

[In verse 20 of our text, we see that] God laid the foundation in the love that prompted him to give his own Son, for Jesus also said to that churchman, Nicodemus, in his time, who didn't know anything about these matters -- as Jesus says, "Thou art a master of Israel but knowest not these things" [John 3:10] -- so Jesus said to him thus, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son" [John 3:16]. So there is where God has *given* and *laid* the foundation on which he himself now builds, as we hear in Jesus' explanation right afterward thus: "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." Such is, therefore, the result of God's construction. And it is indeed a structure of everlasting life, a structure that lasts forever, namely our faith, of which the Bible testifies that it is the operation of God [Colossians 2:12].

Yes, this is a consolation, as is this first part of our text, which came to mind while hearing Brother speak, as to what kind of a being that person is whom God has created. Thus the last part, this verse at the end of our text, leads to the first part, where we started to read. Now we hear the Apostle speak through the Holy Spirit that we are his workmanship, *his* workmanship. This means, hear this now, that a believing person is God's workmanship. Yes, *his* workmanship. So we again

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<sup>107</sup> According to church records, Sam Kovala was born on February 15, 1879, and, according to family sources, he died on March 20, 1965 in Ashland, Wisconsin.

<sup>108</sup> Among the songs composed by Kalle Johnson of Embarrass, Minnesota, is the well-known "Katson Golgatalle päin," the original lyrics of which are included as song No. 260 in *Uskovaisten lauluja*. (The lyrics are abridged, revised and attributed to Paul Heideman in newer songbooks.)

receive this assurance from and throughout the Bible that God's own workmanship is acceptable to him, and his own work is acceptable, but the devil has tried to confuse this matter in every conceivable way, as we heard in the previously read text and sermon. Thus the devil has at all times tried to confuse this work of God. It wasn't just in former times, but he is in the same line of work yet in our time, to mess up God's work, yes, and to get it so confused that nobody would get to heaven. That is the intention of the devil, as I have come to realize.

But the passage that we heard Brother start reading at the beginning is as follows: "For we are his workmanship." Well, it often seems different to me, at least in the so-called everyday feelings [arkitunteet], for I at least have very many such feelings. I have many more everyday feelings than holiday feelings. I don't know how it may be with you, friends. Also from this corruption there rises this trickster, and there is such thick fog here too in this everyday portion, which Brother described in such a clever way: The devil does his work here in this lair. I thought it was so amusing to hear the word "lair" [tyyssija]. Yes, and rare is the day that isn't just like that in my corruptible portion too. There he hustles and bustles. Sometimes he lies quite low, but when his dander is up, he gets pretty gruff and then many symptoms and tricks appear, and then he even lights a fire, and I don't know how he gets that big pine tree or fog to rise from there at times, which so darkens the sky of grace that you don't know how things really stand. And, therefore, I have often referred to them as "everyday feelings," and I can't find a prettier name for them. So I will say, since it again came to mind, that no matter how close our spiritual friends may be, which we all, young and old, have this evening also, that when in these everyday feelings we have to travel here, no matter how good a friend were to come now and say those words that were heard here at the beginning, that you are God's workmanship, you would indeed stand agape, thinking that you certainly don't know me now; you don't know your neighbor, nor do you know your traveling companion. It is not so here. Yes, these are those everyday feelings, which so greatly disturb this matter.

Therefore, God has opened up these matters through the Scriptures, which I always respect and hold in high regard, that the Holy Spirit has explained these matters, as is heard here as follows, the explanation of the Holy Spirit, showing the foundation on which a believing person is set by God, in whom God's work has occurred and where God has been able to do the building and on what foundation, of which the Holy Spirit has dared to say that it is the work of God. Well, the explanation is heard right afterward here: "Created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Our works are not at all taken into consideration, as already in the previous verses, where the Apostle mentions this work of grace, this work of the love of God. Those verses indeed were not read, but let them be mentioned in passing now. He says thus: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast" [verses 8 and 9]. Thus, the Holy Spirit sets aside the whole human portion then, with its virtues and vices. Yes, and I also think that even at this time such fools cannot exist who are crazy enough to try to get to heaven with their evil works, with their whole ungodly life, lewd life, and with such conduct. Indeed, there cannot be any who try to get into heaven with such things, but goodness, human goodness, holiness -- this is in the forefront then. The devil entangles matters with the idea that when you are so active, so busy, and your activity is even so beautiful, that God indeed approves of it. But neither virtues nor vices, whatever comes and is of the human portion or human activity, neither of these is acceptable before God. No, this is how the matter stands.

But this new creature is described by the Apostle, or rather the Holy Spirit through the Apostle, as created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Here then is the explanation of the Holy Spirit of that atonement, the reconciliation, which the Son of God accomplished while here on earth. And the content of the Bible is generally such that two parallel themes run throughout it, and both of them are important. There is the theme of the ruin of the fall and then that of the reconciliation, or this work of God, and the Holy Spirit has given explanations of both of them. In many places it tells how deeply the fall into sin corrupted the human being, and not a single person can evade that, for the Word of God makes it clear that it corrupted man so deeply that there is now no good in him. Thus the Apostle tells the Romans, that there is no good in man: "We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin" [Romans 3:9]. The Apostle says, "As it is written, there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one" [Romans 3:10-12]. Here one explanation of the fall is given. Yes, but David also speaks in a certain psalm even more deeply. He says, "I am conceived in sin, and my mother gave me birth in sin" [Psalm 51:5]. And my understanding is indeed that self-righteousness and the builders of self-righteousness do not at all comprehend this. This they do not at all understand, that is, how deeply a person is corrupted. Well, then they understand the restoration aspect even less. This is indeed the situation, for as is evident at this time also, listening to the churches, their explanations and their devotions, I have never heard them speak of the point at which a person becomes a sinner, namely, from his conception and birth, but of that ugly life, yes, of that they speak. And they appear to understand that this is sin then, such an ugly, ungodly life, that is, drunkenness, fornication, theft and everything like this, a bad life, slander and cursing and all this. So this then, in their opinion, is sin. Now when this is the only thing they understand as sin, self-sanctification steps in then to fix this bad life. Here now is where the construction of self-righteousness begins. Well, this is where it starts. Yes, and the true basic fault is entirely unknown. The basic fault is entirely unknown in the so-called Laestadian, even in the dead Laestadian circle. I do not at all shrink or shy away from saying that it is unknown there too where the fault lies. Indeed, they just enumerate and present what must be done, what actions are to be taken. [The other preacher interjects: "The sow just keeps getting fed."] The sow just keeps getting fed. Yes, I would not have noticed that, but it is good that I have a helper, yes, a helper. But this is how it is. You are supposed to kill the piglets, but the more you kill, the more they spring up. Indeed, let's just apply that confession issue here then. When you have had poor success in life, whether in words, actions or activities, it is set as a precondition that you must confess all. Isn't this the killing of piglets? The sow just lives on. The sow keeps getting fed then. So self-sanctification is heaped on top of self-righteousness. I do not doubt this at all.

It is indeed comforting -- hear this, children, young and old -- that God's glory shines to us in the face of Jesus Christ [II Corinthians 4:6]. From nowhere have I had such precious thoughts of God as when the light of the conscience shines from the right place. Yes, and in that light I started to really see how I am constructed on my own part, entirely spoiled, in lusts and desires, understanding and mind and actions, and in everything so ruined that no good exists. Well, now God's gift is acceptable. Now this explanation of the Holy Spirit is acceptable, as we heard here, "created in Christ Jesus unto good works," because there are no works of your own. It really seems to me often that you are forced here to rely on the works of another since you yourself don't have any to bring before God. And this is received entirely as a gift. And the Holy Spirit has indeed shown, provided an explanation, as to the performer of that work, the one who accomplished even

the work in which this has occurred, a new creature made by God through his Son, naming it the work of God.

Isn't it good that the Holy Spirit has explained these matters? Yes, and thus only God's gift is repeatedly confirmed in our hearts, as we already heard in the previous verses, which I recalled and read here, that it is by faith that this work of grace has occurred, as the Apostle recalls here, "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." Oh, it is delightful to be traveling on the strength of a gift, owning a gift, a gift that will indeed last for eternity, of which he says that it is eternal life [Romans 6:23]. Regardless then of the kind of tribulation that may come before the end of this journey -- and I have been happy about those brethren who have been released from much tribulation, as my heart was moved by the fate even of Brother Kuoppala,<sup>109</sup> when word first arrived there, when we were gathered at Särkelä's house in Sebeke and heard the news. It felt as though I could not stay in one spot but had to walk around there, knowing that he was freed to enjoy that gift of life that he had claimed here by faith and by which gift God conducted that brother as he does us. Now he is freed to enjoy in sight and senses. This is how the matter stands. And this is what our spirit awaits, and it yearns for that brother. I had feelings that I am really unable to describe when I started on this long journey again from Sebeke, to which I am already returning. Oh, if only the departure moment were near, so that I would not have to make this journey after all. Yes, you feel such strange feelings at times from your own portion, when the symptoms of old age begin to trouble you, even in this position. Well, once again now there is a long journey ahead. Yes, and on such trips, you do not know what may befall you. And as it is unknown, often a groan of the spirit even rises -- if only God's determined time would be so close already that I could leave to participate in and enjoy this life, which we are already enjoying here by faith. And this matter will change quite a bit yet. So now we are traveling only by faith, but not by sight. No, but when deficiency ends, fullness begins. And there Brother Kuoppala is singing, and many other innumerable ones too.

Then the Apostle also recalls here after he had already explained this by the Holy Spirit, saying, "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." The lot of an unbelieving person is still the same this evening, relying on their own sanctification. Regardless of the understandings or views they may have, this is precisely their condition. They are without a pacified and reconciled God. Yes, and, therefore, they have a dispute with God, even as the Apostle mentions, writing also to Corinth, saying, "We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" [II Corinthians 5:20]. And that, according to the Bible, is indeed quite an opponent for people to have -- the righteous God! Yes, and it is because of unbelief that they have such an opponent. God, on his part, is reconciled. It has indeed been explained in so many places here in the Bible. The Apostle says again to those Corinthians, as I recall now, which is again a comfort even today and at all times: "that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation" [II Corinthians 5:19]. Well, God, on his part has become reconciled then with the whole of mankind, no matter how large it may be. As many millions as the human race may number even at this time, God, on his part, is

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<sup>109</sup> Preacher Walter Isaacs of Deer River, Minnesota, also used the Finnish name Valter Kuoppala but was commonly known as "Kuoppa-Valteri." These comments indicate that this sermon could not have been delivered until after February 24, 1952, the date of Isaacs' death.

reconciled with them. He has loved all with the same great love, but now when God cannot open their hearts to this love, they stand, therefore, against God, and then, with this opposition, they make God an enemy to themselves. It is their own fault, yes, their own fault, but we are no longer God's enemies, nor is God our enemy. We are his children. Yes, you are all the children of God by faith in the Lord Jesus, as the Apostle also tells the Galatians, even naming them the children of Abraham [Galatians 3:26-29].

But now the Apostle continues, saying, "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Here now is the place of reconciliation. Here now unity has come with a righteous God, through this redemption which is in Jesus Christ our Lord. And as I have often said, I say this evening also, that is the core of the Bible, namely, this reconciliation and atonement, for in accomplishing this atonement, as the Bible testifies, the innocent and holy blood of the Son of God had to flow from an innocent and holy body to the last drop, and then the debt was paid. Yes, and God now demands the honor from people that they accept this reconciliation here in this time of grace, so that he could impoverish man, impoverish people from relying on their own sanctification, their own righteousness, their own hope of heaven, as they still hope for heaven on the basis of their own works, that he could impoverish them. God indeed gets along with the poor, but with the rich he does not get along. And I have never blamed God for being able to honor a poor person. Why? Well, because to a poor person the best portion of the Bible always belongs. What then? Well, to them the gospel belongs. "To the poor the gospel is preached," Jesus says [Luke 7:22]. Yes, I always recall Brother Pollari, as I do those other traveling companions. Their words and understandings still come to mind, and Brother Pollari when he recalled the lot and journey of the poor children of God, asked at times, "Well, what then is to be done with these poor ones? Are they to be killed?" "No, they are not to be killed," he said in a loud voice, "to them the gospel is preached." Even a wretched one gets along fine with God's power. Nor would I, for one, have managed at all thus far, but with God's power I have trudged onward. It has brought even me here, to reside on Mount Zion, the city of the living God. The voice of turtledoves is even heard at times here in this city. Even summer birds sing at times in this city, which makes my immortal spirit so happy here, where I have received boldness from God to undertake this journey. Yes, if only God would still blow the south wind enough that even my poor spirit would always receive power and be comforted in tribulation, suffering and storms. This is my hope.

"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." How is it then that by Christ you enter into an eternal covenant with God? Well, he is now our peace, as the Apostle says, "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." Isn't it delightful, children of God, young and old, to still journey on the peace of God in this land of griefs and sorrows, though besieged, troubled and oppressed by the devil here for that time that has been ordained by God to journey here? Yes, we are journeying on his peace. Yes, and it has not been done by any human power, nor by any great overwhelming power, that is, overwhelming human power, but it has been done in love, that is, the peace that the Son of God established when he went by his blood to the cross, as the Bible says, and we are established in that peace by faith.

Therefore, the Apostle says here in closing, which I will mention in passing and read that verse too: "Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace." Now here too we have the explanation of the Holy Spirit, so that we see in the Word to be read and believed where the holy wrath of God is pacified and reconciled. Yes, that he by his flesh, namely our peace, that is,

Jesus, the Son of God, by his flesh, pacified the wrath of God. The wrath of God was not pacified even though he traveled such a holy and righteous walk over 30 years, such an innocent journey here before God's just law that he did not break a single commandment but fulfilled them all -- and it was shown on the Mount of Transfiguration how innocent and holy a journey he had accomplished -- but God's wrath was not yet pacified there, for it was not until when on the cross of Calvary, on Good Friday, when he was lifted up to hang from the ends of three iron nails from that rough-hewn cross and there gave up his life, that God's wrath was finally pacified. He cried out there, "Now all is finished" [John 19:30]. Yes, and I also recall the Scripture that says that we have received of his fullness and grace from grace [John 1:16]. Is there sufficient Christianity, children, for you and me, when we have the Lord Jesus with his work, our whole fullness, with which God himself is satisfied and pacified? I dare say only, and I also urge you, children, to always keep this, yes, keep what you have, that no one take your crown [Revelation 3:11].

And God is indeed still strengthening us by his power on this journey, and, therefore, he still says here in the last verses then: ["And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and came and preached peace to you who were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.]<sup>110</sup> Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Isn't this a noble relationship? I tend to often lose sight of whose relative I am and what kind of family it is. We are members of the family of God and thus of the same household.

Well, then he describes the foundation on which it is built: "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." As we mentioned already at the beginning, the Apostle here explains on whom the whole structure is then built.

Then he adds, "In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord, in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." So it seems to me this evening also and I want to say -- I nearly forgot here -- it seems so delightful to again be able to start traveling under the blessing of the Word of God. And since it came to mind, I want to remind you, friends, since the whole journey comes to mind, the long journey that I am now facing, whenever, children, young and old, the spirit of prayer moves you, remember me [Other preacher: "Yes, indeed we will remember."] so that I would leave you with confidence, old and young. We bear the same spirit of faith, yes, and so it still rises in prayer on behalf of one another to God. Yes, and then often it seems also that I have to travel alone on these long trips. Thus from the human side one often grows weary. Old age is beginning to close in on me too, to close in very, very tightly, but it doesn't matter as long as God grants health and has viewed it as good that I am to travel by his power. It still works out and will work out, but I have simply learned that the spiritual groans and prayers of the children of God are the hands by which we are still borne. [Mother's spirit still speaks. Soon the happy day will dawn when the trumpet of peace will sound and we can go forever to that land where righteousness dwells.]<sup>111</sup> It is very pleasant to have a funeral at the grave of a believer. Yes, I can easily surmise what it was like there, even though I could not be at the event, for though we were in Marengo, gathered in the church, by the Spirit we were there in Deer River at Kuoppala's funeral. The Spirit assured us that we were there together.

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<sup>110</sup> Kovala failed to read the portion of the text in brackets.

<sup>111</sup> The bracketed words had to be paraphrased somewhat due to the emotional tone in which they were spoken and the poor quality of the tape.

Yes, and this then is the unity of those whom God has been able to build on the foundation that he has laid.

# Ida Karhu

(1911-2001)

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Ida Karhu (nee Karppinen) was born on May 24, 1911 in Kalajoki, Finland. She left home in 1933 and lived in Raahe, Kemi and Petsamo. In Petsamo, she married Unto Karhu of Sodankylä in 1938. They were evacuated when Petsamo was ceded to the Soviet Union, after which they settled in Karunki. Eventually they moved to Långshyttan, Sweden. There Ida began to be severely assaulted by the devil after being excommunicated from an apostate Laestadian congregation in the fall of 1976. Strengthened by the Word of God, she supported other believers by her prayers and correspondence until she began to lose her memory about a decade later. She spent her final days in a nursing home, listening to cassettes of songs and messages received from other believers.

## A 1979 Letter of Ida Karhu<sup>112</sup>

Långshyttan  
August 14, 1979

Dear Brother and Sister in Jesus,

I greet you there over the ocean with greetings of God's grace and peace. I will try to focus my thoughts as though you were right here next to me. It really would be nice to hear, if you had a chance to go to Minnesota, whether there are any longer any believers from grace there or has the devil gotten them all into his works? Here, all who disobey the orders of the Association of Peace are put to work. First, they are placed under a ban for two weeks, and if they do not submit they are expelled from grace. I have been thinking how good it is that I was freed from there. We should thank God with uplifted hands that we have been released from the house of bondage, even if the devil in his envy often preaches in the flesh, "How will you have the strength to travel almost alone to the end?" But Jesus has promised to walk with his own every day until the end of the world.

"So what can fill us with dismay, for what should we keep striving, when on that book of debt today the bleeding cross is shining?"<sup>113</sup> I was shown and told that the record of debt is annulled, and I showed and thrust it to the devil, saying, "See now. It is marked with blood!" And the devil went backwards. I was shown a kind of scene to strengthen my faith after I had prayed to God that he, the Heavenly Father, would release me from the devil's temptation because he accused me continually that I don't feel my sins. I argued with the devil, saying, "I do not feel them because they are forgiven." The devil just kept hounding, saying that in any case they must be felt: "You are not truly penitent after all, nor do you feel grace as greatly as if you were a great sinner." And this kind of chatter lasted almost from the time they cast me out. It came to me as such a great burden that I had to go to the Father in the name of Jesus. That passage of the Bible came to my mind in which Jesus urges us, in all distress, to confidently present all our needs to the Father in his name, and I went before the Father and knelt three times that day, asking, "Dear Father, free me from this cycle. I do not know how to do it. The devil tempts me. In the name of Jesus, your Son, I come

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<sup>112</sup> The recipients of this letter were Hugo and Martha Hepokoski, who then lived in Richmond, California.

<sup>113</sup> Finnish: "Mikäs meillä on hätänä ja mikäs meillä on täällä kuin verinen risti heloittaa tuon velkakirjan päällä?" See song No. 63 (Ilolla nyt laulakaa), verse 13, in *Uskovaisten lauluja*, and the translation, No. 89 (With joy now carol everyone) in *Songs of Believers*. Also see *Rovasti Lars Levi Laestadiuksen saarnat puhtaina*, Sermon on the Twenty-Second Sunday after Trinity, p. 469, and the 1857 reading examination sermon, p. 768.

to request this of you.” And I believed that the Father would indeed help. He has heard me even previously. And it was already evening. My husband was on the evening shift at work. I prepared food for his arrival, and I was on my way to go to sleep, but I still prayed the same way, and then, as I was opening the door to the bedroom, there on the threshold it appeared as though a receipt formed before the eyes of my soul, and words were heard so tenderly from there, as when a little child is given a gift that he has desired. The words were “Love’s gift of grace. The record of debt is annulled.”<sup>114</sup> Then I thrust that receipt to the devil, saying, “Look now! This you wanted and demanded from me. See now that it is annulled, and it bears the mark of the cross stamped in Jesus’ blood.” And I felt that the devil went backwards. Such great joy came to me that I wanted to shout, but the devil intervened, saying, “Go ahead and cry out in the middle of the night!” But my soul was filled with thanks, and I promise to surely thank God in heaven.

Thus God takes care of his children. I tell you, beloved, be not timid to go to tell your needs to the Father in the name of the Son. There is an open line to heaven, and there are ears that hear there, and he forgives much. I had not heard this word “annulled” [mitätön] in this context, nor did I remember the word at all. It has been over 50 years since I was a servant at my sister’s place in Kalajoki. There, the landowners always endorsed promissory notes to one another, and when a note was paid, it came back from the bank with the word “annulled” written over it. Thus also, since our debt of sin was paid on Golgotha, the word “annulled” is written over it in Jesus’ blood.

Beloved! Sins are forgiven from the beginning to the end of the world, those committed and those not committed, and we are in this grace and live in this grace. If our salvation were dependent on confession, the preaching of forgiveness could never grow silent from my ear. By faith we are pure every moment by the merit of Jesus. Luther by no means rejects confession, but he doesn’t force it on us either. This is a sweet message to hear, the gospel of forgiveness of sins, when it is uttered in love and as a gift of grace rather than in a demanding spirit. Then it comes as from the heart of Jesus: “Be of good cheer, my child; fear not; I have redeemed thee, etc.”

Well, I will continue again. A day has passed. I wonder if you can make sense of this. I am of such a hasty nature that my hand can’t keep up with my thoughts. I have indeed listened to those cassettes even many times, and I have duplicated them for others too. That sermon moved me about the high priest of the new covenant who went into the holy place with his own blood, claimed our sins as his own and took them to the grave of death, and there they remain forever.<sup>115</sup>

The devil again preached to me here, “Why are you always so filled with doubt and sorrow? Are you at all in the right doctrine?” At the same time, the psalm of David came to me, “Thou leadest me in the right path for thy name’s sake.”<sup>116</sup> And this right path was revealed as very precious to me, and that it is essential that I be on the right path. For Jesus does not lead his own on the wrong path. This path will one day take its travelers home. Let’s just stay near the Shepherd. If we tire, the Shepherd will indeed carry us. He has promised to take us to the end for the sake of the honor of his own name. So let our eyes always remain in faith on the author and finisher of faith. We have no other refuge, nor do we need any other. Jesus is sufficient for our salvation.

If you find the strength to write, if only a little, it would be a precious thing to also get greetings here on this difficult wilderness journey from the sisters and brothers because we are visibly only few in number. There at home then there will be a great flock of those purchased from the earth,

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<sup>114</sup> Finnish: “Rakkauden armolahja. Velkakirja mitätöity.”

<sup>115</sup> See Hebrews 9:12.

<sup>116</sup> See Psalm 23:3 in the Finnish Bible.

nor will tears of parting then flow from our eyes, and there we will view the Bridegroom unhindered. Oh, the beauty!

I also mailed Warren a letter yesterday. Many greetings are sent from here by Aila (my sister's daughter, who lives in Stockholm), my husband's sister Mari and my daughter Anne. In Jyväskylä there is Alli, Aila's sister. My husband also confesses faith, but he is so quiet that one cannot speak much with him about faith or anything else for that matter.

With beloved greetings of God's peace,  
Ida Karhu and Anne

### **A 1980 Letter of Ida Karhu<sup>117</sup>**

Långshyttan  
March 28, 1980

Dear Brother with your family in the Lord,

God's greetings. I will first express many thanks for your letter, which I received today. You certainly found the right words to comfort me again, for I, wretch that I am, don't seem to remember the matter of most importance nor to bear in mind that we are nothing but Christ is all that we need for our salvation. And this is where the dispute and war with the devil comes from, for he would not let us rely only on the work done by Jesus but I too am supposed to have something, even if in me, in my flesh, nothing good is found. Neither did Paul find anything in the flesh [Romans 7:18] -- and sin is not to be an obstacle to faith. Thus Luther and Laestadius say in that joint sermon of theirs.<sup>118</sup> But from the Association of Peace is indeed heard, "Lay aside sin whenever it adheres."<sup>119</sup> This is only their own self-repentance. Thus one old person there even said, "I do not want to be a foolish virgin. I always lay aside sin." But, as it seems to me, I think that I at least would need a permanent loudspeaker at my ear announcing that word of forgiveness, for a person commits sin even within a second -- fornication and murder -- for the law judges according to the thoughts. I have had to recite to the devil all the commandments and their explanations and then ask, "Did you hear now that I have sins, devil, since you continually accuse me that I do not feel my sins?" But I tell him sternly, "Hear now where my sins are. They are submerged in the sea of grace. Jesus took them away on that great day of atonement, and I can here in the blood of Jesus believe every day and moment that they are indeed forgiven. The Father views me in his Son as entirely acceptable for heaven by faith."

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<sup>117</sup> The recipients of this letter were Warren and Margaret Hepokoski.

<sup>118</sup> In an 1856 sermon, Laestadius paraphrases, from Luther's August 1, 1521 letter to Melanchthon, the famous "pecca fortiter" passage so often quoted by Catholics trying to refute Luther's doctrine: "Luther writes to doubters and slaves of unbelief, 'Commit even more sin, but believe even more firmly. Sin we must commit as long as we live. From the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world, sin will not separate us, were we to commit fornication and murder even a thousand times a thousand in one day.'" See Sermon on the Second Day of Rogation in *Rovasti Lars Levi Laestadiuksen saarnat puhtaina*, p. 619.

<sup>119</sup> See Hebrews 12:1 in the Finnish Bible. By a convoluted method of reasoning, many apostate Laestadians base their doctrine of compulsory confession on this passage.

This has to be the same accusation of the devil that Laestadius mentions, that when he cannot get an older Christian into the sin of impenitence, he accuses him, saying, “You are not even properly awakened yet.”<sup>120</sup> He takes you into the woods and whips and accuses you. But it dawned on me now while writing that Jesus does not accuse me like that. This is nothing other than the devil of self-righteousness. But it doesn’t matter. I am not even concerned about it any longer. He apparently came up with this because he could not get me back into the congregation, that is, into the Association of Peace, for he has been trying to do this these last three years. He has not previously troubled me with this accusation of insensitivity. But soon the trumpets will sound. Then this flesh with its works will remain behind when we take on the form and nature of our Bridegroom. Let’s wait in faith a short while. All signs indicate that the Bridegroom is coming and will not at all tarry when the Father gives the order: “Now the wedding will begin. Fetch, Son, your bride, whom you have washed with your blood and for whom you have prepared a wedding garment.” Thus we will be freed to rejoice together. The wedding wine has been prepared in abundance in that fire of love on Golgotha. Is it strange that the devil is envious? I often tell him, “Go to the pit, where you belong. Why did you ever start telling lies in heaven? You are the father of lies.”

I will continue here. It is Monday. I am awaiting a letter from Martha.<sup>121</sup> It is 11:00 o’clock. The mail comes at 12:00 o’clock. But my memory has grown so bad that I have to start listing the letters and cassettes that I have already received so that I would know what has been received and when it was answered. There are now a number of people with whom I am corresponding. I now promise to also make a cassette for Yliniemis.<sup>122</sup> I have indeed already written to them, and they sent a cassette in which two preachers spoke. The name of one, to my recollection, was [Jacob] Erkkilä, and the name of the other was Matt Reed. The sermons of both men were only good gospel.

Have I already replied to the last cassette that you sent? In it you spoke and read about how at all times the kingdom of God has only been small, as also in the time of Luther, when you would think that it was big, but the group of true believers was indeed only small. It can only be said that not all were elect saints, whom God alone knows. So it was comforting to hear this. Even at this time, we are in appearance only a handful, but God the Father indeed takes good care of us. I often comfort myself with this when I do not see the Father’s care. As I behold how the Father cared for me when he took me out of that Babylon. It happened so quickly that 10 minutes earlier I would not have anticipated it.<sup>123</sup> The devil certainly raised a tumult, asking, “What now?” But even that just comforted me ultimately, that I am after all in the correct doctrine because the devil raised such a tumult over it, for if I had been on the wrong side, he would certainly have just caressed me, saying, “You did the right thing, my little girl.” And it is also the devil’s temptation when he accuses me of being unawakened. I just keep repeating to him that in Jesus I have all that I need for my salvation. My own is not acceptable for heaven. All that stems from man, from the flesh, is only a hindrance on the path of heaven, whether good or bad. “By faith we remain therein, and by faith we enter in. Our Lord does not allow anything else to be added to it.”<sup>124</sup> These words Hilda Joutsu<sup>125</sup> just keeps repeating, and that is the best lesson for me to keep repeating too. At times this matter is revealed

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<sup>120</sup> See L. L. Laestadius, *Kolmas Postilla* (Pori: 1924), Sermon on the Second Day of Rogation, p. 375.

<sup>121</sup> Martha Himanka of Kalajoki died in 1993.

<sup>122</sup> The late William and Helen Yliniemi of Osage, Minnesota.

<sup>123</sup> Ida has often told how she was abruptly excommunicated by telephone after refusing to concur in the excommunication of her niece, Aila Hietala, from the Stockholm congregation.

<sup>124</sup> Lyrics from song “Laiva se on rakennettu.” See song No. 241, verse 14, in *Uskovaisten lauluja*.

<sup>125</sup> Hilda Joutsu of Kalajoki died in 1983.

so clearly that I think: Why do I doubt so often whether I will make it to the end if Jesus has cleared the path of heaven so well that we arrive there only by faith?

The letter didn't arrive from Martha H. after all, though I believed it would arrive today because last week I phoned her and she said she would mail it. However, the mail doesn't run on Saturday or Sunday there either, but surely it will arrive on Tuesday. We write to each other every other week. A letter is better than a telephone call because you can read a letter and listen to a cassette repeatedly, for this bread of heaven never gets old. I will end this now. I will just say many thanks to Margaret for the calendar. It is nice to have it there on the wall, for it always reminds me of you. Greetings from Aila, Anne and Mari. I have phoned them and conveyed the greetings from you. Let's struggle yet a little longer. Soon we can leave our weapons behind if we do not deny our Saviour. Many a day has been so dark that as soon as you rise in the morning you feel there isn't an ember of faith. But I have always remembered with David that my soul waiteth on the Lord [Psalm 130:6], and the prayer has risen: Jesus, be not far from me. And thus I have again often received delightful comfort after the trials. God's peace and a peaceful Easter to you all. Jesus lives. He is risen from the dead, and we too will rise up one day. Remain, all of you, in the peace of God.

With love,  
Ida, Anna, Aila and Mari

## CONCLUSION

“Of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:12-14).

These words, with which Solomon concludes the book of Ecclesiastes, should cause us to consider the terrible consequences of falling into the hands of the living God, who has not only given the children of Israel his law on tablets of stone but has written it into the hearts of all men, so that we are all without excuse for having broken his commandments (Romans 1:18-20). In fact, the Bible testifies in many places that none of those to whom the old covenant was given kept it, neither prophets nor people (Daniel 9:3-19, Isaiah 64:6), and we are by no means any better.

However, God, as all should know, has given a new covenant, under which he takes no note of our sins and iniquities, imputing righteousness to sinners without regard to their works, whether good or bad (Hebrews 10:16-17, Romans 4:6). Under the old covenant every infraction was justly punished (Hebrews 2:2). Now, however, there is a new and living way to heaven (Hebrews 10:20). This highway to heaven, marked by the blood of Christ, is so simple that wayfaring men, though fools, cannot err therein (Isaiah 35:8). It is simple because the promises are now better (Hebrews 8:6). In Isaiah 55:3 they are called the sure mercies of David because, unlike the promises of the law, which were conditional (based on human worth and merit), these are unconditional, like the promises made to David (II Samuel 7:12-16), and are sealed not with the blood of animals but with the blood of God’s only begotten Son. Isaiah can, therefore, refer to this covenant as everlasting and can cry out to all indiscriminately, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price” (Isaiah 55:1).

This is a marvelous truth, which dumbfounds Jews, Muslims and the whole system of false Christianity with all its branches and sects. For Jews and Muslims know nothing of atonement, and false Christians make forgiveness dependent on penance, faith combined with love, good works, keeping commandments, etc. The whole world, inspired by the angel of light (II Corinthians 11:14), rises in horror and righteous indignation against the mere thought that God would be so unfair as to acquit the guilty. The realization that God is able to forgive sins, all sins, and cast them into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19), runs completely contrary to the fallen mind and heart of man and causes even the Prophet to wonder: “Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage?” (Micah 7:18) The servants of the angel of light, basking in the splendor of their own righteousness and holiness, will never honor God by reminding sinners that the Creator, whose ways are higher than our ways and whose thoughts are higher than our thoughts (Isaiah 55:9), is himself the Redeemer and has provided an offering (Genesis 22:8) that satisfies his justice by abolishing the law of commandments, which are nailed to the cross on which his only begotten Son is crucified (Ephesians 2:15, Colossians 2:14).

Though all men are redeemed (Romans 5:18), not all will be accepted into heaven, for, as we see so clearly in the world, many reject the gift of God by unbelief. The same Word that proclaims the forgiveness of sins and eternal life brings faith to poor, lost sinners (Romans 10:17), by which they are enabled to claim the benefits of the gospel. Faith too is the gift and work of God (Colossians 2:12), for those who are dead in trespasses and sins cannot believe of themselves. Faith earns

neither redemption nor forgiveness. These precede the faith that claims them, when man is still spiritually dead (Colossians 2:13, Ephesians 2:1). They are attributed solely to the fathomless grace and love of God, which is revealed in the work of Christ on the cross, when he died for his enemies, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

The faith that is produced by the Holy Spirit is not dead but living. Those who claim to believe but despise the fruit of the Spirit, which is goodness, righteousness and truth (Ephesians 5:9), should not entertain the vain notion that they will enter heaven. Christ says, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:12). John writes therefore: "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment" (I John 3:23). These words by no means imply that we can be justified before God by love, or even by a combination of faith and love. They are directed to those who are already justified (I John 5:13). However, let no one delude himself into thinking that he has living faith if he despises these commandments, for John testifies: "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (I John 2:4).

Living faith does not pick and choose but accepts and confesses all the truths of the Holy Scriptures. Apostle Paul defends himself before Felix, the Roman governor, saying: "But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets" (Acts 24:14). The carnal confessor, who extols the grace of God but lives for the world, cannot be saved. The confessionist, who believes that his sins are forgiven only as they are confessed, cannot be saved. The moralist, who believes that Christ has freed him from the ceremonial law but not from the moral law, cannot be saved. The free-willer, who believes that salvation is the result of his own choice, cannot be saved. The legalist, who believes that he keeps the Ten Commandments in part and applies the blood of Christ as a patchwork for his failures, cannot be saved. The traditionalist, who believes he is a Christian because he attends the right church, cannot be saved. The Bible critic, who believes in Christ but finds errors in the Bible, cannot be saved. The compromising Christian, who believes in Christ but assents to error from fear of persecution, cannot be saved. All who believe they can enter heaven not by the gates but by methods concocted by their fallen intellect will be sorely disappointed. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Revelation 22:14).

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