

The Laestadian Movement:

Disputes and Divisions 1861 - 2000

And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. (Matthew 24:12-13)

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INTRODUCTION

The children of Israel left Egypt with a “mixed multitude” among them (Exodus 12:38), and in the wilderness they were obstinate and rebellious, worshipping a golden calf even before Moses descended from Mount Sinai with the law (Exodus 32). Then, in the promised land, they did not take counsel at the mouth of the Lord but were fooled by the old clothing and moldy bread of the Gibeonites, who, by their hypocrisy, gained a right to live among them as laborers (Joshua 9). After the first generation passed away, “there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel” (Judges 2:10). As in the case of those who were justified by faith (Hebrews 11:32), time would fail to tell of the incidents of rebellion of the people of God. Even Stephen, in the speech he gave before being stoned, cut short his account with the words: “Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost. As your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One, of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers” (Acts 7:51,52).

In the house of Abraham, the son of the bondwoman Hagar persecuted the son of the freewoman Sarah (Genesis 21). In the visible church, as in the household of Abraham, there are children of both the freewoman and the bondwoman (Galatians 4). The free children are known as believers, not workers, doers or servants, because they believe that through no merit of their own they have been granted an inheritance of eternal salvation as the due privilege of their status as heirs of God, which they have received freely by the tender mercies of God through the bitter suffering and death of his only begotten Son. This gives rise to envy and frustration among the children of the bondwoman, who never cease to assess and improve the quality of their service, which results only in persecution (John 16:2). They neither understand nor appreciate the focus of the others, who look not on themselves nor on their own miserable efforts but on the blood and righteousness of Christ, by which they are cleansed and justified through faith.

This untenable situation led, in the household of Abraham, to the expulsion of the bondwoman and her child (Genesis 21:10), and in the Church to schisms. Hagar’s descendants multiplied until they outnumbered by far the children of Sarah (Genesis 21:18). Likewise, the hypocrites and legalists grow in number until the children of grace remain but a remnant among those bearing the name of Christ (Romans 9:27).

As for the doctrine of the hypocrites and legalists, it is described in the ninth chapter of Revelation. The key opens the bottomless pit, and smoke rises, as the smoke of a great furnace, darkening the sun and air and emitting locusts, which are given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. They have a king whose name is Abaddon or Apollyon, which means a destroyer, and

go about with stings in their tails, tormenting those who lack the seal of God in their foreheads. The doctrine of the hypocrites and legalists, which promises liberty and forgiveness, is actually the doctrine of hell. It is not pure and transparent but muddled and dark, obscuring the light of the gospel and preventing men from breathing life from it. It gives birth, not to children of God, who are regenerated by the Word of God, but to tormentors. Their king is not the Saviour, as they claim, but the Destroyer, under whom they go about, after receiving power, not from above but from hell, oppressing those who have sworn loyalty to them. The citizens of this kingdom are not children of God, as they boast, but children of the devil (John 8). They are not free, as are the children of God, but are a prey and spoil and are bound by their captors, who torment them in their prison cells (Isaiah 42:22).

CHAPTER 1

EARLY ISSUES

Cold Jumping and Holy Flesh

The mood that prevailed upon the death of Pastor Lars Levi Laestadius in 1861 is described in a letter of his daughter Sofia:

The departure of the faithful spiritual shepherd left a sincere longing and sorrow, not only among the Christians and the awakened but also among the impenitent. Only then did their consciences accuse them of having shut their ears to his heartfelt warnings. Now they understood that a burning candle had been extinguished from their midst and that there was no longer anyone to visit their homes in the evenings, to hold prayers and seek the impenitent in their dark recesses with tender exhortations of love. As a result of this event, many people have been awakened to seriously consider the salvation of their souls in this village of Pajala and especially in other villages. Brotherly love, devotion and harmony have increased among the Christians since there is no longer anyone to teach and feed them with milk, as a mother her child.¹

The sermons of Laestadius, by which God effected the revival in Swedish Lapland, speak of baptized pagans, who are enemies of true Christianity, of self-righteous persons, whose faith is based on their own repentance, of grace thieves, who hypocritically, without penitence or repentance, claim grace for themselves, and of fallen Christians, whose hearts the devil has stolen through love of the world and lack of vigilance -- truly a mixed multitude.² It is not surprising, therefore, that dissension soon appeared among the Christians.

By the latter half of the 1860s, disagreements existed in the arctic region of Norway. According to tradition, the trouble was caused by two preachers -- Juho Viheriä (also known as Johan Grøn) and a certain Terjeri.³ In 1868, Juhani Raattamaa of Saivomuotka, Sweden, the leading preacher after Laestadius, wrote to the brethren in Vadsø (Vesisaari), Norway:

I have heard that the awakened are divided one against another, and thus it seems that they intend to build many kingdoms of Christ in Vadsø, but do not err: There is one sheepfold and one shepherd; stay together and keep the unity of the Spirit; ask for forgiveness and forgive one another. But the heretical ones will not humble themselves though the congregation counsels them, and the Apostle commands to flee from them. The teachers and confessors of cold jumping and holy flesh have come from Finland. They thought in their blindness that everyone must jump and that jumping is the best sign of Christianity. However, this is not how matters are. In the wedding chamber, there is playing or singing, and some jump, others sit, but they are, nevertheless, joyful from wine. Some are full of strength, as Stephen, and preach powerfully and rejoice in Spirit, which is seen in their faces; and the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy and peace and much more that the Apostle lists, but flesh remains flesh, and a Christian is not to walk so as to please it. As is written in Romans, there is "no

¹ August 31, 1861 letter of Sofia Niva in A. Laitinen, *Muistosanoja Lapin kristillisyydestä* (Oulu: 1926), pp. 26, 27.

² See, for example, the sermon for Trinity Sunday in L. L. Laestadius, *Uusi Postilla* (Pori: 1897), pp. 268-280.

³ Terjeri is evidently an old spelling error for Färjari and Värjari, variant names of Henrik Höglund. See P. Raittila, *Lestadiolaisuuden matrikkeli ja bibliografia* (Helsinki: 1967), pp. 56, 57.

condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” [Romans 8:1]. Thus, the righteousness of the Lord Christ is our righteousness, and his holiness is our holiness, though we are as sinful as Paul writes of himself in the seventh chapter of Romans.

Raattamaa, fearing that some might be tempted to reject their faith on account of the “cold jumping,” writes in the same letter:

This is also dung from Finland, that you are supposed to curse the former Christianity in which you have erred. To jump cold isn’t any extraordinary sin as long as your legs held out. Let all repent of this doctrinal error and believe the gospel so that they would become fervent in Spirit.⁴

Viheriä had arrived in Norway in 1866 from Kittilä, Finland. In an 1867 letter, Erkki Antti Antinpoika Juhonpieti, the well-known elder of Pajala, Sweden, mentions him by name, accusing him of leniency in doctrine and conduct:

And I will be straightforward and say: Let that preacher Viheriä also preach, but let him not be raised to the highest degree, for signs of deceit have been found in him along the way, but we still consider other preachers better because they are more pure in doctrine and conduct.⁵

In his 1882 autobiography, Erkki Väitalo, a believer of Kittilä, tells what happened after the revival reached his locality:

But the devil was also awake, trying to corrupt the work of the Lord by false doctrine. There came to the congregation a preacher who encouraged ‘cold jumping,’ as it has since been called. That is, people started jumping and rejoicing in a group, though hearts were cold and hard, so as to become fervent. The late Matti Laakso was the first to oppose this offensive activity, and others also zealously opposed it. Men also came here from Muonio to end this disturbance, and Maria Parkajoki, in particular, vehemently preached against it, and so this sad period of cold jumping did not last long.⁶

Väitalo mentions neither the name of the preacher of “cold jumping” nor when this activity occurred. It may be significant, however, that Viheriä, originally of Ii, Finland, moved to Kittilä in 1865, about two years after the revival began there.⁷ Johan Paakkonen (also known as Paakkola), another preacher of Ii, who preached in the Simojärvi region in the early 1860s, is connected by tradition with “cold jumping” and has also been accused of being in the holy flesh doctrine, a concept that will be discussed later. Paakkonen, who appears to have been as much a Hedbergian as a Laestadian, eventually opted for Fredrik G. Hedberg’s antinomian Evangelical movement, which condemned the *liikutuksia* (emotional outbursts) of the Laestadian movement. Paakkonen’s letters of 1861-1871 to Hedberg, insofar as their content has been published, confirm only that Paakkonen defended *liikutuksia*, not necessarily “cold jumping.”⁸

⁴ March 16, 1868 letter in J. Raattamaa, *Kirjeet ja kirjoitukset* (Helsinki: 1976), pp. 99, 100.

⁵ December 20, 1867 letter to I. Tiberg in E. A. Juhonpieti, *Kirjeet ja kirjoitukset* (Loimaa: 1979), p. 34.

⁶ E. Väitalo, “Heräyksistä Lapissa. Elämäkertoja 5. Eerikki Juhonpoika Väitalo,” *Kristillinen Kuukauslehti*, No. 10, 1882, p. 157.

⁷ Biographic data on Viheriä is from *Lestadiolaisuuden matrikkeli ja bibliografia*, p. 219.

⁸ L. Takala, *Evangelisen liikkeen ja laestadiolaisuuden ensi kosketus Oulun seudulla* (Helsinki: 1940), pp. 401-413. Takala’s assertion (pp. 408, 409) that Paakkonen held the holy flesh doctrine is not confirmed by the letters he cites. In fact, in a September 6, 1864 letter, Paakkonen admits that his flesh is not intrinsically (“itse olemisessaan”) holy (p. 409).

Confession of Sin

Differing views of confession of sin have been a persistent cause of dissension. According to Part 5 of Luther's *Small Catechism*: "Confession [Finnish: *riippi*] consists of two parts; the one is, that we confess our sins; the other, that we receive absolution from the confessor as of God Himself, in no wise doubting, but firmly believing that our sins are thus forgiven before God in heaven." This doctrine is based on the words of Christ himself, who breathed on his disciples 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 20:22,23). However, at the beginning of the revival, absolution was not proclaimed, even to those who confessed their sins publicly. Six years passed before Raattamaa and some others began using the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, that is, proclaiming forgiveness in the name and blood of Christ. According to tradition, Raattamaa, first used the keys to free a young woman from doubt and then reported the matter to Laestadius, who approved of his action. After Raattamaa's "discovery" of the keys, they came into general use. By 1872, Raattamaa was referring to confession as the "pilgrim's staff" (*matkasauva*): "Our Lord Christ has given into our hands the pilgrim's staff, which is the asking for and the forgiving of sins."⁹

Many eventually began to view confession as equivalent to justification. For example, Pastor Oskari Jussila writes in a 1929 book:

Jesus gave the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven to his disciples. All believers in Jesus, who have received the Holy Spirit, now have power and authority to remit and retain sins in the name of Jesus, that is, in accordance with his command on his behalf. He knew man and realized that the human wretch, stripped naked by the fall into sin, no longer retained any ability to free himself from his bonds by his own efforts. This recognition of helplessness becomes evident even to man himself when his conscience awakens. Until then, a person may imagine that he can free himself from the bonds of sin in some way other than through the keys of remission. Whoever thinks thus reveals that he has not yet become sufficiently pressured in his conscience after all, for he rejects the aid offered by Heaven and also remains so bold as to demand of God that aid be given in another way, determined by man himself. The keys of the Kingdom of Heaven have been lost many times, but the Holy Spirit of God has always fetched them anew from their hiding place for the use of Christ's congregation, for the Lord of the congregation himself has promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against his congregation.¹⁰

Such extremists cannot adequately explain passages in the Bible such as Acts 10:44, where the Holy Ghost fell on those in the house of Cornelius as they heard the preaching of Peter. They also have trouble understanding how the revival could have even started without the keys. Some imagine, without any historical basis, that Laestadius was converted by absolution proclaimed by the Lapp woman Lapin Maija in 1844. Others seek indications of use of the keys before they were used by Raattamaa. Researcher Aulis Zidbäck, finding no solution, draws the simplistic conclusion:

Much needless suffering and mutual accusation has been caused in Laestadianism by the failure to fully understand, in regard to the two great doctrinal fathers of the revival movement, that it was not a question of

⁹ July 15, 1872 letter to Erkki Antti and J. Vanhantalo in Raattamaa, *Kirjeet ja kirjoitukset*, p. 124.

¹⁰ O. Jussila, *Jeesuksen Seurassa. Kolmannen vuosikerran evankeliumiteksteistä* (Oulu: 1929), p. 143.

differing gifts of grace but of two different views of Christianity and paths of salvation, tension between which, due to the nature of the matter, could only lead in time to an inevitable breakup of the movement.¹¹

However, Raattamaa specifies that it was he -- not Laestadius -- who failed to understand the doctrine of the keys. He writes in an 1881 autobiography:

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.¹²

If Raattamaa views 1845 as the beginning of the revival, when the Lapp woman who was the first to experience grace jumped for joy, the time frame given here agrees with an 1891 letter to America in which he mentions that “the keys of the kingdom of heaven have indeed been in use over 40 years already in Swedish Lapland.”¹³ According to tradition, Raattamaa discovered the keys by reading Luther’s sermons, but there is no reason to assume that Laestadius did not understand the doctrine of the keys, even if he was hesitant to use them. In 1849, Laestadius became entangled in a debate with some of his Pajala parishioners who did not approve of his refusal to grant absolution to a young woman who had committed fornication, and he was formally reprimanded for this in 1851. In his writings of that time, the issue of the proper use of the keys is quite prominent, and it is only reasonable to assume that he would also discuss the issue with his assistant Raattamaa. Laestadius believed that it was against the Bible, Luther’s doctrine and church rules to absolve impenitent persons and admit them to church privileges.¹⁴ This is obviously the background, for example, for a sermon given on the nineteenth Sunday after Trinity, even if the year is unknown, in which Laestadius says:

But ecclesiastical punishment has in these days become hypocrisy and occurs only because of custom, for now a whore or thief is given forgiveness of sins even if no element of penitence or intention of repentance is detected in them.

In the same sermon, Laestadius says, on the basis of Matthew 9:1-8:

It is written in the Holy Bible that the just shall live by his faith, and one with living faith can live and die in the assurance that the Son of Man has power to forgive sins, not only by the preaching office but by every person who has himself experienced grace. This is an unshakable truth, whether the pharisees believe it or not.¹⁵

¹¹ A. Zidbäck, *Pohjolan suurin maalikkosaarnaaja* (Helsinki: 1941), p. 25.

¹² J. Raattamaa, “Elämäkertoja II, Juhani Juhonpoika Raattamaa,” *Kristillinen Kuukauslehti*, No. 12, 1881, p. 180.

¹³ November 14, 1891 letter to J. Takkinen et al. in Raattamaa, *Kirjeet ja kirjoitukset*, p. 390. Also see the October 11, 1881 letter to E. Törmälä, in which Raattamaa’s recollection of events is based on the same time frame.

¹⁴ See, for example, L. L. Laestadius, *Tidskriften Ens Ropandes Röst i Öknen* (Pieksämäki: 1994), pp. 398-437.

¹⁵ L. L. Laestadius, *Kirkko-Postilla* (Tampere: 1900), pp. 394, 399.

Compulsory Confession

According to tradition, at the first “big services,” which were held in Ylitornio (Alkkula), Finland, in 1875, Raattamaa rebuked preacher Johan Takkinen for teaching the doctrine of compulsory confession (pakkorippi).¹⁶ If this occurred, no contemporary records document it. There are, moreover, many different ideas about the meaning of compulsory confession. Historian Hjalmar Westeson defines it as follows:

On one side, it was preached that only the unbelievers had to repent, and not the believers, but then other preachers explained that it was not sufficient to have confessed one’s sins and to have received forgiveness for them only once, but the believer should always recall his old sins as well, always confess them, always lay them before God and men.¹⁷

Pastor Väinö Havas writes accordingly in 1935:

Many of us have had to go to speak of the same sin even three times to the father confessor. First it was a bit too embellished; then we were too coarse, and even our third confession didn’t turn out to our liking. At least the penitence seemed too shallow.¹⁸

All confessionists (rippiläiset), as those who espouse the doctrine of compulsory confession are called, do not demand repetitive confession of the same sins, but they all believe that sins are forgiven only when confessed. Theologian and historian Uuras Saarnivaara writes, for example, in 1947:

The accusations of a believer’s conscience are from the devil only in the event that sins of which he has already repented and for which he has been forgiven trouble his conscience and try to make him despair. It is not necessary to confess the same sins more than once if done honestly. But a believer may have pangs of conscience over sins of which he has not repented, and then the voice is that of the Holy Spirit, to which he is to be obedient.¹⁹

A 1965 sermon of confessionist preacher Janne Marttiini -- as published in English -- is even more explicit:

Dead faith comes when we have sins upon our conscience that we have not put away. When we do not put them away, but we try to believe without putting them away. The Lord Jesus will knock for a time on your heart’s door. But if a person does not heed this, the Holy Spirit will depart, even though He has once been there.²⁰

Pastor Paul Heideman also writes (before his ordination) in a 1910 letter, in which he criticizes self-righteous persons:

¹⁶ See, for example, P. Raittila, “Alkkulan kokous 1875,” *Maitojyvä*, 1964, p. 14.

¹⁷ H. Westeson, *Ödemarcksprofetens lärjungar* (Stockholm: 1930), p. 35.

¹⁸ V. Havas, *Sovituksen sana. Saarnoja ja kirjoituksia* (Rauma: 1960), p. 83.

¹⁹ U. Saarnivaara, *Amerikan laestadiolaisuuden eli Apostolis-luterilaisuuden historia* (Ironwood: 1947), p. 314.

²⁰ J. Marttiini, *The Scriptural Plan of Salvation* (sermon given at the 1965 fall services in Portland, Oregon), p. 21.

Regardless of how smooth and white they may be outwardly, within there is decay, unconfessed sins.²¹

In a 1924 article, Preacher Heikki Jussila (Oskari's father) defends compulsory confession against its critics, saying:

And the voice of the Holy Spirit, which teaches in the conscience and by the Word of God to confess sins, is blasphemed by saying it is the voice of the devil. When the devil has caused sin to be committed, he would be divided against himself if he were to demand that it be confessed.²²

Such views of the Holy Spirit are, of course, in conflict with the scriptural doctrine of justification and purification of the sinner's conscience by faith alone (Romans 5:1, Acts 15:9, Hebrews 9:14). Laestadius explains the role of the Comforter (John 16:7-11) as follows:

We hear in today's gospel that the Holy Spirit does not rebuke the disciples of Jesus, but the Holy Spirit is their Comforter and guides them into all truth.²³

Laestadius also says, in sharp contrast with Heikki Jussila, in regard to the devil of self-righteousness (II Corinthians 11:14):

But the devil of self-righteousness is so serious that he will not at all urge one to commit sin but urges the awakened to repent. The devil of self-righteousness is so holy that he demands a pure heart before he will allow the awakened access to Jesus.²⁴

Public Confession

In a 1925 article, Iisakki Ylinenpää of Övertorneå claims that at the 1875 "big services," Raattamaa "opposed" public confession.²⁵ The demanding of public confession (*julkirippi*) is, in fact, the doctrine for which some say Takkinen was rebuked.²⁶ By the 1870s, public enumeration of sins was no longer demanded as strongly as in the time of Laestadius. An 1873 letter, signed by Pietari Hanhivaara (also known as Hanhi-Pieti), his brother Fredrik Paksuniemi (also known as Hanhi-Feetu) and Karl Heikel, contains the following comments:

²¹ June 12, 1910 letter to Oskari Jussila in Oulu provincial archives.

²² H. Jussila, "Salaiset häpeät," *Rauhan Tervehdys*, Sept. 1924, p. 132.

²³ Sermon on fourth Sunday after Easter in *Kirkko-Postilla*, pp. 205, 206. Compare Isaiah 54:9 and Titus 1:13.

²⁴ Sermon on twentieth Sunday after Trinity in *Uusi Postilla*, p. 441.

²⁵ I. Ylinenpää, "Muistelmia Ylitornion ensimmäisistä suurista seuroista," *Siionin Lähetyslehti*, Sept. 1925, p. 132.

Ylinenpää, who was present at the 1875 Ylitornio services, mentions (p. 131) a noteworthy incident that occurred on the second day of the services: After the public reading of a sermon of Laestadius, Raattamaa preached a comforting sermon that resulted in great *liikutuksia*. Then, Israel Nattavaara of Gällivare started to shout over the sound of the *liikutuksia*, "stimulating them." Albert Heikel, then pastor of Ylitornio, could not bear the commotion, went to the pulpit and shocked the listeners by shouting, "With such racket occurring in church, all of Finland's churches will be closed to such meetings!" According to tradition, Heikel was later struck by remorse and repented of what he had done. (See Raittila, "Alkkulan kokous 1875," p. 15.)

²⁶ See, for example, H. Jussila, *Kutsujan armo laestadiolaisessa kristillisyydessä* (Oulu: 1948), p. 124.

We have heard with sorrow that a disagreement has emerged among you over the matter of confession. The public enumeration of all individual sins before the congregation was a custom in some places at the beginning of this Christianity, but since then it has been realized that this is not commanded in the Holy Bible and is neither profitable nor necessary for liberty of conscience or the advancement of Christianity. It is not mentioned in regard to people who came to John the Baptist in the wilderness that they there enumerated separate sins but only that they confessed their sins (generally) and were baptized with the baptism of repentance [Mark 1:5]. Neither are the words of the Apostle in I Cor. 14:25 to be understood in such a way that all practices of sin should be proclaimed there (in the assembly). Nor is it appropriate to take John 3:21 as a defense of public confession, for sins are by no means “wrought in God,” but a believing person lives in God and does all his deeds in God (which he does in faith). Therefore, he does not need to fear or hide his works -- he is a child of light. . . . The confession of sin is necessary for the purification of the heart, as is the opening of a vessel in order to wash it, but purity does not come by opening or confessing but by the blood of the Son of God claimed by faith (Acts 15:9, I John 1:7).²⁷

Raattamaa’s writings do not confirm that he “opposed” public confession. He writes, for example, in an 1876 letter:

But let those who come in from the world’s crowd declare their deeds at least in a veiled manner so that the devil would not be able to get a grip on the awakened and rend them by the power of secular law.²⁸

Raattamaa’s views are also stated in an 1878 letter of preacher Abram (Aapo) Tapani:

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 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.²⁹

The Three-Cubit God

The emphasis on confession led many to believe that God works only through the oral word and that forgiveness is given only through individual absolution. This view became known as the “three-cubit God” (*kolmen kyynärän Jumala*) doctrine, meaning that God is only three cubits tall, that is, as tall as a man. In his autobiography, Väliälo writes:

But since 1869, it began to be preached in our congregation that the Holy Spirit works only through the preached word. My brother Olli, together with the pastor and others, opposed this doctrine, but I held to those who were considered pillars and believed that they were right. However, when schoolteacher Raattamaa visited here, he explained and spoke of the effects of the Holy Spirit through the word that is read and preached and through the sacraments, and he applied the doctrine of the Bible and the experiences of the awakened. Then I understood this error too, but I didn’t ask for forgiveness at that time yet, for I waited for the others to become sinners. But this dispute lasted many years yet in our congregation, until Raattamaa firmly

²⁷ May 5, 1873 letter to unidentified recipients in K. Heikel, *Kertomus Hengellisistä Liikunnoista Lapissa ja Pohjanmaalla, viimeisinä kolmena-kymmenenä vuonna* (Oulu: 1873), pp. 73, 74.

²⁸ August 29, 1876 letter to Isak Palohuornanen et al. in Raattamaa, *Kirjeet ja kirjoitukset*, p. 173.

²⁹ June 1, 1878 letter to Kalle Henriksen et al. in Oulu provincial archives.

demanded that the expression that 'the Holy Spirit does not work through the written word' be eliminated. Since then, it hasn't been taught publicly.³⁰

In his article, Ylinenpää claims that in a sermon given in Övertorneå about two years after the 1875 "big services," Raattamaa accused Hanhi-Pieti of bringing the "three-cubit God" doctrine to the Tornio River area from Kittilä. When a certain woman, Ahven-Elsa of Kittilä, was offended, feeling that Hanhi-Pieti was being oppressed, Raattamaa allegedly remarked in a sharp tone, "We are not oppressing Pieti, but Pieti also needs to repent of his faults and have his sins forgiven, just as does Raattamaa." Ylinenpää then adds:

He then presented many passages from the Bible by which he clearly showed how God works through both the read and preached word and by his Spirit himself, for God's greatness is unsearchable. He also said that confession of sins cannot be set as a foundation, that the preaching of faith is to be held of higher value than the preaching of confession of sins and that a single Christian, even a woman, is sufficient as a father confessor.

Ylinenpää's story seems to be contradicted by a July 23, 1945 letter of Pastor Eliel A. Auno to Oiva Virkkala, according to which Hanhivaara told Auno that he had promised Raattamaa at the 1875 "big services" that he would cease teaching that only the preached word is effective.³¹ Whatever the case, at least Väitalo's account of Raattamaa's visit to Kittilä is confirmed in an 1878 letter of Raattamaa, which says:

I have just come from Kittilä, and we were gathered together with all the teachers in the Kittilä parsonage, where the expression that the Holy Spirit does not work by means of the written word outside the congregation, as some have been saying, was eliminated from the teaching. They were satisfied when I said that the sphere of God's wisdom cannot be measured by us. Indeed, he led the wise men from the east to Bethlehem.³²

Pastor Grape and Princess Eugénie

In an 1880 letter to Per Olof Grape, Pastor of Övertorneå, Princess Eugénie of Sweden expressed a desire to become involved in the revival. In the letter, she made clear her love for the state church and appealed for Grape's help in her effort "to reform the Laestadian movement, under the rugged surface of which there is certainly much substance." She hoped that Grape, whom she viewed as enjoying the "confidence" of the Laestadians, would oppose their doctrinal errors, particularly their "distorted" view of confession and their "offensive" conduct during church services, and find for her some "serious, faithful and experienced itinerants, who would not work in the Laestadian manner but in a purely Christian and church manner, so that our work would not cause offense or expose itself to justifiable criticism."

In his reply, Grape wrote in regard to confession:

³⁰ Väitalo, pp. 157, 158.

³¹ O. Virkkala, *Alkulähteille. Lestadiolaisen uudenheräyksen synty ja luonne* (Lappeenranta: 1945), p. 27.

³² February 6, 1878 letter to M. Fogman in Raattamaa, *Kirjeet ja kirjoitukset*, p. 197.

It is true that some Laestadians have carried the doctrine of confession to a harmful extreme. It is also true that some have wanted to underrate the effects of the written word. Likewise, some have had a very muddled concept of the significance of private prayer, but a strong opposition has been raised against these misconceptions within the 'Laestadian camp' itself.

In regard to *liikutuksia*, Grape wrote:

And I have often seen how awakened souls have been so filled with joy, having grasped free grace, that they have burst into shouts of joy, clapped their hands and jumped for joy. I do not at all feel that these outward *liikutuksia* are essential signs of true Christian life or that they are of any special worth. It is indeed possible to be a true child of grace even without such *liikutuksia*, and most Laestadians do not have them and are nevertheless considered true Christians as long as they have the signs that the Holy Bible ascribes to the children of God.³³

The involvement of the Princess was viewed adversely by many. It is said that Juhani Raattamaa's outspoken older brother Pekka (not to be confused with Juhani's son Pekka, who is also known as Petteri and Pietari) told Pastor Johannes Kerfstedt, who visited Lapland as a representative of the Princess in 1883, "Convey greetings to the Princess and tell her that up here we have enough Christianity for home use but that there is a shortage of flour." Even if this account is true, at least the claim that the representative sent Pekka a sack of flour has an apocryphal ring.³⁴

Johan Lantto of Tärändö, Sweden, writing in the 1940s, voices the view of the opposition. He claims that the first "missionaries" to arrive in his locality were Iisakki Ohtana (also known by the surname Poromäki) and Tuomas Puljula (also known as Nikkari-Tuomas). He writes:

This Nikkari-Tuomas had been sent by Pastor Grape, as the latter had promised to Princess Eugénie. In Tärändö, landowner Juntti received these new preachers, and services were held in his large home. At first, some old Christians in Tärändö were inclined to criticize somewhat the proclamation of this fenceless and borderless gospel, as it was called, to all the impenitent and unawakened as well as to Christians -- not to mention that unprecedented racket of singing that came with this new movement. Young people joined the group in droves, and spiritual songs were sung from *Siionin laulukirja* [Songbook of Zion]. Johan Raattamaa did not consider this kind of furious song-Christianity correct but preached firmly against it and said that this Christianity did not begin with the shouting of songs or the hollering of hymns, but it was born again in great travail, tears and groans in the dismal wilderness of Swedish Lapland.³⁵

A 1974 history written by a committee of the Old Apostolic Lutheran Church of America claims that as a result of Grape's correspondence with Princess Eugénie, Nikkari-Tuomas and others traveled up the Tornio River valley, opening the doors of "fleshly freedom" with the theme that "one should not preach of finery to the youth, they become timid. One should not preach to the aged of covetousness, it offends them." As a result, "soon the voice of sorrow over sin and the sound of rejoicing over the forgiveness of sin began to disappear."³⁶

Joonas Purnu of Gällivare (Gellivaara), Sweden, who eventually became the leader of the opposition, as will be seen, writes in an 1897 letter:

³³ Princess Eugénie's November 10, 1880 letter and Grape's December 17, 1880 reply in O. Kolsrud, *Til forstaaelse av Læstadianismen. Et brevsfifte mellem prinsesse Eugénie og P. O. Grape, 1880* (Oslo: 1940), pp. 47-53.

³⁴ Westeson, p. 76.

³⁵ J. Lantto, *Juntin talo ja lestadialainen heräys Tärännössä* (Haparanda: 1973), pp. 79, 80.

³⁶ *History of Living Christianity in America* (Hancock: 1974), p. 31.

The spiritual authorities would like to have this spiritual movement led into the lap of the state church so that the pastors who are obedient to the faith could finally say, Yes, they have corrected the heresy of Laestadius in order to receive honor for it!³⁷

Others focused on the beneficial aspects of the Princess' involvement, such as the building of a mission school for Lapp children in Lannavaara, which the believers were allowed to use for their annual "big services." When the Princess died in 1889, Raattamaa referred to her as "a beloved mother, who is now, as we believe, in a higher palace than the royal palace -- there, where the Lord of Lords and King of Kings is."³⁸

The Oral and Written Word

According to the record of an 1876 inspection of Kittilä Church carried out by Pastor A. G. Borg and quoted in the anti-Laestadian history of Bishop Johansson in 1892, Pastor Albert Heikel and his son Karl "admitted that the absolution used among the believers is wrong and intended to eliminate it."³⁹ Karl felt compelled to justify himself to fellow Laestadians in an 1893 booklet, in which he explained that "the record is not precise or sufficiently clear in this matter." According to him, the discussion that took place during the inspection related to the understanding that "one enters living faith only through a public appeal for forgiveness for unbelief and oral absolution from the Laestadians." He explained, "My late father and I said that we have always opposed such a view and intend to oppose it in the future."⁴⁰

Heikki Jussila notes in his 1948 history that the inspector "testified that the Kittilä believers had adhered better to our church's confession than any other believers examined in other parishes and expressed the hope that those in Kittilä would work toward correcting the believers throughout Finland." Jussila then asks the rhetorical question, "Is it strange that the world expressed gratitude when it ascertained that the Kittilä Laestadians did not care much about the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven?"⁴¹

In 1885, Karl Heikel, P. O. Grape and other ordained pastors agreed at a meeting in Ii, Finland, that the "the work of the Holy Spirit and even a disciple's mind and living faith are found outside the so-called Laestadian movement." It was also agreed that "the written Word of God is able not only to awaken its reader but also to lead to participation in the grace of God in Jesus Christ."⁴² Such views have been rejected by other Laestadians as being contradictory to Romans 10:17 and other parts of Scripture. At the 1908 Ylivieska "big services," for example, in reply to a question received in a letter from preacher Leonard Typpö as to "whether the written and preached Word of God are of equal effect," the participants answered, "Would Jesus have counseled and commanded his disciples in vain to preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins to all creatures at a time when the books of the Old and New Testament were already available for reading if reading alone effects faith?" Also: "The scribes and pharisees have never been killed for reading the Bible, but only the

³⁷ July 25, 1897 letter to O. Matoniemi in J. Kieri, *Aikakautemme Vanhinten Kirjoituksia* (Calumet: 1898), p. 156.

³⁸ *Sanomia Siionista*, 1891, p. 85; cited in Zidbäck, p. 198.

³⁹ G. Johansson, *Laestadiolaisuus* (Kuopio: 1892), p. 188.

⁴⁰ K. Heikel, *Miten olen opettanut* (Heinola: 1893), p. 94.

⁴¹ *Kutsujan armo*, pp. 126, 127.

⁴² "Kolme kirjoitusta uskovaisilta papeilta Iin kokouksessa 1885," *Kristillinen Kuukauslehti*, 1886, pp. 25, 27.

witnesses and preachers of Jesus, who have diligently read and spoken about the Bible, for their preaching of the atonement of Jesus, of which the Bible testifies, has effected conversion and repentance, but this is precisely what the world has never been able to tolerate.”⁴³

The Bible a Dead Letter?

The stress on the oral word led some to conclude that the Bible is without life or power, only ink and paper, a dead letter that will burn as will any combustible material. Early writers such as J. A. Englund, often attributed such views to the Laestadian movement as a whole.⁴⁴ In response to such accusations, Karl Heikel writes with undue optimism in an 1881 article:

The presentation of the Holy Scriptures as a dead letter can perhaps be considered a heresy that has been successfully overcome even among those who once held this view. Such a doctrine has never been approved by persons in this movement who have had somewhat more insight into spiritual matters.⁴⁵

A thorough rebuttal of the doctrine is found in a 1919 article of preacher Matti Suo, who writes:

In the understanding of some, the word of the Bible is a dead letter and it comes alive only when persons who have received the Holy Spirit explain it. For if the word of the Bible were living, they would have received life by reading it. But since they have not received peace or life from it by reading, they have drawn the conclusion that it is a dead letter. And even Paul says, ‘The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life’ (II Cor. 3:6). But if the word of the Bible were a dead letter, how then could there be a power to kill in it, as the words say, ‘The letter killeth’? It does not say that the letter is dead but that in the letter itself there is that killing power. . . . Thus, the law has the power to awaken a person sleeping in his sin into conviction, even as the Apostle says, ‘For by the law is the knowledge of sin’ (Rom. 3:20). So the law is by no means a dead letter, for that which is dead has no power to effect anything, but it is said of the law that ‘the strength of sin is the law’ (I Cor. 15:56). And since the law side of the word of the Bible is not a dead letter, by no means can the gospel side be a dead letter either. The Apostle calls the gospel the power of God (Rom. 1:16), and God’s power is by no means dead. Thus, the written word of the Bible, both read and preached, is the true, holy and living Word of God. ‘For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword’ (Heb. 4:12).⁴⁶

In spite of such arguments, the Bible is still viewed as a dead letter by many who call themselves Laestadians.

⁴³ “Kertomus uskovaisten kristittyin suuresta kokouksesta Ylivieskan seurahuoneessa lokakuun 4, 5, 6 ja 7 päivinä v. 1908,” *Armonsanoma*, Dec. 1908, p. 218.

⁴⁴ J. A. Englund, *Lars Levi Laestadius. En kyrklig tidsbild* (Uppsala: 1876), p. 127.

⁴⁵ K. Heikel, “Några ord med anledning af biskop Landgrens artikel om læstadianismen och bigtläran,” *Teologisk Tidskrift*, 1881, p. 209.

⁴⁶ M. Suo, “Onko raamatun sana kuollut puustavi?” *Siionin Lähetyslehti*, Mar. 1919, pp. 65, 66.

Christ's Descent into Hell

In an 1880 article, Karl Heikel noted that in a primer published the same year in Calumet, Michigan, entitled *Amerikan Suomalainen Aapinen*, Christ's descent into hell in the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed was placed in parentheses and rewritten to read, "astui Gethsemanessa alas helvettiin" (descended in Gethsemane into hell). Heikel also noted a unique reading in the Third Article, in which Christ's name was not capitalized: "yhden pyhän kristuksen seurakunnan" (one holy congregation of christ). He viewed the first change as an inappropriate addition to a time-honored historical document accepted by all Christian denominations. As for the second change, he suspected that it might simply be a typographical error for "yhden pyhän kristillisen seurakunnan" (one holy Christian congregation). However, creeds published subsequently by the Old Apostolic Lutheran Church of America retain both readings, except for variations in regard to the parentheses and the capitalization of Christ's name.

The first change caused a broad debate over whether Christ actually descended into hell after his crucifixion. Heikel qualifies his own position as follows:

I have never yet heard of anyone with an understanding of Christ's descent into hell after his death that he went there to suffer, but these words are always explained in reference to the exaltation of Christ. As for the suffering of the pains of hell, I and the American brethren understand that our Saviour has suffered this inexpressible agony in Gethsemane and on the mount of Golgotha, and we are by no means alone in this understanding but many millions of Christians are with us.⁴⁷

In the same 1880 article, Heikel claims that if the words "astui alas helvettiin" (descended into hell) had been changed to "astui alas tuonelaan" (descended into the underworld), no one would have been offended. It is surprising that Heikel, a Lutheran pastor, had never heard the doctrine that Christ, after his death on the cross, descended into hell to suffer for our sins. Johannes Aepinus, a sixteenth-century German theologian, is usually cited as the spokesman of the doctrine that Christ's descent into hell was not the first phase of his exaltation but the last phase of his humiliation. Aepinus is clearly supported, however, by the writings of Luther, who, commenting on the words, "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death" (Acts 2:24), says:

Thus, I will remain meanwhile by these words of Peter until I am instructed better, so that I believe that Christ, above all others, has experienced not only death but also the pains of death or hell, that his flesh has indeed rested in hope but that his soul has tasted of hell, and this is what he says here: 'Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell.'⁴⁸

Some of the elders did not share Heikel's historical concerns. Erkki Antti wrote in an 1882 letter to America:

And I inform you of the opinions of the Christians of the Tornio valley in regard to the American primer, that it is more in accord with the Holy Bible than our primer, particularly in the creed section, and in my and our opinion, you may freely keep it.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ K. Heikel, "Amerikan Suomalainen Aapinen," *Kristillinen Kuukauslehti*, Nov. 1880, p. 166.

⁴⁸ M. Luther, *Arbeiten über die ersten 22 Psalmen*, in *Dr. Martin Luthers Sämmtliche Schriften* (St. Louis: 1895), Vol. IV, p. 991.

⁴⁹ January 11, 1882 letter in *Juhonpieti*, p. 92.

Raattamaa wrote in an 1881 letter to America:

As for your question in regard to the views of the people on the revision of the primer, all the enlightened Christians are of the same opinion as myself. And reading the American primer at our place, the old Christians of Lapland, whose hearts have been touched by the suffering of Jesus in Gethsemane, have said that the faith that they have in their hearts is that Jesus suffered the pains of hell in Gethsemane until his death on the cross. And the Evangelist writes that Jesus told the thief that he would go to paradise the same day.⁵⁰

Raattamaa's understanding of Christ's descent into hell is by no means shared by all Laestadians. God, as the creator of all, is not subject to time or place (Revelation 13:8, John 3:13, II Peter 3:8). Even Laestadius says in a sermon:

Go now, all unbelievers, to weep and wail when Jesus has died. Go to complain that you have no refuge, neither in Heaven nor in the world. Turn your hope toward hell when you feel and see that Jesus is dead. Turn your hope toward hell and groan so heavily that a hole would appear in the roof. Perhaps these groans will be heard in hell, where the Crucified One is after his death. Perhaps death and hell will have to release him because the groans of the penitent, sorrowful and wailing ones cause unrest in hell.⁵¹

⁵⁰ April 12, 1881 letter to J. Takkinen in Raattamaa, *Kirjeet ja kirjoitukset*, pp. 236, 237.

⁵¹ Sermon on third Sunday after Trinity in *Kirkko-Postilla*, p. 294.

CHAPTER 2

THE REAWAKENING

Origin

By the mid-1890s, preachers such as Frans Silén of Kittilä, commonly known as Metsänhoitaja Silén (Forester Silén), were charging that people had fallen asleep and that a “new awakening” was necessary. These preachers felt that unregenerate people were trusting in absolution without demonstrating any fruits of faith. Hanhivaara, who became one of the most prominent of these Reawakenists (uusheränneet), has noted, for example, that “there weren’t many houses in which there was even a New Testament, and yet they were Christians.”⁵² Feeling that a Christian’s entire life should be one of penitence at the foot of Christ’s cross, some began demanding deeper contrition before proclaiming absolution. Juho Pyörre, a preacher who joined the Reawakening after visiting the “elders” in Kittilä, explains:

If, for example, a person with a puffed-up heart comes, as if to test whether forgiveness will be granted, I find myself faced with the question: Does God grant forgiveness to someone in that condition? And the answer seems to me to be: No, that person has to become humble.⁵³

Another prominent preacher who joined the Reawakening was Mikko Saarenpää of Jalasjärvi, the composer of the well-known song “Täältä halajaa mun sieluni” (From here my soul is yearning), which was published in 1886 -- before the Reawakening. This song describes Saarenpää’s conversion, which occurred in about 1875, after he returned home from the army, not long after the revival had reached Jalasjärvi. Verses 8 to 13, literally translated, read:

Naked, a wretch, I lay in deep wounds, in sorrow and severe pain -- in the pit of death. My conscience pressed me unto death, hell frightened me, which God’s holy law confirmed as correct. But I heard a sweet voice from God’s children: ‘Don’t doubt, poor one, but be secure. Your sins are forgiven in the name of Jesus, and your transgressions are paid in holy blood.’ From this I gained peace for my conscience and sweet repose, for which I sing eternal thanks to the Father. So I made an eternal covenant to ever follow the Bridegroom, and of his grace I even received the Holy Spirit as an earnest.⁵⁴

Saarenpää began preaching, but on an 1880 trip to Tampere, he squandered his employer’s money on liquor. Returning home, he lived a dissolute life for about a year. He later repented and began preaching again but was not fully accepted everywhere. Reawakenist writer Frans Mäkivaara tells what happened next:

⁵² *Pöytäkirja Lestadiolaisten ryhmien sovintokokouksesta Oulussa Maalisk. 22-23 päivinä 1911* (Oulu: 1911), p. 60.

⁵³ *Pöytäkirja Lestadiolaisten ryhmien sovintokokouksesta Oulussa Maalisk. 22-23 päivinä 1911*, pp. 42, 43.

⁵⁴ For a free translation of this song, see No. 440 (My Weary Soul Longs Evermore) in the fourth edition (1993) of *Hymns and Songs of Zion* of the Apostolic Lutheran Church of America.

Mikko Saarenpää was the one to whom God particularly revealed that his Christianity and that of the other preachers was not in agreement with the Word of God. Therefore, he left for Kittilä, and there he made contact with Christians from the time of Laestadius. Now he received the light that his spirit had craved. On this trip he received a new spirit.⁵⁵

In a published letter that was written in June 1899, about five years after his “reawakening,” Saarenpää reviewed his past in the new “light” that he had received:

When I returned home [from the army], I found that during my absence this doctrine of Christianity had come to our area, and my mother and older brother had joined it. Of course, they also talked to me about repentance. I couldn’t greatly resist their words because my conscience indeed said that in this condition my journey would end in hell. After a short time, I too tried to join Christianity. I confessed my sins and asked for absolution, which I received, but neither the Lord’s death nor love could move my heart and circumcise it, and for this reason the love of sin remained in my heart. A little nip and other such things remained permissible, and they toppled me again into the same slough in which I had lived before. I tried to ask for forgiveness again, but I didn’t receive any power to repent. Then I lived quite a wild life for about a year. I sinned and I condemned myself. I decided to try yet again to really start repenting. I asked for forgiveness once again, and so I started traveling 18 years ago. I don’t recall how much power I grasped, but my heart started thirsting for internal change from that time on, and I felt repelled by the teaching that absolution from sin is the same as justification and so forth. The saltless preaching of grace, which I myself also preached, still kept me in a lax spiritual condition, though I was able to avoid the deeds of the flesh. But then, five years ago, I became quite distressed in my conscience. As I viewed my spiritual condition alongside the Word of God, it always fell as a heavy load on my conscience that I and the others will perish and that we have gone astray from the path that the former travelers have followed to Heaven. The more I read the Holy Scriptures and the sermons of Pastor Laestadius, the more I became distressed in my conscience in regard to my soul. Then I decided to go in the fall to Kittilä, and so I went. I will never forget this visit. There, God’s Word was fervently and orally read and studied, and the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross and that great work of redemption were preached so sharply that my heart was crushed more keenly than ever before. Heavenly purification, which I had craved for myself so often, flowed into my soul from the wounds of Jesus.⁵⁶

Saarenpää presented his case for the Reawakening in a letter to Raattamaa, written in July 1898:

Laestadius sought a path for the Word of God into people’s hearts, not into their reason, and he also found it, and for this reason his sermons effected in them a change of heart and mind, or true rebirth, without which no one will enter the Kingdom of God. But here much work has been done without much regard to a correct awakening of the conscience or to a breaking of the heart at the cross but mainly to make people understand the necessity of absolution from sin and the fact that men have the power to forgive sins. Change of heart and mind has not actually been preached very much to the conscience, and so, in many, Christianity has remained in the understanding and knowledge. Thus, many have remained unbroken and whole before the two-edged Word of God. Those who have entered Christianity in this way have become so complete that Christianity is no longer growth and struggle by the moment. Upon being absolved from sin, they are freed from following God’s Word and the footsteps of Jesus. All words of counsel, reproof and chastisement are law, which allegedly doesn’t belong to a free Christian. Daily repentance and vigilance in faith at the cross of Jesus are self-righteousness, etc.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ F. Mäkivaara, “Hengellisten heräysten alkua ajoilta Ahlaisten Pohjajoella,” *Huutavan Ääni*, No. 4, 1932, p. 54. According to Virkkala (p. 77), this trip occurred in 1895.

⁵⁶ “Kirje Jalasjärveltä,” *Sanomia Siionista*, 1900, pp. 45-47.

⁵⁷ “Kirje Jalasjärveltä,” *Sanomia Siionista*, 1898, pp. 185, 186.

In 1899, the Reawakenists established their own magazine, *Kolkuttaja*, which marks their separation from the other Laestadians, who became known as the Conservatives (vanhoilliset).

The Third Use of the Law

The Reawakenists share the view of most nominal Christians that in Christ only the ceremonial law, not the moral law, is abolished. According to this doctrine, the moral law, from which the curse has been removed, remains as a rule of life and conduct for justified persons. Saarenpää writes, for example in 1900, in regard to Apostle Paul:

His writings show that when he speaks of the law, he does not always mean the law of the Ten Commandments, which Christ did not come to remove but to fulfill, as he himself says, 'Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law' [Matthew 5:18]. What the apostles, in their epistles to the Christians, write in regard to sanctification, as to how they should conduct themselves, is, in content, consistent with the Ten Commandments. However, Paul, in his writings, often refers to the ceremonial church law, which was imposed until the time of reformation (Hebrews 9:8-10) but ended in Christ.⁵⁸

Saarenpää nowhere proves his point that Paul distinguishes between a “ceremonial” and “moral” law. Not understanding the Bible, he has fallen into the grand error of both Protestant and Catholic theologians. When Paul says in Romans 8:2 that believers are free from the law of sin and death, he is by no means speaking only of ceremonial aspects of the law, to which the Gentiles have never even been subject. In fact, throughout the epistle, he views the law from a moral perspective, saying, for example, in chapter 7, verse 7, “For I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.” It is, therefore, quite clear here and throughout the Bible that the whole ministration of death, in all its aspects, whether moral or ceremonial, is abolished in and by Christ (II Corinthians 3:7-13, Hebrews 7:18), who fulfilled the strict demands of the law for every fallen sinner and then nailed it to his cross (Colossians 2:14).⁵⁹

The Reawakenists state their position on the law in no uncertain terms in a 1924 article in their monthly *Huutavan Ääni*, written as a response in a debate initiated by an article of Heikki Jussila that had been published earlier the same year in America, which will be discussed later:

For man's salvation, the Holy Spirit needs the law to awaken him and to mortify the old man, and the gospel to apply grace by faith in Christ. Also, in the sanctification of a Christian, the Holy Spirit uses grace as nourishment and God's commandments (I Thess. 4:2) as a guide, as the apostles teach in all their epistles. But in these commandments there is no condemnation for Christians. Christ removed the enmity (Eph. 2:15).⁶⁰

This doctrine, which is anathema to most Laestadians, is found in the Lutheran Confessions. The *Formula of Concord* (Section VI) teaches that the law has three uses: 1. To maintain external

⁵⁸ “Mikä on laki ja mikä Evankeliumi?” *Sanomia Siionista*, No. 9A, 1900, p. 175.

⁵⁹ In his 1535 *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, Luther proves conclusively from the Holy Scriptures that the whole law is abrogated in Christ. See, for example, his comments there on Gal. 2:19. The Reawakenists, however, have found a New Year's Day sermon of Luther that appears to contradict this view and have republished relevant portions of it. See Lenker's edition of Luther's works, Vol. 7 (*Luther's Epistle Sermons*, Vol. I), pp. 267-310, and the pamphlet *The Law and Its Works and the True Seed of Abraham, A Sermon by Martin Luther*.

⁶⁰ “Mooseksen peitettä heittäessä ja palkkavaimoa ulosajamassa,” *Huutavan Ääni*, May 1924, p. 78.

discipline among men; 2. To bring men to a knowledge of sin; 3. As a rule of life for the daily walk of the believer.

The Reawakenists have also found the third use of the law in an 1855 sermon of Laestadius:

Christians are not offended by John's preaching of the law, for they feel that the word of the law is necessary, not only for the impenitent but for the Christians as well, for the awakening of the conscience and consciousness of sin and also as a guideline in daily life.⁶¹

Not surprisingly, the following editorial note appears in the English-language postil containing a translation of this sermon, published by the Old Apostolic Lutheran Church of America:

In the Evening sermon, 1855, on the Fourth Sunday of Advent, in the Postilla, will be found written, 'the law for Christians in daily life.' We are not able to believe that such words were written by Laestadius, even though they may appear in the manuscript, particularly when we are not able to find any words in the writings of Laestadius or Raattamaa that contain such an understanding, and therefore it is not proper to use such words in the Christianity.⁶²

Despite this assertion, we find, in an 1853 letter of Laestadius to the King of Sweden, another mention of the law as a guideline for the Christian. Defending the Christians in their struggle with the enemies of the revival, he writes that the "readers," as Christians were referred to at that time, demand, among other things, "that a Christian refrain from all willful sins and lead a holy life, that the law be preached for awakening to the impenitent and as a guideline for the life of the Christian who has experienced grace, that the gospel also be preached to penitent and contrite sinners, etc."⁶³

The Reawakenists have also found a passage in a sermon of Luther, given on the third Sunday in Advent, in which, after discussing the law, as being necessary for the ungodly, he adds:

In addition to this, the Ten Commandments must also be retained in the Church for the sake of those who are already holy and Christians, in order that they may know what is a truly godly life and what are good works which they are to do, and now since they are turned unto God, justified by faith in Christ, and God's children, that they may also begin to live in obedience towards God.⁶⁴

These words are found in the version of the sermon copied by Veit Dietrich but are missing from the version copied by Georg Roerer, who is reputed to have been an objective scribe, who refrained from adding his own thoughts to the sermons he heard.⁶⁵ Whatever the case, Reawakenists have not been any more successful than Lutheran theologians in establishing a Scriptural basis for the third use of the law. Raattamaa, responding to charges of antinomianism long before the Reawakening, writes in 1877:

Finally, we will also note, since voices have been heard that the followers of Laestadius have changed the doctrine after his death, that neither is this charge true. For all that is taught today is the same doctrine that was preached in the time of Laestadius, even if, in their church sermons, Luther and Laestadius have placed the law

⁶¹ Sermon on fourth Sunday in Advent in *Uusi Postilla*, p. 602.

⁶² L. L. Laestadius, *The New Postilla* (Minneapolis: 1980), p. 9.

⁶³ April 14, 1853 letter cited in M. Miettinen, *Lestadiolainen heräysliike I* (Mikkeli: 1942), p. 127. A similar statement is found in *Ens Ropandes Röst*, p. 390.

⁶⁴ M. Luther, *Dr. Martin Luther's House-Postil* (Columbus: 1869), Vol. I, pp. 35, 36.

⁶⁵ See *Sermons of Martin Luther, The House Postils* (Grand Rapids: 1996), Vol. I, Preface, p. 12. For Roerer's version of the sermon, see pp. 59-68.

of Moses as a guideline for Christian congregations that live after the flesh so that God's justice, by the chastisement of the law, would drive them to Christ to receive by faith the forgiveness of sins in the name and blood of Jesus and also the righteousness of Christ, which is a pure wedding garment before the glorious face of God, and power, by the Spirit, to mortify the deeds of the flesh. For such righteous ones the law is not established, Paul says. But we are not, therefore, without law. We have the law of Christ, which says that we should love one another. Christ's love demands that all ungodly conduct be rejected. Also, by faith on the Lord Christ, a holy life is constructed. Thus, the law has been our schoolmaster unto Christ, but after faith came, we are no longer under that teacher.⁶⁶

The Narva Reaction

The Reawakenists, who were a minority in most places, gained the upper hand in Karelia, St. Petersburg and Estonia. People lost their joy and assurance of salvation as a result of the new teaching that doubt and incessant penitence are true signs of Christianity. However, in Estonia a sharp reaction soon occurred in the form of the Narva movement, which even attracted some prominent Reawakenists, such as Silén, who also joined the movement. In a 1902 article, preacher Kaarle T. Lindström explains that in the summer of 1898, in the city of Narva and vicinity, the Christians began to study the new birth and their own spiritual condition. A certain Katariina Olli, a woman better known simply as "Narvan Katri" (Katri of Narva), was distressed because, though she had publicly confessed her sins and had experienced the effects of grace, she doubted that she had been born again. Lindström and others pointed out the words of Christ to Nicodemus in John 3:16 and the passage in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* in which the traveler loses his burden at the foot of the cross. After this latter passage was repeatedly and insistently pointed out to her, she lost her burden and began singing praise to Jesus, feeling that she had entered through the strait gate into the Kingdom of Heaven. Later, she saw visions of Jesus on the cross and giving the Lord's Supper (Revelation 3:20). Lindström describes the experiences of others:

Some felt themselves shaken by a strange force, some so powerfully that, without anyone touching them, they were thrown from a sitting position to their hands and knees. Others rolled on the ground, beat their chest and confessed their sins. It appeared to some as though living beings had come from within them. Some saw vivid images of how their sins had lacerated the Son of God and made him bloody and felt those same sins tearing their bodies, and they had to bring them into the light by shouting.

Lindström writes that "at first, the ignorance prevailed that all who are born again must see visions." Some, he says, believed that those who felt that the visions occurred within themselves had Jesus in their hearts but that those who felt that the visions occurred outside themselves did not yet have Jesus in their hearts. He also tells that whereas previously there was only outward knowledge in many, now that "living feelings" had come, another one-sidedness tended to appear -- "that of remaining entirely under the guidance of internal feelings and also of believing that when a person has the Holy Spirit and is a child of God all that he says and does is of God." Lindström then explains:

After a long struggle, they finally realized that knowledge without feelings of salvation is dead and again that feelings alone, without the light of God's Word, cannot lead a person on the path of salvation. For there are

⁶⁶ *Kirkko-Postilla*, p. III of Raattamaa's preface.

also false feelings, which the Bible shows and corrects and which a man cannot conceive of as false without this counselor. Also, even if the Holy Spirit and living faith are received, there is much ignorance, lack of understanding and deficiency.⁶⁷

In his 1945 history, Reawakenist apologist Oiva Virkkala tells how Lindström became involved in the Narva movement. He says that Lindström and Saarenpää had a discussion in St. Petersburg in the summer of 1899, a few months before this new movement reached that city. Virkkala writes:

Lindström remarked to Saarenpää that the Reawakening would ‘change into pietism’ [körttiläisyys], become dark and end unless one begins preaching the gospel. To this, Saarenpää said that he has also thought so but that he fears dead faith, ‘Erkki Antti’s faith,’ a light faith based on a broad gospel. Then, when the Narva movement came to St. Petersburg, Lindström opposed it, but soon he received a different light, and the very same year he made a public confession of sin, asking for forgiveness for his previous spirit of opposition.⁶⁸

Outsiders often compare the Narva movement to the Kautokeino movement, which was also characterized by revelation and ecstaticism. Many saw in the Narva movement no more than an attempt to recover through “cold jumping” the good feelings that had been lost in the Reawakening. It has been said that, in the manner of the Kautokeino fanatics, the Narva adherents (narvalaiset) placed “inner light” above the written word. Väinö Havas alleges, for example, in his 1927 history that Katri of Narva said, “Write down what I say. It will become a new Bible.”⁶⁹

Saarenpää observes, in a March 3, 1904 letter, that in St. Petersburg the Narva movement was divided into two groups.⁷⁰ Virkkala explains that there was a moderate side led by Lindström and a radical one led by Aleksanteri Kumpulainen of Lappeenranta, who is said to have eventually led many of his followers into the Pentecostal movement. He points out, as an example of differences between the two men, that Kumpulainen demanded as an unconditional requirement that everyone confess his sins openly on his knees while Lindström wasn’t as strict -- those who confessed didn’t have to go to their knees. The Narva movement is said to have spread like wildfire in Ingria and Southwest Finland, but the zeal soon abated, and most adherents joined other Laestadian groups. A reconciliation is said to have occurred with the Reawakenists in Viipuri in 1913. By the time Lindström died in 1917, the Narva movement was no longer viable, even if some adherents were still living in 1945.⁷¹

The Oulu Reconciliation Meeting

In response to an invitation from the Reawakenists, a “reconciliation meeting” was held in Oulu in 1911. After Chairman Viktor Virkkala and Pastor Aatu Laitinen had made earnest appeals for unity, the discussion commenced. Hanhivaara, who was one of the first to speak, said of the Reawakening:

⁶⁷ K. T. Lindström, “Muutamia piirteitä Narvan heräyksestä,” *Sanomia Siionista*, July 1902, pp. 137-145.

⁶⁸ Virkkala, pp. 114, 115.

⁶⁹ V. Havas, *Laestadiolaisuuden historia pääpiirteissään* (Oulu: 1927), p. 162.

⁷⁰ Virkkala, p. 120.

⁷¹ Virkkala, pp. 113-121.

As for how this awakening emerged, there was real reason for it, for the doctrine of justification tended to become so one-sided that sanctification was omitted. Upon closer examination, it was found that no sanctification appeared in either doctrine or life. Studying the matter of salvation more closely in the light of the Word of God, it became apparent that God does not justify a person in the condition that he was in before. It began to be noticed that the matter of Christianity had grown dim, that with many it was only on the surface, and when a real awakening came, many became alarmed and had to cry to God for help.

The main rebuttal was made by Kalle Heliste, who said:

The first alien voice in our locality was the incessant phrase, 'We're sleeping.' The next alien voice was the term, 'new awakening.' Then they took the next step and said, 'Everyone is sleeping; everyone has to rise up.' Then, children, they took another step and said, 'God's law has to be fulfilled.' Then they said, 'A person has to be a murderer of the Saviour until death.' The suffering of Christ was made into another law, and not only so, but it was also said that 'a person has to drink of the cup of the wrath of God, and if you have drunk once, you have to drink again.' Then they said, 'A person has to be a spiritual publican until death.' Then they said, 'Man has to remain in the [strait] gate until death.' Then: 'The Bible is not to be explained.' Then: 'The gospel spoils the work of God' and 'the gospel is slop [plaiskua].' Then: 'The forgiveness of sins is an exaggeration and is not within the covers of the Bible.' Then: 'It would be better for them to shout about a dog's blood than about Christ's blood.' Then: 'It would be better if they said they had been cleansed in the dragon's blood than in Christ's blood.' Then: 'There is only one law.' Then: 'One should not preach about the resurrection. It causes a light and lax Christianity.' It was said of the preaching of Christ's resurrection, 'There they hover over the resurrection field.' Of the effects of the grace of God, it was said that they are nervous symptoms, laxness, slackness, etc.

Antti Halttu said:

Hanhivaara mentioned that a man is not justified in the condition that he was in before, though the Bible says that God justifies a person in an ungodly state.

Hanhivaara replied:

In self-defense, I will say that I have never preached the kind of doctrine that a man is justified by works, for even at 15 years of age I understood that a man is justified by faith, but the path of sanctification begins in justification.

The Reawakenists denied that Heliste's charges were true of the Reawakening as a whole. Hanhivaara, knowing that the minutes would be published, tried -- unsuccessfully -- to have them reviewed. He said:

For example, the statement that Christ's blood is no more than a dog's blood horrifies me. It can't be the statement of anyone other than some atheist perhaps, and it seems awful that the awakened are accused of it. It is so terrible that it defiles everything.

Heliste stuck to his charges, saying:

I could even point out the person who has told me, 'It would be better for you to speak of a dog's blood than of Christ's blood.' I have also been told, 'It would be better for you to say that you are washed in the dragon's blood than in Christ's blood' and 'the forgiveness of sins is from the deepest hell.'

Hanhivaara said of the charges:

Some are true, such as the statement that ‘it is not considered necessary to explain the Bible but only to read the Bible.’ I have tried to impress on minds how important it is to read the books of the Bible, particularly the books of the New Testament. The Apostle has sent his epistles to the congregations, and they are to be read precisely as they are. I have endeavored to adhere to this and to explain less. I do not say that the Bible may not also be explained by one who has the ability to do so, but I am not so wise that I could explain it.⁷²

Halttu replied:

I have heard elder Hanhivaara explain the Bible. Why then did the elder stop explaining when the Reawakening came? We see that the apostles explained the Bible and that on the road to Emmaus, Christ explained all the Scriptures that were written of him. So explaining the Bible is not wrong, but the expounder must have the same Spirit in which it is written, for the Bible is a book written by inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

During the meeting, Halttu asked Saarenpää whether he had ever considered the Conservatives “thieves of grace and the serpent’s seed,” to which Saarenpää replied that he did not remember. Halttu then asked more specifically whether he would admit to writing a letter in which he referred to the Conservatives as the serpent’s seed. Saarenpää replied, “I do not remember what I have written.” Halttu then read a portion of an October 27, 1904 letter to P. Kainulainen and others in Joensuu in which Saarenpää describes an incident that occurred in Viipuri:

Hermann [Karjalainen] asked for forgiveness that he has spread the lies of the Tampere people about me there. It is not at all strange that impenitent persons and thieves of grace tell lies about the Christians. It has been so from the beginning and will be so to the end. No reconciliation is possible between the serpent’s seed and the woman’s seed.

After much discussion in regard to other matters, Saarenpää’s memory suddenly improved. He said:

We are accused of lacking forgiveness, but what is to be said of the method of bringing up the offense caused by the letter that I wrote to Joensuu, which was just read and for which I have asked forgiveness in the past and requested that the letter be burned? A promise was made to bury the matter, but now it appears that this has not happened after all, because the letter is still here. (Halttu said aloud, ‘I didn’t know that!’) In this procedure too, there is reason for repentance.

Conservative preacher Heikki Hooli, adopting a surprisingly moderate stance, said that the Reawakenists had calmed down so much that there was no longer much difference between the groups and that he would be “worse than a devil” to keep himself separate from them. He also said:

I would like to note, in regard to this new awakening, that it was indeed quite necessary. Before it began, dissension had already existed among the speakers for at least a decade. The elders of the Tornio River preached not only repentance and forgiveness of sins but also the words of counsel and reproof, but then an aversion to this preaching appeared, and it was said that it was no longer necessary to use the words of rebuke and warning but only to preach of the Son of God. This was said openly. Those who spoke the doctrine of the

⁷² A Conservative, discussing the schism in a 1913 article, writes that if a person who normally remained away from Reawakenist services were present, the question would be asked, “Can this brother at all be believing since he has not been seen in our group?” The leaders would then explain, “He is indeed believing, but he has become intelligent by reading the Bible. In his skull he indeed has a firm faith based on literal knowledge, but his heart is unbroken and unregenerate.” See N. Ryyti, “Muistelmia kristillisyyden hajaantumisen ajoilta Keski-Suomessa.” *Siionin Lähetyslehti*, Oct. 1913, p. 268.

Bible in entirety were named law preachers. In those places where repentance sermons were opposed, carnality appeared. It is true that in those places a new awakening was necessary, but when it lumped everyone into the same dead state, it was not in the right form.

A. Tikkanen, the sole representative of the Firstborn, a group that will be discussed later, called for unity with the Christians of Lapland, saying:

Before the Reawakening, the preaching of repentance was omitted, and finery, love of the world, and other sins became permissible. Many thought that it isn't fitting to preach repentance but only the gospel. Therefore, a new awakening was necessary, but it was guided amiss. There should not have been a new order of grace.

The Reawakenists remained on the defensive and even confessed some of their faults. Hanhivaara said, for example, "There have indeed been weakness and lack of love in me, for which I beg for forgiveness from my heart and pray God that in the future he would increasingly pour the Spirit of grace and love into my heart." However, when Halttu asked whether the Reawakenists would admit doctrinal errors, Hanhivaara replied:

As for doctrine, I do not feel that any change has occurred in it through the Reawakening. I have remained in the doctrine in which I have obtained salvation and will remain in it until death. I have often erred in words, and, indeed, there would have been reason to have more love, but I do not feel that I am guilty in respect to doctrine.⁷³

Later in the year, at the 1911 "big services" in Kokkola, Hooli repented of the position he had taken in the Oulu discussion. He said:

I am compelled by my conscience to say, in regard to some points in the statements I made at the so-called reconciliation meeting in Oulu, which some surmised to have been motivated by patience: I was in error, for patience has its limits, lest error be mixed with it. For this reason, I ask of those who are ailing over this whether they are able to grant forgiveness?

According to the minutes, "with moved hearts, the brothers and sisters granted forgiveness."⁷⁴

Renewed efforts at reconciliation, initiated by the Reawakenists, resulted in poorly attended meetings in Haapajärvi in 1922 and in Oulu in 1923. Other meetings with less sparkle, fizzled later, even if, in Soviet Russia, a lasting reconciliation apparently occurred in 1924 when the Reawakenists saw the error of their ways.⁷⁵

⁷³ The statements made at this meeting are cited from *Pöytäkirja Lestadiolaisten ryhmien sovintokokouksesta Oulussa Maalisk. 22-23 päivinä 1911*, pp. 18-81.

⁷⁴ *Kertomus ja Pöytäkirja kristittyin isoista kokouksista Kokkolassa lokakuun 9, 10, 11 ja 12 päivinä v. 1911* (Kemi: 1911), p. 33.

⁷⁵ See January 7, 1925 letter of Kristiina Rouvinen from St. Petersburg in "Kirje Neuvosto-Venäjältä," *Siionin Lähetyslehti*, Feb. 1925, p. 24.

Issues and Schisms

In 1905 and 1906, a debate occurred among the Reawakenists in regard to the permissibility of consuming blood. The issue is summed up in an editorial comment in the Conservative monthly *Armonsanoma*, published by Pastor Laitinen, which continued to carry articles written by Reawakenists. Laitinen writes:

Due to the weak consciences of Jewish Christians, whose ceremonial law forbade the consumption of blood, the apostles also preserved it for Christians, even though no food in itself is unclean and all eaters of meat consume some blood with it. But the main point in this issue, which ‘does not involve justification by faith,’ is that these matters not be viewed as a reason for judging or despising others.⁷⁶

Problems of a more serious nature emerged for the Reawakenists in the 1920s, when the preacher Aatu Heiskanen adopted the doctrine of rebaptism and began to acquire support for his views. According to Väinö Havas, at their “big services” in Kittilä in 1925, the Reawakenists had to “fervently defend the doctrine of infant baptism and the Lutheran Church’s views of it.” Heiskanen, who finally had himself rebaptized, retained a following of a few dozen people in Kittilä, Kalajoki and Impilahti.⁷⁷

The Reawakenist mouthpiece *Kolkuttaja* ceased to exist in 1918 and was replaced the following year by *Huutavan Ääni*. Internal dissension with regard to cooperation with the state church in mission activity led an internal opposition group led by Einari Peura to reestablish *Kolkuttaja* in 1939, but with the abatement of dissension during the Winter War, both papers were replaced in 1941 by a single mouthpiece, *Vartijan Ääni*, with Peura as its editor. The group also terminated the “Suomen lähetysseuran laestadiolainen haaraosasto” (The Laestadian Branch of the Finnish Missionary Society), which had served as a central organization for the the Reawakenists since 1908.

In 1947, Saarnivaara still noted two trends within the Reawakening. He writes:

Nowadays, the differences, particularly between Conservatism and the newer branch of the Reawakening, are relatively small, for the latter has grown closer to Conservatism’s view of Christianity. Within the Reawakening there is, however, still an older branch, which is close to the original manner of thinking.⁷⁸

As will be seen, however, the reason for this rapprochement of views is to be sought as much in changes in Conservatism as in developments in the Reawakening. In 1952, in any case, the internal friction finally led to a split in the ranks of the Reawakening. The following year, Mikko Torvinen replaced Peura as editor of *Vartijan Ääni*. Peura, who is said to have been influenced by Pentecostalism, then established his own magazine, *Kolkuttaja*, in 1954, from which his supporters became known as the Kolkuttaja Group, which was said to be the more radical of the two groups. Peura himself served as editor for only a short time in 1955, the year of his death.

Thus two Reawakenist organizations are included in researcher Pekka Raittila’s 1967 list of Laestadian groups: the more moderate “Suomen lestadiolaisten lähetysyhdistysten keskusliitto” (Finnish Central Association of Laestadian Missionary Associations), with its mouthpiece *Vartijan*

⁷⁶ *Armonsanoma*, Mar. 1906, p. 57.

⁷⁷ *Laestadiolaisuuden historia pääpiirteissään*, pp. 193-195.

⁷⁸ *Amerikan laestadiolaisuuden eli Apostolis-luterilaisuuden historia*, p. 297.

Ääni, and “Suomen laestadiolainen lähetysliitto” (Finnish Laestadian Missionary Union) -- the Kolkuttaja Group.⁷⁹ It is said that Peura initially intended to have his group, the Kolkuttaja Group, support the missionary activity of the state church, but this idea was vetoed by his second-in-command, Jaakko Miettunen.

Einari Peura’s followers, known also as “peuralaiset,” suffered another schism in 1960. One side was led by Eskil Peura, a brother of Einari, and the other by Heikki Kontio. Eskil Peura’s group is now extinct, but Kontio’s followers, known as “kontiolaiset,” are said to still exist -- without preachers -- in Sodankylä, Pyhäjoki, and Noormarkku, where services are held in homes.

Kolkuttaja ceased publication in 1976. Many Kolkuttaja Group supporters returned to the more moderate group, which is said to be divided into three “currents.” The first of these is the most conservative of the three and uses the old translation of the Bible. The second is noted for being favorable to the state church and all its activities. The third “neo-pietistical” entity feels an attraction to Pentecostalism and is involved in non-Lutheran religious activity. The number of supporters is steadily dwindling, but the group still publishes its own periodical -- *Lähetijä*.⁸⁰

Reawakenist missionaries have been active in other countries, particularly China. They have also toured America, where Saarenpää and Pyörre, for example, preached in 1910 and 1913. Saarnivaara wrote in 1947 that the Reawakenists in America also had two preachers of their own, Lars Levi Aaltonen and Leonard Estola.⁸¹ In spite of this, the American Reawakenists have never formed a separate group but have remained, to some extent secretly, among the Little Firstborn, who will be discussed later.

Typistö’s Summary

Leonard Typistö, summing up the Conservative position in a 1904 book, claims that the Reawakenists “mixed the gospel with the law, trying to achieve a sinless congregation, but everything went otherwise.” He explains:

The Lord’s Apostle Paul writes in Philippians 3:1: ‘Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.’ It is a treacherous trap of the old serpent, by which he ensnares people for himself, when he presents the old gospel, preached from the beginning, as so powerless and ineffective that one has to start changing it and preaching differently and writing differently. It is alleged that the preaching of faith is lax and soft, that people have fallen into slumber and sin, and so it isn’t appropriate to preach faith at this time, but now works and sanctification have to be preached so that people would awaken to better vigilance and a more earnest struggle. Here another manner of preaching and writing appears, by which consciences are led astray from the word of faith and the merit of Jesus into works and the law. Thus, birth is given to mere slaves and children of the bondwoman, who mock and persecute those born of the promise. Preaching and writing are always to occur in one manner, as Jesus commanded, ‘Repentance and remission of sins are to be preached in my name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem unto the ends of the earth’ [Luke 24:47, Acts 1:8]. And again: ‘Preach the gospel to every creature’ [Mark 16:15]. This preaching is correct until the end of the world, repentance wherever vices have taken hold,

⁷⁹ *Lestadiolaisuuden matrikkeli ja bibliografia*, p. 344.

⁸⁰ For more on the new factions that have emerged among the Reawakenists and other groups, see Toivo Kulpakko, “Lestadiolaisuuden yhdeksän suuntaa,” *Vartija*, No. 5-6, 1997, pp. 182-192, and Jouko Talonen, “Suomen Lestadiolaisuuden osaryhmät,” *Perusta*, No. 1, 2000.

⁸¹ *Amerikan laestadiolaisuuden eli Apostolis-luterilaisuuden historia*, p. 296.

free gospel, grace and the remission of sins to the penitent and believing. It strengthens you when you always hear the same gospel, the same preaching of faith, by which you received the Spirit. By the gospel, God does mighty works among you. 'For it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth' [Romans 1:16]. Here is cause for joy. When the gospel is preached in one manner, it always supports, strengthens, secures and establishes us on that rock that stands forever, which is Christ. Shortcomings are not repaired by the doctrine of law and works. It is not by them that powerful works are done in the Kingdom of God for the life, edification and peace of souls, but their true fruit has always been disturbances and heresies. The new man created in God's image is not renewed by the works of the law, even if they are pressed on him with the threat of death. He is renewed only by faith, in the knowledge of Jesus, where he first received life and the Spirit.⁸²

⁸² L. Typpö, *Armo ja Totuus. Ynnä Kristillisiä kirjeitä* (Tampere: 1904), pp. 4, 5.

CHAPTER 3

THE FIRSTBORN GROUP

Origin

The Firstborn Group is characterized by asceticism, compulsory confession and subservience to its leadership in Swedish Lapland, specifically Gällivare. Under its first leader, Joonas Purnu, the group separated from the other Laestadians in Europe in 1900, but its roots go back nearly a quarter of a century, to the arrival of preacher Johan Takkinen in America in 1877 as a mediator in disputes that existed at that time.

Dissension appeared in America almost as soon as congregations were formed in 1872-73 in Calumet, Michigan, with Salomon Korteniemi as pastor, and in Cokato, Minnesota, with Iisakki Barberg as pastor. Some early issues in America seem rather petty, however, such as the one mentioned in an 1877 letter of Mathilda Fogman of Övertorneå (Matarengi), Sweden, to Barberg:

It is clear that your heart may have first been offended, my dear brother, with [Jaakko] Rovainen, because he demanded conviction and confession of the fact that when you first arrived in America you wrote to us too boastfully of your external circumstances, saying, for example, that you wouldn't trade your advantages for the best land in Matarengi, although it was reported here that even at that time you were in great poverty.⁸³

It is difficult to determine to what degree doctrinal issues really existed. J. A. Englund mentions in his history that a dispute had emerged in Minnesota “over whether the crucified Christ or the resurrected Christ is to be preached.”⁸⁴ Little more is known about this matter except that it reappeared in Finland as a dispute in the Reawakening. Preacher Juuso Runtti discusses it in 1923 in a sermon given in Viipuri (Vyborg) on Isaiah 53:

Some feared the preaching of the resurrected Christ and of his victory, presuming that it would result in a Christianity of the brain or knowledge, and so they left it as a matter of secondary importance and considered it more important instead to study the suffering of Christ. Others, however, feared the preaching of the Crucified One in the light presented by the prophet here, thinking that it would lead to legalism, and for this reason they only wanted to view the victory of Christ in the triumphant field of the resurrection.⁸⁵

The elders in Lapland first sent Heikki Parkajoki (also known as Parka-Heikki) and Abram Tapani to try to effect a reconciliation. Their efforts resulted in only a temporary settlement in 1876, which began to come apart in some places even before the emissaries arrived home. In any case, the terms of the settlement, under which Korteniemi and Barberg retained their positions, did

⁸³ February 18, 1877 letter in P. Raittila, *Ylitorniolta Cokatoon* (Tornio: 1981), p. 97.

⁸⁴ Englund, p. 159.

⁸⁵ Sermon in “Raamatun Kristus,” *Rauhan Tervehdys*, June 1927, p. 85.

not appeal to the elders, who supported the opposition. When the emissaries returned home, they found that they were under pressure to repent, which they did, to the great disappointment of those whom they had supported in America.⁸⁶

Takkinen Era Begins

The elders now decided to send Takkinen to America. Takkinen's view of Christianity is aptly summarized in an 1876 letter he sent to Raattamaa after a trip to St. Petersburg:

But along the coast, I was saddened by workers and supporters of the truth because they do not have the strength to care for the wall of the vineyard and bear Christ's yoke, and they are governed by freedom. Only grace is to be preached, not self-denial or brotherly rebuke, for that is legalism, let alone finery -- that is to dull your sword in the sand.⁸⁷

On June 26, 1877, before Takkinen's arrival in Calumet, Raattamaa wrote to Mathilda Fogman, who served the elders as an informal secretary, in regard to certain letters that had arrived from America. These letters had criticized the support of the elders for the opposition in Calumet, and also in Cokato, where Jaakko Rovainen was vying for the pastor's office with Barberg. Raattamaa wrote:

Caleb Wuollet has also written a long letter to me in which he mentions that you have slandered Barberg and Kortenieniemi and even says in his letter that there were also bad women in the Old Testament, such as Jezebel. Today I have also heard what Salomon Kortenieniemi has written. He is of the same opinion as before and demands repentance of you and us because we are strengthening the hands of Rovainen. Caleb also says that you are strengthening Rovainen's dirty hands, but I believe that even today Rovainen's hands are as pure and clean as those of Caleb and Kortenieniemi.⁸⁸

Raattamaa wrote to Fogman again on July 7, 1877, saying, "I and Parka-Heikki are demanding that Caleb and the others ask for forgiveness for what they have written about you" and telling her that Kortenieniemi, who was from Alkkula, needed to ask for forgiveness from the Christians there for his old sins. Raattamaa then adds: "In his letter, Caleb seeks the names of Salomon Kortenieniemi's sins. Brother Huhtasaari can name them if the things that we have been told are true." At the end of his letter, Raattamaa expresses fear that Kortenieniemi and his friends will form a wild-reindeer herd ("mettä tokka") because "Kortenieniemi has already written to Abram Tapani that they have their own wash basin and Holy Spirit, that they don't need to fetch them from Europe, etc. and rejects our letters, saying that they don't need contentious letters such as these."⁸⁹

Takkinen arrived in Calumet in the fall of 1877. In a November 30, 1877 letter from America, he writes that Kortenieniemi finally repented, albeit reluctantly, of the "Alkkula matter." At first,

⁸⁶ Raattamaa, *Kirjeet ja kirjoitukset*, January 23, 1877 letter to M. Fogman, p. 178, and October 25, 1877 letter to N. P. Stark and J. Ruonavaara, p. 194. The specific reason for the repentances was a "letter of reproof," which the emissaries had sent from America to Iisakki Huhtasaari and Mathilda Fogman.

⁸⁷ Letter written from Kittilä in July 1876 in "Saarnaaja Johan Takkisen lähetyskirja Raattamaa vanhimmalle," *Siionin Sanomat*, No. 4, 1893, p. 60.

⁸⁸ Raattamaa, *Kirjeet ja kirjoitukset*, p. 181.

⁸⁹ Raattamaa, *Kirjeet ja kirjoitukset*, p. 182.

according to Takkinen, Kortenieniemi tried to justify himself, but when no one supported him, he “confessed the matter and asked for forgiveness.”⁹⁰ Kortenieniemi was finally deposed in the winter of 1877-78.

It was not long before David Castrén of Calumet, who had been a staunch supporter of Kortenieniemi, changed sides, and, in a series of bombastic articles in the newspaper *Sven Tuuva*, began denouncing him as a power-hungry tyrant who, being unlearned and not gifted, was compelled to write his sermons beforehand. In his third article, he accuses Kortenieniemi of saying:

For broader reading and studying of the Bible make the life of faith mere history in the intellect, and so the internal power of faith disappears and becomes ‘dead faith,’ and the power of grace and the Spirit come to naught, and the justified soul is hurled into a fallen state, etc.!

Upon publication of this article, the newspaper abruptly commented, “The editors of *Sven Tuuva* feel this is enough already, without continuation.”⁹¹ A few days later, in a letter to the editor, a reader recalled the love and unity of a few years past and wrote that “thorns had been sown” in people’s hearts by persons motivated by “a spirit of envy” but that “the first preachers sent from Europe removed the thorns and testified by the Bible that the Christianity in America was correct.” After a period of peace, “the serpent’s seed soon began to sprout again,” according to the same writer, who adds:

These baneful persons, who dress in the garb of humility, sent out lies in their circular letters and with their poisonous tongues in order to win over the hearts of the Europeans and get the fine preacher Takkinen to come here. This man Takkinen thought that, by means of the book of Revelation, he could write Kortenieniemi off as a bad angel, and by his doctrinal prowess, he removed him from office, which was, after all, the wholehearted pursuit of these sheepskin-devils. Then Takkinen began to preach a new awakening, the only text of which that could be found was S. Kortenieniemi. Such a procedure has turned many dozens over to drunkenness and the taverns.⁹²

In the fall of 1878, Takkinen, after a trip to Lapland, took Kortenieniemi’s place as pastor of the Calumet church. In his 1920 history, John Pollari, the well-known preacher of Maple, Wisconsin, tells what happened next:

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.⁹³

⁹⁰ Letter to K. Heikel et al. in P. Raittila, *Lestadiolaisuus Pohjois-Amerikassa vuoteen 1885*, p. 186.

⁹¹ D. Castren, “Muuan sana Suomen kansan kirkonvaiheista Pohjois Amerikassa III,” *Sven Tuuva*, 5 July 1878.

⁹² July 8, 1878 letter signed “Kynä” in *Sven Tuuva*, 12 July 1878.

⁹³ J. Pollari, *Apostolis-Lutherilaisten hajaantumisen syyt Amerikassa* (Duluth: 1920), p. 3.

The Hallites

In 1891, Henrik Koller of Calumet, a supporter of Takkinen, wrote a series of articles in the periodical *Siionin Sanomat*, of which he was the editor, claiming that Kortenieniemi had joined an opposition group led by Heikki Berg and Johan Mullo. He describes the group as follows:

Thus, about a decade ago, these malcontents tore themselves away from the majority of the congregation even outwardly, for internally they had already separated into that 'evangelical' kingdom and their own faction, away from the kingdom of the 'law,' as they called Takkinen's instructional leadership and the majority of the congregation, for they could not endure the teaching of anyone under whom they would have to blend into obedience.

Koller goes on to say that when Peter Strolberg joined this group, which became known as the Hallites (haalilaiset) after they began meeting in a hall that was built in 1885, "they came up with the doctrine of believing 'as pure,' that a person who believes is entirely pure and not sinful, and if he does not believe this, he is still under the law." Koller adds in a footnote: "Salomon Kortenieniemi is said to have taught even in his time that in a Christian the soul does not sin but only the body, although the Lord says, 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die' (Ezekiel 18:4)."⁹⁴

According to the Bible, a believer is simultaneously sinful (I John 1:10) and pure (I John 3:6), for the new man, which receives birth from the Word of God, is created in holiness while the flesh remains unregenerate and impure (Ephesians 4:22-24). However, Pollari asserts in his 1920 history that some of the Hallites held the doctrine that their *flesh* was holy, many of whom were also rebaptized.⁹⁵

Who are the Firstborn?

After the separation of the Hallites, dissension continued in the church because of Takkinen's strong-arm tactics and his demand for strict obedience to the elders in Lapland, who were referred to at that time as the "firstborn" (esikoiset). In a July 15, 1872 letter, Raattamaa applied the term "firstborn" to himself:

Since I am the firstborn among many brethren, I also greet all the Christians of Pajala and Juhonpieti with the warning that we should endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit so that the bonds of love would not break.⁹⁶

In other writings, Raattamaa uses the term "firstborn" to refer to the elders generally, as, for example, in a June 13, 1889 letter to his son Pekka, who had moved to America in 1883, where he sided with the opposition to Takkinen:

I will also answer your question as to where the firstborn are: They have been born again in our time in travail in Swedish Lapland, and this flock, in living faith, has sent preachers to Norway, Finland, Sweden and

⁹⁴ H. Koller, "Sananen selitykseksi," *Siionin Sanomat*, 1891, pp. 185, 186.

⁹⁵ *Apostolis-Lutherilaisten hajaantumisen syyt Amerikassa*, p. 4.

⁹⁶ Letter to Erkki Antti et al. in Raattamaa, *Kirjeet ja kirjoitukset*, p. 125.

America, though preachers have been sent first from Lapland to Muonio and the Pajala congregation, which the good shepherd Jesus has brought into one sheepfold, even into the congregation of the firstborn, which are written in heaven.⁹⁷

In an 1891 letter, in which Raattamaa again defines “the congregation of the firstborn of our time” as being “first born in travail in Swedish Lapland,” he adds that “it is in accordance with the Holy Bible to heed the congregation of the firstborn as widely as the revival has spread, which is the pillar and ground of the truth, where Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone.”⁹⁸ Erkki Antti also writes in an 1877 letter:

But do you understand that the congregation of the firstborn are those who have first become Christians and then have remained in the doctrine in which the Spirit and life have been received and that those who separate from this flock are no longer part of the congregation but a wild-reindeer herd and lost sheep, for the Chief Shepherd has said that there is to be one sheepfold and one shepherd, and that is the congregation?⁹⁹

The Scriptural passage in question is: “But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, etc.” (Hebrews 12:22,23). The word “firstborn” (Greek: *prototokon*) is in the genitive plural in the Finnish Bible, where it is rendered “*esikoisten*.” According to the Bible, all firstborn belong to the Lord and are hallowed unto him (Numbers 3:13). Thus, all believers, being in Christ, the true Firstborn, unto whom all precedence, priority and holiness are ascribed in the Word of God (Colossians 1:12-19), are the Lord’s, and may claim firstborn status as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17).

Takkinen Era Ends

A reconciliation was effected in Calumet in 1885 during a visit of Minnesota preachers Jacob Wuollet (a brother of Caleb) and Pekka Raattamaa. Forgiveness was mutually proclaimed but it was not long before the quarreling resumed. In 1887, Takkinen and Kalle Daniels (also known as Tiinan Kalle) made a trip to Finland, where they sought help from the elders. When they returned to America the following year, matters were the same, if not worse, for many were seeking a new pastor from Finland, but the elders refused to send anyone to replace Takkinen. However, Koller writes that when the old and respected preacher Eliel Juola arrived in 1888 and was allowed to preach, “all the old disputants, including those in the hall, were soon gathered together, and all were welcome in the condition they were in, for he was the one who was to blend all into one, into good soil, in the land of America.” Koller then adds in regard to Juola:

After awhile he condemned the emissary of the congregation of the firstborn, Johan Takkinen, as a heretic, and he compared the firstborn, that is, the first preachers of this movement of Christianity, to Cain, Ishmael and Esau, saying that these were also firstborn and telling how dangerous it is to be obedient to them.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Raattamaa, *Kirjeet ja kirjoitukset*, pp. 345, 346.

⁹⁸ December 14, 1891 letter to America in Raattamaa, *Kirjeet ja kirjoitukset*, p. 393.

⁹⁹ December 15, 1877 letter to N. Stark in Juhonpieti, p. 75.

¹⁰⁰ Koller, p. 199.

Takkinen was finally replaced as pastor by Johan Roanpää in an annual church election in 1888.¹⁰¹ Takkinen's supporters contested the election -- unsuccessfully -- in court. Takkinen's side claimed that, among other irregularities, non-members, including Hallites, had been allowed to vote.¹⁰² Raattamaa's reaction to Takkinen's removal is given in his June 13, 1889 letter to his son Pekka (Pietari):

In many letters, I have asked you to avoid contentious disputes. I am still surprised that you argue against Takkinen, regarding whom you have written to me previously that he has shown you fatherly love both materially and spiritually. Your late mother said that many preachers have visited here from Finland but Takkinen is the best. . . . Eliel Juola might be a good preacher, but his doctrine caused a greater dispute among the Christians than had existed previously in America. I indeed, with a large congregation, testify to you, Pietari, in the name and precious blood of Jesus, the forgiveness of your weaknesses and faults, and my opinion is that you should reconcile with brother Takkinen, each forgiving the other his shortcomings.

The raising of the issue of the election in the secular courts was particularly offensive to many. In fact, the unconditional support that Takkinen had received from the elders, particularly Erkki Antti, waned as a result. Erkki Antti writes in an 1889 letter:

Is that, moreover, the fruit of peace and love that a Christian goes to court with Christians before the world's judges in regard to the pastorate and church? I, however, feel indeed that someone better than me would be appropriate for this precious office. And if the Christians were to say that I am not suitable this time, I would give the position to another. Since the Christians wanted it so, why didn't brother Takkinen let Roanpää fill the position for a year, without going to court?¹⁰³

In an 1890 letter, Erkki Antti writes:

I have not written to Takkinen's party recently, but now I have decided to write nothing but gospel. Since they have so little for others, they probably have very little for themselves, for a person gives what he has. Even a generous person cannot give what he does not have.¹⁰⁴

The elders continued to demand reconciliation. Raattamaa and a large number of preachers, who were gathered in Lannavaara in 1890, signed a joint letter to America in which they called for a restoration of love, expressing "great sorrow" that Takkinen has been "forbidden" to preach in the church. They added that the "denying of the church to Takkinen has not happened in accordance with the Scriptures or God's Word but is a transgression requiring repentance."¹⁰⁵

In the summer of 1890, Arthur Leopold Heideman, an ordained pastor, arrived in America, in response to a request from the Calumet church, to replace Roanpää as pastor. Later in the year, preacher and songwriter Paavali Ervasti visited America, where his pure evangelical sermons endeared him to Heideman's group. Pollari claims that this is when the Hallites returned to the church. This seems to conflict with Koller's account, which is given above. Whatever the case, Pollari writes that repentance was demanded of the Hallites for their "false doctrine." They, in turn,

¹⁰¹ Roanpää died in 1896 with Aapo Hietanen while on a trip to Cape Cod. Unfamiliar with then modern lighting systems, they apparently blew out a gaslight in their hotel room in Boston and were asphyxiated.

¹⁰² Koller, p. 199.

¹⁰³ July 15, 1889 letter to M. Pekkala in Juhonpieti, p. 209. Raattamaa also disapproved of the litigation. See his January 12, 1891 letter to Takkinen in Raattamaa, *Kirjeet ja kirjoitukset*, p. 369.

¹⁰⁴ August 29, 1890 letter to O. Koskamo et al. in Juhonpieti, p. 229.

¹⁰⁵ February 20, 1890 letter in Raattamaa, *Kirjeet ja kirjoitukset*, p. 361.

demanded that the others ask for forgiveness for condemning them. According to Pollari, there were “legalistic hearts” on both sides. Pollari also mentions that the preacher Johan Perä, influenced by Mullo, started to attack the men who preached in Calumet at that time, namely, Antti Rajaniemi, Matti Tauriainen, the Wuollet brothers, Pekka Raattamaa and Johan Mursu. Perä found as a “good reason” that “the fear of the Lord” had been rejected, and so he began to preach it, but the others rose against it, fearing legalism. Pollari goes on to say that Mullo and his friends also started demanding that the Ten Commandments be preached, but the others opposed this, saying, “the law is not for the righteous.”¹⁰⁶

On March 1, 1891, the Calumet church held a meeting at which it was decided to seek a settlement with Takkinen’s supporters (takkislaiset). However, Takkinen -- who realized about this time that the litigation was to no avail -- decided to build his own church. In the fall, therefore, his supporters built their “little church” across the street (Pine Street), but then both congregations decided to hold a joint meeting to settle their differences, which brought great joy to many. However, such a simple solution was apparently unacceptable to Takkinen, who said that the elders should send someone to supervise the proceedings. He then traveled with Olli Matoniemi to Lapland to explain the situation, leaving Kalle Ojala as pastor in his place.

While Takkinen and Matoniemi were in Lapland, two letters arrived from Calumet, one from each congregation, criticizing Takkinen’s actions. Heideman’s church wrote on November 3, 1891:

Some here in Calumet do not seem to be striving to unite, which is confirmed by the [new] church building, but we have effected a reconciliation with brother Kalle [Daniels] and some others and have decided to hold a general meeting here in America, to which the preachers would be invited, to investigate the origin of the dispute, and we presented this idea to Takkinen, some of us together with some of those who currently love him, but he rose against it, saying that there is no judge to decide matters, and he intends to fetch judges from there in Europe.

Takkinen’s supporters wrote on November 10, 1891:

Beloved brother Takkinen has received a commission to Europe from a small group. And our wish would be that brother Takkinen would return from Europe, preaching reconciliation, because we who love Takkinen in America have been greatly grieved by Takkinen’s current trip to Europe, for we had the intention that brother Takkinen would participate with us in the voice of reconciliation, in accordance with the advice of the elders.¹⁰⁷

A December 14, 1891 letter of Raattamaa to America approving of the reconciliation contains the following postscript signed by Takkinen and Matoniemi:

We also want to participate in this reconciliation. We ask forgiveness from the brothers with whom we have been disputing and, in the name and blood of Jesus, we forgive them from the heart.¹⁰⁸

In Finland, Takkinen died of pneumonia on February 13, 1892, and Matoniemi, who recovered from the same ailment, returned alone to America. In May 1892, a letter was published in *Siionin Sanomat* in which Takkinen’s followers asked for forgiveness for having tried to recover the Calumet church in court.

¹⁰⁶ *Apostolis-Lutherilaisten hajaantumisen syyt Amerikassa*, p. 6.

¹⁰⁷ The two letters are in *Siionin Sanomat*, 1892, pp. 79-82; cited in *Amerikan laestadiolaisuuden eli Apostolis-luterilaisuuden historia*, pp. 87-90.

¹⁰⁸ Letter in “Sovinto ja rauha Jeesuksessa,” *Sanomia Siionista*, Feb. 1892, p. 20.

The 1897 Lannavaara Services

In 1897, at the annual “big services” in Lannavaara, which is in Vittangi Parish in Sweden, a dispute occurred over Pastor Aatu Laitinen’s spiritual condition. According to historian Carl Edquist, when the services continued later at a meeting place known as Nikukka in Vittangi, Joonas Purnu mentioned in a sermon that a “Finnish lad, who has never come into the church of the firstborn, tramples the elders of the firstborn congregation under his feet and corrupts Christianity in our communities through his leaflets, which make their way into every home.” The listeners took this to be a reference to Laitinen and his magazine *Sanomia Siionista*. According to Edquist, Laitinen’s friends conferred and decided to rebuke Purnu. The next day, therefore, after Raattamaa had preached, August Lundberg, who had been sent by Princess Eugénie to run her school for Lapp children in Lannavaara, asked the elders publicly and individually whether pastors Grape and Laitinen had rightly entered God’s congregation and were to be respected as true teachers and shepherds. Affirmative answers were given in turn by Raattamaa and other elders, including Purnu, who denied that the “Finnish lad” he had referred to was Laitinen. In spite of this, according to Edquist, Lundberg said that he was convinced that not all were telling the whole truth, and he presented, on behalf of the congregation, a warning to Purnu, pointing out, on the basis of the fifth chapter of Acts, the danger of lying to the Holy Ghost.¹⁰⁹

A differing account of the meeting is given by Viktor Appelqvist, a defender of Purnu. In a letter to Edquist, he claims that Lundberg asked the elders, including Purnu, whether Laitinen had been born again and received affirmative answers. Then Lundberg said that Purnu had preached against Laitinen the previous winter in Svappavaara and that witnesses were present. However, despite efforts, he could not produce them, was at a loss as to what to do next, and, turning to Purnu, said: “I consider Joonas a precious elder. Now you speak!” Appelqvist claims that during this incident, Raattamaa, realizing that Lundberg was behaving imprudently, left the room, sighing, “Oh, my, the honor of these pastors!”¹¹⁰

According to an anonymous account of the same meeting, which has been found among Erkki Antti’s papers in the Oulu provincial archives, Iisakki Kuoksu, a Purnu supporter, pointed out as a fault of Laitinen that the latter had written that it is not permissible to preach the forgiveness of sins *seiniä myöten*, that is, “all-inclusively” or “indiscriminately.” Lundberg pointed out that the expression “forgiveness of sins *seiniä myöten*” is found neither in the Bible nor in the sermons of Laestadius and that only penitent persons were present in the house of Cornelius (Acts 10). He explained:

Brother Kuoksu is a poor fisherman if he salts good and rotten fish in the same crock. Peter did not testify forgiveness to Simon the sorcerer but said, ‘thou hast neither part nor lot in this word, for thy heart is not right in the sight of God’ [Acts 8:21]. We must correctly divide the Word of God, proclaiming to the penitent, grace and the forgiveness of sins, but to the impenitent, God’s judgment and punishment until they repent.

¹⁰⁹ C. Edquist, *Ropande röster i ödemarken* (Stockholm: 1916), pp. 42-49. In a September 1, 1900 letter to N. Jönsson, Erkki Antti defends Grape and Laitinen: “And the youngsters in the West should recall what the late Elder Raattamaa said about Pastor Grape and Pastor Laitinen at the Nikukka meetinghouse in Vittangi when we came from Lannavaara. . . . Elder Joonas Purnu also testified at that time, and I confirmed even the place where Pastor [Grape] became a Christian, and the late Antin Pieti confirmed that Aatu Laitinen had become a Christian.” See Juhonpieti, *Kirjeet ja kirjoitukset*, p. 310.

¹¹⁰ Edquist, pp. 65, 66. Lundberg, despite his high connections, was not ordained.

Strangely, these comments did not evoke a broader debate, though Raattamaa is said to be the first preacher to have proclaimed the forgiveness of sins *seiniä myöten* -- from behind a table in the Sakko home in Kitkiöjoki in the winter of 1853-54.¹¹¹ Also, according to Johansson's 1892 history, "Sins are occasionally forgiven 'seiniä myöten' at services, and the one absolved 'is supposed to scrupulously believe all his sins forgiven.'" ¹¹² Such a doctrine is, of course, anathema to Reawakenists such as Aatto Salo, who writes in 1918:

The proclamation of the forgiveness of sins in later Laestadianism by extremists, without consideration of spiritual condition, *seiniä myöten*, is far from the point of view of Laestadius.¹¹³

Juuso Runtti, in the 1923 sermon cited previously, presents his own view of the matter:

The Lord says, 'To the poor the gospel is preached' [Luke 7:22]. But Peter says that it is to be preached to all creatures [Acts 2:39]. Here we are faced with two differing Bible passages. However, by studying the Bible, we can draw the conclusion from them that the gospel is to be preached to all but that it is acceptable only to the poor, to those who are out of provisions and are being swallowed up by a gaping bottomless pit that has inescapably opened before them.¹¹⁴

Pollari is evidently defending the practice of proclaiming absolution *seiniä myöten* when he writes:

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.¹¹⁵

Did Raattamaa Bless Purnu?

The Firstborn claim that at the 1897 Vittangi services Raattamaa ceded his authority to Joonas Purnu. In a 1901 letter to editor Johan Kieri in America, the Gällivare elders write:

And as Raattamaa said even the last time in Vittangi, while laying his hands on Joonas Purnu, 'Now we are leaving this entire government and office with you, for you are the one we have found faithful to take care of and show concern for all the congregations so that the Lord's flock would remain united, as I have done together with the congregation of the firstborn.'¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ S. Paulaharju, *Kiveliöitten kansaa. Pohjois-Ruotsin suomalaisseuduilta* (Porvoo & Helsinki: 1961), pp. 299. Paulaharju's source is Hilta Parkajoki. The time of this event is determined by Miettinen in *Lestadiolainen heräysliike I*, pp. 262-264.

¹¹² Johansson, p. 253.

¹¹³ A. Salo, *Herätyksen ajoilta. Vähäisiä muistelmia* (Helsinki: 1918), p. 26.

¹¹⁴ "Raamatun Kristus," p. 82.

¹¹⁵ *Apostolis-Lutherilaisten hajaantumisen syyt Amerikassa*, p. 9.

¹¹⁶ December 10, 1901 letter from Israel Nattavaara et al. in J. Kieri, *Aikakautemme Vanhinten Kirjoituksia* (Helsinki:1903), p. 146. This letter, signed also by Purnu, is omitted in subsequent editions.

The letters in Kieri's book *Aikakautemme Vanhinten Kirjoituksia*, from which this passage is quoted, have been revised to some extent by Kieri, a strong supporter of Purnu and Takkinen. There is no evidence, however, to support the oft-repeated charge that Raattamaa's second wife Karoliina did not accurately write that which the aged preacher dictated. Comparisons of the letters in Kieri's book with the originals and other copies prove that the changes were made after they had been sent. These changes involve mainly the word "firstborn," which, as historian Olaus Brännström claims, has been systematically inserted in places deemed appropriate, as for example, before the word "congregation."¹¹⁷ However, as Raittila has pointed out, many of the discrepancies noted by Brännström are the result of changes made by opponents of the Firstborn.¹¹⁸ This is evidently the case in the previously quoted July 15, 1872 letter of Raattamaa, as published by the Conservatives in 1907, in which Raattamaa, instead of being the "firstborn among many brethren" is the "elder among many brethren."¹¹⁹

There is a degree of unreliability in all published material. A glaring example is a two-volume book published in 1884 by Laitinen under the title *Valituista kristittyin kirjeitä* (Selected Christian Letters). Karl Heikel comments on these volumes in a November 14, 1884 letter to Grape:

It is unfortunate that some of the 'selected Christian letters' are completely changed. There are also errors: One that bears my signature is Olli Väitalo's -- an excellent letter otherwise.¹²⁰

Historians, who are often dependent on published material, point out, perhaps too optimistically, that most editors will not radically distort the words of living writers, who might object to inaccurate publication of their writings.

Even if the 1901 letter quoted above is genuine -- and there is no evidence that it is not -- this does not mean that Raattamaa is quoted correctly in it or, much less, that his actual words, whatever they were, are to be interpreted in the papistical manner of the Firstborn. Saarnivaara seems to agree, however, with the Firstborn account of Raattamaa's ceding of power to Purnu. He claims that Jalmar Kyrö of Elo, Michigan, but originally from Korpilompolo, Sweden, told him that he heard Iisakki Ohtana and Nikkari-Tuomas, say, after returning from the Lannavaara services, that Raattamaa had specifically blessed Joonas Purnu to be the leader of the "firstborn congregation" because he himself was too old.¹²¹

According to Firstborn writer Lauri Koistinen, Raattamaa's blessing meant that Purnu could never fall away:

In 1897, Raattamaa turned his position over to Joonas Purnu by a public laying on of hands in the presence of the congregation in Lannavaara. This act was not based on any human invention, but the Holy Spirit was present. God's Spirit has never erred in such laying on of hands, but the one who has received the blessing by this means has remained faithful in this calling to the very end.¹²²

¹¹⁷ O. Brännström, *Den laestadianska själavårdstraditionen i Sverige under 1800-talet* (Uppsala: 1962), pp. 238-243.

¹¹⁸ P. Raittila, *Lestadiolaisuuden vanhimmista kirjekokoelmista ja -julkaisuista* (Oulu: 1969), pp. 393-397.

¹¹⁹ L. Typpö, *Kirjeitä virvoitukseksi köyhille matkustajille elämän tiellä* (Tampere: 1907), p. 46.

¹²⁰ Letter cited in P. Raittila, *Albert Heikelin ja J. Fr. Thauvónin perheiden kirjeenvaihtoa 1800-luvulla* (Helsinki: 1965), p. 151.

¹²¹ *Amerikan laestadiolaisuuden eli Apostolis-luterilaisuuden historia*, postscript (lisäys) to page 118.

¹²² L. Koistinen, *Den andliga styrelsens skiften i den förstfödda laestadianska församlingen i Sveriges Lappmark* (Pieksämäki: 1976), p. 78.

Raattamaa's death in 1899 facilitated the formation of a separate group of Firstborn. This group is also known as Western Laestadians and "gellivaaralaiset" as distinguished from the Eastern Laestadians, that is, the Conservatives. The holding of separate services by the two sides in Svappavaara, Sweden, in 1900 marks the beginning of the schism, at least in Swedish Lapland.

The 1901 Gällivare Meeting

In Edquist's history there is an account of an attempt at reconciliation that took place when certain Conservative preachers arrived in Gällivare in 1901. When Firstborn preachers, hearing of their presence, also arrived, meetings were held, where Appelqvist gave a sermon, the first part of which is identical with the July 25, 1897 letter of Purnu quoted previously. Appelqvist thus, repeating by heart this letter of Purnu, who was also present, urged the listeners to remain in the doctrine from which they have received life and the Spirit and not to be offended by the congregation of the firstborn. He reminded them of how, in the time of the apostles and Luther, the ordained pastors opposed Christianity and noted how few of them, even today, have a desire, together with the lay preachers, to build the congregation of the Lord, to remain in unity of spirit with it and to be reproached for the name of Jesus. Therefore, confidence should not be placed in them or in "any congregation other than the one that we have entered through the bloody door, which, according to the Apostle's statement, is the mother of us all." Noting that the camp of the saints was surrounded by Gog and Magog, Appelqvist said of Nikkari-Tuomas, whose name means "Thomas the carpenter":

As long as Raattamaa was alive, he planed and hammered, and so Raattamaa never knew him. But now that Raattamaa has died, he is growing so old and trembles so much that he cannot work as a carpenter, and so he has become a preacher.

While saying these words, Appelqvist allegedly imitated Tuomas' voice and manner of trembling and then turned to Mikko Pääkkölä, a partner of Tuomas, with the question: "Who is the firstborn?" When Pääkkölä replied, "Christ," Appelqvist continued:

When asked who the firstborn is, they reply in a querulous tone that it is Christ. We know, of course, that Christ was the first firstborn, that he gave the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven to Peter and that Peter was the rock on which Christ built his congregation. At that time, the Christians were also very zealous in gathering around the elder in Jerusalem. In Christ's stead, he led the congregation. But the question is: Who is *now* the firstborn? Who now has the keys of the kingdom of heaven, around whom we are now to gather to be saved?

According to Edquist, when Pääkkölä did not answer, Appelqvist presented the same question to Tuomas, who began to explain at length that Abel was the firstborn in his time, mentioning other Old Testament types of Christ, but Appelqvist interrupted him, saying,

We are simple folk and do not understand learned explanations. If you have no better reply, keep your mouth shut!

Edquist then describes a disorderly debate that ensued over whether Johan Sirkanmaa had written a letter containing accusations against Purnu.¹²³ Someone shouted, “Brothers and sisters, believe in Joonas Purnu!” Joonas, hearing this in another room, where he had been drinking coffee, stuck his head in through the door, saying, “Believe in God!” Pastor Olof Bergqvist then rose with an open Bible and read, in an earnest tone, the words of Christ in Luke 11:32: “Behold, a greater than Jonas is here.” These words, according to Edquist, had a dampening effect because “many no doubt believed that Christ had spoken specifically about Joonas Purnu.” When the commotion resumed, Meri-Pietari (also known as Peder Fjeldal) shouted:

For 40 years, I traveled and preached with Raattamaa, but as for these Finnish fellows, Nikkari-Tuomas, Sirkanmaa and Pääkkölä, I never caught sight of them. I don’t know where they were, whether they were underground or in Finland, Norway or Russia, but now they have come from Finland and hell to besiege the camp of the saints, the beloved city.

The Firstborn, strong proponents of the view that preachers should remain in their assigned areas, apparently felt that their rivals had no business preaching on their turf. Appelqvist, in a 1916 letter to Edquist, in which he discusses this meeting, which the Firstborn refer to as the “robber synod” (ryöväri synoodi), seems to confirm, if nothing else, at least that he followed the line of questioning described above in regard to apostolic succession:

For my text, I took the eighth chapter of Romans. During the explanation, I presented a question to Pääkkölä, but when he did not reply, Nikkari-Tuomas offered to do so. The assertion that I asked Tuomas to be quiet is just as much a lie as everything else. I think I have received the kind of upbringing from my parents, in addition to what I have learned from Christianity, that I do not ask an old man to be silent.¹²⁴

Internal Dissension

After Purnu’s death in 1902, the Firstborn leadership is said to have become “collective” in nature.¹²⁵ As for Appelqvist, historian Dagmar Sivertsen writes that his unsuitability as a leader became so evident by 1915-1916 that he was “expelled” from the group.¹²⁶ However, even if Appelqvist was eclipsed by Viktor Björkman, Frans Parakka and others, he remained a member of the group and continued to sign letters with them until at least 1928, about 10 years before his death.

The Firstborn are known in Finland by the name “Vanha-Laestadiolais-Kristillinen Yhdistys” (Old Laestadian-Christian Association). Their doctrine has been disseminated in their periodicals *Fadersrösten* and *Rauhan Side*. Firstborn preachers rarely fail, whenever the opportunity arises, to assert “full trust and confidence in the elders in Lapland.” In its 1974 history, the American branch, known as the Old Apostolic Lutheran Church of America, draws a “lesson” from past schisms:

¹²³ See Sirkanmaa’s May 19, 1900 letter to O. Koskamo in L. Koistinen & E. Mäkelä, *Vanhinten Kirja III* (Lappeenranta: 1989), pp. 105-107.

¹²⁴ Edquist, pp. 50-69.

¹²⁵ P. Raittila, *Esikoislaestadiolaisuus Suomessa* (Helsinki: 1984), p. 205.

¹²⁶ D. Sivertsen, *Laestadianismen i Norge* (Oslo: 1955), p. 202. Sivertsen’s source is an October 17, 1945 letter from H. Kvandahl, which gives the reason for Appelqvist’s expulsion as a “moral downfall” (p. 475).

This lesson causes us to try and test ourselves that we wouldn't begin to form our own opinions, but rather place our understandings, no matter how right they seem to us, before the right judges: Christians having the Holy Spirit. This lowliness, humility and obedience to the rule of the congregation is the secret of strength. We must place our trust in God and His congregation that has the Holy Spirit. Man can err but the Holy Spirit does not err.¹²⁷

At about the turn of the century, the Firstborn in America divided into two groups, the Old Firstborn and Little Firstborn. As will be seen, the more radical Old Firstborn received the support of the Firstborn in Europe, and the other group began to repair relations with Heideman's church. By 1914, the Old Firstborn were again divided internally. Some sided with Matoniemi and others with Kieri. A reconciliation appeared to be effected in 1916, when Kaarlo Toivonen arrived from Lapland, but by the following year it was evident that the split was not healed, and even a third group was forming. The problems continued until 1920, when a reconciliation finally took place as the result of a visit to America by elders Iisakki Niku and Frans Parakka.¹²⁸

In 1965, a schism occurred among the Firstborn in Europe. A radical minority broke with the main group, led by Elder Gunnar Jönsson. The minority is known by the names "leeviläiset" and "pikkuleeviläiset" after its main leader, Levi Älvgren, also known as "Pikku-Leevi" (Little Levi) because he was only 153 centimeters tall. According to Lauri Koistinen, a spokesman for the minority, the trouble actually began in 1946, when J. P. Stöckel and Gunnar Jönsson, traveling in America, established "a new spiritual government" with former leader Arthur Niska now outranked by Samuel Juvonen. Koistinen charges, among other things, that the majority group began to tolerate pictures, photographs, flowers and fashionable clothing; women ceased using aprons; men began wearing modern hats and white shirts; organs, radios and televisions became permissible; wreaths were laid at funerals; birthdays and father's and mother's days were celebrated; and people engaged in sports, even on Sundays. Koistinen also accuses the majority of using the new translation of the Swedish Bible and a revised Swedish edition of Laestadius' sermons published by Per Boreman in 1957 under the name *Evangeliepostilla*. According to the minority, none of Laestadius' words, even obscene ones, should be changed or omitted because he is the seventh angel of Revelation 10:7 and "every word he preached after 1844 is by the Holy Spirit" and "every word is God's Word and is to be taken seriously."¹²⁹

By 1976, the minority had acquired support in other countries -- in America, mainly in Minnesota, among the offspring and friends of Arthur Niska, and in Norway in a group of radicals led by Thoralf Jensen, August Krågh and Hans Danielsen. The minority ran into new trouble, however, when Sten Johansson refused to add his signature to those of other minority leaders in the introduction to Koistinen's history of the 1965 schism. Johansson did not object to the history -- at least initially -- but felt that signatures were unnecessary. In any case, his refusal began to cause another schism in 1976.¹³⁰ According to Koistinen, Johansson was actually trying to usurp the leadership of the group. Koistinen writes:

¹²⁷ *History of Living Christianity in America*, p. 34.

¹²⁸ See correspondence published in K. Panula and E. Reunamo, *Vanhinten Kirja II* (Tampere: 1966), pp. 180-212.

¹²⁹ L. Koistinen, *Hengellisen hallituksen vaiheet ensinsyntyneessä laestadiolaisessa seurakunnassa Ruotsin Lapinmaalla* (Pieksämäki: 1978), pp. 19, 29-33.

¹³⁰ *Hengellisen hallituksen vaiheet ensinsyntyneessä laestadiolaisessa seurakunnassa Ruotsin Lapinmaalla*, pp. 125, 129-134. See Johansson's negative comments on the history in the August 16, 1977 letter of Johansson et al. in L. Koistinen & E. Mäkelä, *Vanhinten Kirja IV* (Lappeenranta: 1990), p. 950.

Sten Johansson became so enthusiastic about the success of our congregation in America and Norway that he felt that he had already satisfactorily reached the goal of becoming the leading figure of an international movement. It is not by his work, however, that the international 'conquests' were achieved, but the person responsible for this is mainly this author.¹³¹

By 1977, the power struggle within the minority left Älvgren and Koistinen with only one supporter in America, the late Sophia Hill of South Dakota. Koistinen and certain fellow preachers have made several trips to America, however, where they claim to have "new connections" in various Laestadian camps. Their goal, according to Koistinen, is to "break down the dividing walls among awakened and broken hearts with the pure gospel of Christ, which gathers all the followers of Jesus to one mountain of Zion, into the lap of the congregation of the firstborn."¹³² The Firstborn tradition of using vulgar language in the manner of Laestadius has not been an asset in this floundering ecumenical endeavor.

In 1979, Sten Johansson's followers, known as "steeniläiset," suffered another schism. Melvin and Ralph Niska -- sons of Arthur Niska -- divided into two camps in America. Ralph left Melvin and Johansson but remained in spiritual union with Jensen in Norway, who split from Krågh and Danielsen, who stayed with Johansson. Ralph Niska is accused of rejecting exhortation in regard to conduct, saying that fruit comes of itself and that if a preacher demands fruit it is legalism. Melvin is said to have 13 children, about half of whom have sided with Ralph. After Melvin's death, a son ("Little Melvin") who remained loyal to his father became the leader of his group.

Conservative Views of the Firstborn

In a February 28, 1907 letter, a large number of Conservative preachers, meeting in Lannavaara, wrote to America:

Neither at the last meeting in Vittangi nor anywhere else has the late Raattamaa given rule over the congregation into the custody of Joonas Purnu or any other preacher, though there were indeed many preachers in whom the late Raattamaa had even more confidence than in Joonas Purnu. Neither firstborn status nor age appears to make anyone infallible, but the devil tempted even the Son of God, and thus he tempts young and old Christians; and let him who thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall, for God resisteth the proud but he giveth his grace unto the humble.

The letter goes on to say that "it was not the congregation" that chose men such as David, Solomon, John the Baptist, Luther, Laestadius and Raattamaa, but "it was all done by the Lord Sabaoth, when he selected these men while still in their mother's womb for this work and, from their childhood, without their knowledge or that of the congregation, trained them and gave them the Spirit and gifts."¹³³

Typmö, in his 1904 book, sums up the Conservative view of the Firstborn:

¹³¹ *Vanhinten Kirja IV*, p. 7.

¹³² *Vanhinten Kirja IV*, p. 10. Their connections appear to be mainly in Federationist congregations in which they have preached in various states.

¹³³ Letter entitled "Lähetyskirje Ameriikkaan," signed by J. Sirkanmaa et al. in *Armonsanoma*, May 1907, pp. 93, 94.

When the devil saw that this new [Reawakenist] doctrine did not succeed very well to his honor, he inflated new soldiers for himself in Swedish Lapland in an old Christian's guise. They have now come boasting of their firstborn status, their infallibility, in the manner of the pope. Thus, the devil, in the form of an angel of light, took the old ship, intending to send the children of God sailing to destruction in it, since he didn't succeed with his new vessel. Oh, dear friends, be not deceived by divers and strange winds of doctrine. Always hold fast, in childlike faith, to the rock of salvation that stands forever, which is Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, the true Firstborn among many brethren, by whose bloody merit each of us is blessed with the same inheritance.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ *Armo ja Totuus. Ynnä Kristillisiä kirjeitä*, pp. 5, 6.

CHAPTER 4

THE LITTLE FIRSTBORN

Origin

In 1893, during a visit of Joonas Purnu and Jöns Mäntyvaara as emissaries of the elders, the reconciliation was formalized in Calumet. A committee of 12 men from each side was formed, which drew up a formal letter of reconciliation to be sent to Europe. It was also decided to alternately hold services in both churches, but this arrangement was short-lived, and it was not long before the practice of holding separate services resumed.

In 1899, Matoniemi moved to Lake Norden, South Dakota, apparently because he realized that the majority in the “little church” preferred Kalle Ojala as pastor. Torsten Estensen was pastor there, but Matoniemi evidently feared competition more from John Lumijärvi of Astoria, Oregon, who had arrived in America in 1882 with the blessing of the elders and preached in South Dakota occasionally. As a result of Matoniemi’s accusatory letters, Lumijärvi went to Lapland in 1902. Mäntyvaara and other preachers then confirmed in an August 18, 1902 letter to America that Lumijärvi was a “preacher of pure doctrine.”¹³⁵ According to Saarnivaara, this “testimony” of “old preachers” was revoked later by a letter sent by younger preachers in whom Matoniemi had instilled suspicion of Lumijärvi. Saarnivaara tells how, after long negotiations, an apparent reconciliation was achieved, with both sides asking for forgiveness, but Matoniemi then resumed his slandering, and the two sides began to hold services at separate times.¹³⁶ The Firstborn elders were still working for a reconciliation as late as 1906.¹³⁷ By then, however, the group was irreconcilably divided into the strict and ascetic Old Firstborn (vanhat esikoiset) of Matoniemi, Koller and Kieri and the moderate Little Firstborn (pikkuesikoiset) of Lumijärvi, Ojala and Estensen.

The Annual Conventions

In an attempt at reconciliation, all the groups were invited to a conference in Calumet in 1908. The Old Firstborn did not participate, but the other groups, including the Little Firstborn, were

¹³⁵ An English translation of this letter is in C. Kulla, *The Streams of Life* (Brush Prairie: 1984-85), pp. 351, 352.

¹³⁶ *Amerikan laestadiolaisuuden eli Apostolis-luterilaisuuden historia*, pp. 120-122.

¹³⁷ *History of Living Christianity in America*, p. 16. Mäntyvaara apparently refused to repent of his August 18, 1902 letter for several years. See *Vanhinten Kirja III*, p. 688.

present, and the Little Firstborn leaders even repented there.¹³⁸ Mullo's Hallites, who were still members of the "big church," though spiritually separate, also participated fully in the reconciliation. Before the meeting began, Arthur Heideman left for Finland with his son Paul, whom he left there to study theology. Saarnivaara claims that when Arthur was asked by preacher Jacob Uitti whether he had anything against participating, he only replied, "Will Roosevelt also be coming?"¹³⁹

At the 1908 meeting, it was decided to hold a similar meeting the following year in New York Mills, Minnesota -- and annual meetings, known as conventions, have been held to this day. However, in New York Mills, a dispute emerged because, as Pollari says, Ojala and Mullo, who had not abandoned their "old heaven" in doctrine, "rose against the gospel as before."¹⁴⁰ The scanty minutes published in *Armonsanoma* give no hint of a dispute, but Heikki Jussila claimed to have some details in 1934:

The Christians explained there that the law is not established for the righteous. But a terrible fight erupted when those heretics rose to fight with postils and formulas of concord to show that the law belongs to the Christian. The man chosen to write the minutes told how the meeting ended. He showed the width of a span with his hand, saying that he did not get any more than a span written before the meeting became as rowdy as an American tavern.¹⁴¹

Saarnivaara, however, claims that the third use of the law was not even an issue in America until 1923, when it emerged in connection with the publication of Määttä's *Jeesuksen Askeleille*, which will be discussed later. According to Saarnivaara, after the 1908 meeting, the groups began to level accusations at each other, one side charging "legalism" and the other "carnal liberty." He claims that it was not a disagreement between Conservatives and Reawakenists but between Conservatives and "extreme-evangelicals." He also claims that at the 1909 meeting, William Alajoki accused certain other preachers of "legalism" and that the "extreme-evangelicals" accused the other group of binding people into the law by means of the apostolic counsels and compulsory confession.¹⁴²

According to the minutes of the 1911 meeting, held again in Calumet, preacher Johan Mursu noted that many people were absent, that "the decisions of the original Calumet meeting had not produced the desired results," and that several preachers, such as Arthur Heideman, William Lahtinen, William Alajoki, Pekka Raattamaa, Matti Tauriainen and Jacob Vuollet, were maligning the annual meetings, which had been initiated by "Ojala's party," and he proposed that they not be held for a couple of years until "better men" reinstate them. According to the minutes, Pollari "confirmed" Mursu's words. He recalled the reconciliations of the previous meetings and how all who were now criticizing the meetings had rejoiced over them but reminded the assembly of the dispute at the New York Mills meeting. He recommended -- to no avail -- that the meetings not be held until the participants were in one doctrine.¹⁴³ The congregations that still participate in these annual events are referred to not only as Little Firstborn but also as Conventionists (*isoseuralaiset*). Since 1928, they have also been called Federationists (*kirkkokuntalaiset*) because they established a

¹³⁸ *Pöytäkirja, tehty Amerikan Kristittyjen kokouksessa Calumetissa, Michigan, Kesäkuun 15-16-17-18-19 p. v. 1908* (Calumet: 1908), pp. 10, 13.

¹³⁹ *Amerikan laestadiolaisuuden eli Apostolis-luterilaisuuden historia*, p. 145.

¹⁴⁰ *Apostolis-Lutherilaisten hajaantumisen syyt Amerikassa*, p. 7.

¹⁴¹ *Suuret seurat Oulussa v. 1934* (Oulu: 1934), p. 116.

¹⁴² *Amerikan laestadiolaisuuden eli Apostolis-luterilaisuuden historia*, pp. 156-158, 188.

¹⁴³ *Kertomus ja Pöytäkirja tehty Amerikan Kristittyjen kokouksessa Calumet, Mich., Kesäkuun 19-20-21-22-23 p. 1911*, pp. 16, 17.

church federation in that year, known at that time as the Finnish Apostolic Lutheran Church of America and today as the Apostolic Lutheran Church of America.

Kalle Ojala, who was not allowed to preach in Heideman's church in Calumet, occasionally held services in the "little church." At the 1916 convention, Jacob Uitti, defending the Conventionists, explained that the 1908 meeting was not initiated by Ojala but by Heideman's church in Calumet and exhorted Ojala to refrain from performing pastoral functions in the "little church."¹⁴⁴ The next year, Ojala was living in Astoria, Oregon, where he became pastor of the Apostolic Lutheran Church. At the convention held in Ironwood, Michigan, in 1923, he finally asked for forgiveness for having preached in the "little church."¹⁴⁵

Evert Määttälä's Book

Pastor Evert Määttälä, a Conventionist, writes in his book *Jeesuksen Askeleille* (Into the Footsteps of Jesus), published in 1923:

The law, correctly followed, is indeed good (I Tim. 1:8) and should be a guide of life for all mortal men, including believers (Deut. 5:32-33, 8:6, 10:12, 10:22, Josh. 1:7, 23:6, Ezek. 20:19, Ps. 1:1).¹⁴⁶

In the book, Määttälä also quotes passages from the *Formula of Concord* in defense of his doctrine. Heikki Jussila, a strong opponent of the third use of the law, was visiting America shortly after the book was published. After reading it, he suggested, in a 1924 article, a better title for the book: "From the footsteps of Jesus to the footsteps of Moses."¹⁴⁷ Jussila also deals with this issue in his history, in which he says:

The decision on the third use of the law was made at the meeting of the apostles in agreement with the congregation (Acts 15:22), and it was sent in writing to the congregations in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia. In it, the doctrine of the teachers of the law on the use of the law for Christians as a guideline, a reminder of sin and a teacher of good works is rejected as a subversive doctrine and as a practice that troubles the souls of the righteous (Acts 15:24).¹⁴⁸

According to Saarnivaara, Määttälä quoted the *Formula of Concord* because there were, among the Apostolic-Lutherans, "extreme-evangelicals," who "rejected all teaching of God's commandments and rebukes to believers."¹⁴⁹ Määttälä defends himself with similar words in a 1932 article. However, neither Saarnivaara nor Määttälä explain how the establishment of the law as a rule of life for believers is a proper method of dealing with extremism of any kind. In his article, Määttälä discusses a particularly offensive portion of the *Formula of Concord*, which he had quoted from the Lutheran Confessions (*Book of Concord*) in support of his position:

¹⁴⁴ *Pöytäkirja Tehty Ap. Luth. Kristittyjen yleisistä kokouksista Republicissa, Michigan. Kesäk. 19, 20, 21, 22, ja 23 p. 1916*, (Ironwood: 1916), pp. 20-24.

¹⁴⁵ *Amerikan laestadiolaisuuden eli Apostolis-luterilaisuuden historia* (from p. 95 of the minutes of the June 11-15, 1923 convention), p. 164.

¹⁴⁶ E. Määttälä, *Jeesuksen Askeleille* (Hancock: 1923), p. 239. See also pp. 150-154.

¹⁴⁷ H. Jussila, "Jeesuksen askeleille," *Rauhan Tervehdys*, Mar. 1924, p. 37.

¹⁴⁸ *Kutsujan armo laestadiolaisessa kristillisyydessä*, p. 175.

¹⁴⁹ *Amerikan laestadiolaisuuden eli Apostolis-luterilaisuuden historia*, p. 188.

This was the rock of offense, the quoting of which made teacher Jussila say that it leads to the footsteps of Moses, as though Moses were on the path to hell. And the late Juhani Rautio, the apostle of the Tornio River valley, said that the book is good except that it makes the Ten Commandments a guideline of God's Kingdom. Already years ago, at the [1924] Calumet convention, I asked for forgiveness at the meeting of preachers for having been so unobservant as to quote that passage from the Confessions in my book. My intention was not to bring the Ten Commandments, nor can anyone bring them, into God's Kingdom, for the Holy God himself brought them there. And the whip of the law there in God's Kingdom has also driven me to the door of the sheepfold, and God, the Holy Spirit, through the Son, that is, the bloody door of the sheepfold, has granted me access into the sheepfold, the living congregation.¹⁵⁰

Määttälä's signature is found with those of a large number of other Conventionist preachers on the following statement issued on June 15, 1933:

We preachers of the Finnish Apostolic Lutheran Church, gathered at Virginia, Minnesota, in conjunction with the convention, in which our brothers from Finland, Antti Krekula and Ville Kaikkonen, are also present, in discussing differences in the understanding of doctrine, have come to the conclusion that we do not approve nor support, neither do we follow the Reawakenist doctrine of the law as a guideline for the righteous; neither do we approve of the liberty that we have in Christ becoming an occasion to the flesh. It must not serve us as a cloak of evil. Neither do we approve nor do we desire to confess any congregation of firstborn other than the one that has begun with Abel and still exists, in which Jesus is the firstborn among many brethren. And we hope for the great blessing of God so that the matters that have caused disagreements and dissension in Christianity thus far could be corrected by asking for forgiveness and granting forgiveness, and thus we could remain united by the bond of peace in one spirit.¹⁵¹

However, the critics of the Conventionists were not persuaded that Määttälä and his friends were sincere in their disavowals of the third use of the law, and rightly so, for with the help of the Federation, Määttälä continued to sell his book.¹⁵² An English edition is even being disseminated today, along with other literature teaching the third use of the law, by Reawakenist elements in the Federation.

In 1947, Saarnivaara described a "legalistic" faction in the West (Oregon, Washington), led by Carl J. Sacarisen, which rejects ordination, is more scrupulous about apparel and teaches the third use of the law.¹⁵³ Sacarisen's view of the law is made quite clear in a 1961 sermon on I John 2:1-7, given in Hockinson, Washington:

Thus, the Apostle writes here to the believing children of God and says: 'He is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only, but also of the whole world. And hereby do we know that we know Him if we keep His commandments.' But what does the Apostle mean and what does he refer to? Does he mean the law of Ten Commandments, or does he mean the law of the ordinances, or does he mean the communal law? (Some brethren answered that the Apostle was referring to and meaning the law of the Ten Commandments.) That is also my understanding, as also we read in the Revelation, where Jesus says of all them that keep God's commandments -- that they have access to the tree of life and may enter in through the gates into the city.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ E. Määttälä, "Sangen arkaluontoinen asia," *Kristillinen Kuukauslehti*, May 1932, p. 68.

¹⁵¹ *Pöytäkirja Amerikan Ap.-lut. kristittyjen 26:nnessä yleisistä kokouksista ja Apostolis-luterilaisen Kirkkokunnan 5:stä vuosikokouksesta kesäkuun 11, 12, 13, 14 ja 15 p:nä 1933 Recreation Buildingin juhlasalissa, Virginiassa, Minnesota*, p. 48.

¹⁵² *Jeesuksen Askeleille* has been listed among the books offered for sale by the Federation. See, for example, *Kristillinen Kuukauslehti*, Aug. 1944, p. 128.

¹⁵³ *Amerikan laestadiolaisuuden eli Apostolis-luterilaisuuden historia*, postscript (lisäys) to page 273.

¹⁵⁴ December 3, 1961 sermon in Kulla, p. 362.

Sacarisen thus blatantly disregards Apostle John's own explanation of what he means by God's commandments: "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).

Saarnivaara interprets the meaning of "commandments" in John's epistles no less legalistically. He writes in his 1947 English-language history:

This law of Christ, and all the teachings, reproofs, corrections and instruction contained in the New Testament, contain all the main points of the Ten Commandments and even more, but it does not pronounce a curse and a condemnation upon all those who do not observe all things written in it, as the law of Moses does. The Christian is willing to obey all the commandments of God, for love of God is that we keep His commandments (I John 5:3). But because of the corruption which is still in the Christian, he is able to keep them only in part, and he may believe that according to His promise, God will not impute his remaining sins and weaknesses to him for guilt and condemnation, but will forgive them and account him righteous and a fulfiller of the law for Christ's sake.¹⁵⁵

Saarnivaara also falls here into another error of nominal Christians, that of assuming that man is able to keep the law in part. This assumption is, of course, contradictory to the fundamental doctrine of total depravity, which is made so clear in Holy Scripture (Genesis 6:5, Romans 7:14,18,19) that it is hard to imagine that it could be denied.

Expulsion of the Conventionists

When Arthur Heideman died in 1928, he was succeeded as pastor by his son Paul. In 1929, the Conventionists in Calumet were expelled from Heideman's church, and they then established their own congregation in Laurium, which joined the federation that had been established in 1928. Thus far, only one preacher from Finland, Pauli Rantala, had attended a convention -- the one held in Calumet in 1911. According to Heikki Jussila, he was "rebuked" for doing so at the Rovaniemi "big services" in 1912, and the following year, at the Kajaani services, he repented of his trip after a "lengthy examination" of the matter.¹⁵⁶ Saarnivaara admits that repentance was demanded of Rantala but denies that Rantala, who had the support of Runtti, Suo and other prominent preachers, repented in Kajaani, where Jussila himself was under pressure to repent, as will be noted later. Saarnivaara feels that his version of events is confirmed by Rantala's continued support for the Conventionists.¹⁵⁷

The Conventionists eventually appealed to Antti Pietilä, a prominent non-Laestadian professor in Finland, for help in procuring a Conservative preacher to preach at their conventions.¹⁵⁸ As a result,

¹⁵⁵ U. Saarnivaara, *The History of the Laestadian or Apostolic-Lutheran Movement in America* (Ironwood: 1947), p. 95.

¹⁵⁶ *Kutsujan armo laestadiolaisessa kristillisyydessä*, p. 108.

¹⁵⁷ U. Saarnivaara, *Vanhoillisuuden hajaantumisen historiaa Amerikassa ja Suomessa* (Rovaniemi: 1950), pp. 14, 15.

¹⁵⁸ Pietilä's book on confession, *Synnin häätä ja Jumalan rauha*, has been strongly recommended and disseminated by confessionists such as Oskari Jussila in *Siionin Lähetyslehti*, Feb. 1923 (p. 29), and Uuras Saarnivaara in his *Tunnon levottomuudesta Jumalan rauhaan* (p. 3). Saarnivaara himself appears to have been a confessionist even before becoming a Laestadian. He writes in a September 18, 1935 letter to Havas, preserved in the Oulu provincial archives: "Although I do not belong to the Laestadian believers, I have always felt sympathy toward them. When I

Väinö Juntunen left for America in 1932. The same year, in spite of warnings, preachers Antti Krekula and Ville Kaikkonen responded to invitations from the Conventionists. According to Saarnivaara, before any of these men had even returned, a meeting of preachers was held in Oulu, at which it was decided that by going to America they had “committed a violation against the congregation” and had “separated themselves from the general love of the Christians.” Upon their return, a circular was sent on December 27, 1933, to the various congregations, ordering that “all children of God separate themselves from such preachers and their supporters, who do not obey the counsels of love of God’s children and congregations but act against them.”¹⁵⁹

The matter was taken up again at the 1934 “big services” in Oulu, where it was decided that the three preachers had supported the wrong group in America. The participants, sensitive to charges that they were modifying Christ’s command to preach to all (Matthew 28:19), issued a statement in which it was said that these preachers had “not been prohibited from preaching to all, even to those to whom they went, but this work should have occurred in cooperation with the children of God in America who are known in heart, Paul Heideman and his friends.” The three men were admonished as follows:

We hope and pray that the beloved Father would give these brothers, Juntunen, Krekula and Kaikkonen, the grace to repent from their violation against love and their support of mixed fellowship, but unless this occurs, these brothers will, in spite of all the counsels of love that they have received, rend themselves from the love of the Christians. We also regret that certain beloved brothers have started to enthusiastically and even zealously support the mentioned travelers to America. We hope that they will cease from this activity, which has caused dissension and disagreement, but unless this occurs, these brothers will also rend themselves from the love of the Christians.

At the meeting, “an appeal was also made to their consciences as to whether the preservation of unity of the Spirit and the mutual bond of peace of God’s children were not more precious to them than their own opinions and whether there was not reason for them to humble themselves to repentance from the sin of disobedience against the general love of the Christians, but these brothers, in spite of heartfelt exhortations, did not submit to repentance but rigidly remained in their own opinion.”¹⁶⁰

The expelled preachers, supported by Pauli Rantala, Sakari Ainali, Heikki Hooli, Janne Marttiini and others, gained a foothold mainly in the Tornio River valley. Not surprisingly, efforts at reconciliation in 1945 and 1946 failed. The group is commonly referred to in Finland as the Little Firstborn and formally as Lähetyshdistys Rauhan Sana. It has its own mouthpiece, *Rauhan Sana*. Swedish-speaking supporters in Finland are known formally as Laestadianernas Fridsföreningars Förbund (Association of Laestadian Peace Associations) and publish *Zions Missionstidning*. The group remains in spiritual harmony with the American Federationists, whose views have been published in *Kristillinen Kuukauslehti* (not to be confused with the monthly published in the last century in Finland under the same name) and *Christian Monthly*. The Federation is heavily involved in missionary work in Africa, Russia, India, Guatemala and elsewhere.

became acquainted with you, I immediately felt a kind of marvelous attachment, should I say, a spiritual bond, with you. Perhaps it stems even from the fact that we have much in common. All believers have the same Saviour; we are colleagues. These uniting bonds exist, but there is, in addition, the fact that for me too confession is a precious matter, which I have not managed to be without. By means of confession and absolution, the Lord helped even me to personally believe the grace of the forgiveness of sins.”

¹⁵⁹ *Vanhoillisuuden hajaantumisen historiaa Amerikassa ja Suomessa*, pp. 26-29.

¹⁶⁰ *Suuret seurat Oulussa v. 1934*, pp. 22-25.

There is tension in the Federation not only between Reawakenists and so-called evangelicals but also between lay preachers and graduates (“seminarians”) of the Inter-Lutheran Theological Seminary (“Saarnivaara’s school”), now located in Hancock, Michigan. Numerous local schisms have occurred. In Ironwood, Michigan, for example, one such schism led to the Reawakenist elements remaining in the Federation and the other side establishing its own church, the Good Shepherd Community - Apostolic Lutheran Church, with Seminary graduate Norman Kangas as pastor. The charismatic movement has penetrated the Federation in the form of an internal entity known as Christian Outreach, which is active in Battleground, Washington, in Rindge, New Hampshire, and in Greer, South Carolina. Even multiple congregations have emerged in the same community. In Greer, there are no less than four congregations: Rutherford Road (the official Federation body), Eastside (Seminarian), Christian Outreach, and a new entity that emerged in the fall of 2000 with Arvi Aho as pastor. In Washington, two congregations (Orchards and Vancouver) have separated from Hockinson and its strong Reawakenist element.

CHAPTER 5

THE SRK GROUP

Origin

The Finnish Central Association of the Associations of Peace (Suomen rauhanyhdistysten keskusyhdistys) was established in Oulu in 1914. It is usually referred to simply as the SRK, and its supporters are known as “rauhanyhdistysläiset.” This body eventually became the nucleus of a large group of member associations that joined it and became known as the SRK Group. As its influence increased, the group began demanding strict obedience to the decisions of its meetings as the “decisions of the Holy Spirit.” J. A. Tauriainen writes, for example, in this spirit in a 1926 article in *Siionin Lähetyslehti*, which became the SRK’s mouthpiece:

Our spiritual mother is the Kingdom of God. Therefore, it is not at all appropriate for a child to oppose his mother or object to the precious truths of God’s Word taught by her. The unity and love of the Spirit are precious and are also a uniting bond. Whether a disagreement is of a temporal or spiritual nature, when it spoils fraternal and common love, it is required as a condition of salvation that one submit in humility to the common understanding of the Kingdom of God and publicly repent.¹⁶¹

The SRK gained the support of Paul Heideman and his friends in America, known as Heidemanians (heidemanilaiset), who have also demanded strict compliance with their decisions. Preacher Peter Nevala writes in this spirit in a 1975 English-language article:

The humility of children is the acceptance of all things from the hand of God, who in the fellowship of His kingdom cares for His own. The humility of a child of God is total acceptance of the voice of His Spirit, which speaks through the mouths of the previously believing. ‘He that heareth thee, heareth me.’ The true humility of a child is realized obedience to the voice of the congregation, the kingdom, and ‘Mother’ of us all. ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God among men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them and be their God’ Rev. 21:3. This is why Paul calls the kingdom, the congregation, ‘the ground and pillar of truth.’ The Spirit of God, which dwells in the kingdom, the communion of saints, the holy congregation, is an unerring, infallible Teacher; for Jesus says: ‘It shall lead you unto all truth.’¹⁶²

The doctrinal methods used by the SRK to consolidate its power within Conservatism were legalistic use of the apostolic “counsels and teachings,” compulsory confession and accusations of carnality. Today, the SRK, having suppressed and expelled evangelical and other critical elements, enjoys the support of the majority of Laestadians in Finland. The doctrine of the SRK Group has been aptly described as that of the “three-cubit God,” for its preachers teach that forgiveness, even for a believer, is offered only through a brother’s mouth, that is, through absolution. The doctrine that there is forgiveness of sins in the sacraments (as taught, for example, in Luther’s *Small*

¹⁶¹ J. A. Tauriainen, “Mitä ennen kirjoitettu on,” *Siionin Lähetyslehti*, Nov. 1926, p. 163.

¹⁶² P. Nevala, “The Humility of the Deceivers,” *The Voice of Zion*, Jan. 1975, p. 7.

Catechism) is rejected.¹⁶³ Saarnivaara finds evidence of the “three-cubit God” doctrine in the SRK in a 1946 resolution, which states:

The work of God, the Holy Spirit, in the world takes place through the congregation. Christ, the head of the congregation, does not take a single step further than does his congregation, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit.¹⁶⁴

Carnality and the 1916 Discussion

In his 1956 history, SRK supporter Kullervo Hulkko paints a rather negative picture of certain preachers:

At the turn of the century, preachers who tried to effect powerful ‘liikutuksia’ by sermons that appealed to the emotions began circulating again. Thus the fire of ‘cold jumping’ burst into full flame. Preachers Risto Veteläinen and Herman Ahola fanned this false flame in Kuusamo Parish, as did Olli Alatalo in Taivalkoski and Pudasjärvi. The testimony has been given of these men that for years they circulated as preachers with unclean consciences. Their concept of Christianity was the typical ‘carnal liberty’ doctrine, as has been reported in Kuusamo and Pudasjärvi.¹⁶⁵

It is difficult to assess the validity of all these charges, made by an author who tends to classify all *liikutuksia* as “cold jumping.” Hulkko’s comments on the “sign of grace,” which marked the beginning of the revival in 1845, when a Lapp woman jumped for joy, reveals his prejudice against *liikutuksia*:

But precisely because the message of the revival movement led to a severe psychic turning point in the life of those carried away by the movement, the revival could not, any more than any other of our ecclesiastical revival movements, entirely avoid visions, revelations, speaking in tongues, trance preaching or other so-called ecstatic phenomena [hurmosilmiöt], among which the ‘sign of grace’ now under consideration also belongs in a sense.¹⁶⁶

The issue of “carnality” among the preachers was taken up at the 1916 “big services” in Oulu, where a participant by the name of Väitalo asked, “Why does carnality seek to enter the kingdom of God?” He explained:

Now many fear false spirituality and self-righteousness, but alongside this, they grant a foothold to carnality and make little use of the words of counsel and teaching, which we need because we are not at all holier than the former travelers on the path of life. Such persons have gone into a false doctrine and have rent the congregation of God.

¹⁶³ For confirmation of the SRK’s rejection of forgiveness in the Lord’s Supper, see the SRK-AALC primer *By Faith* (Plymouth: 1982), p. 89. Other errors in this book are, for example, the inclusion of the Apocrypha in the canon (p. 16), the claim that Peter wrote three epistles (p. 52), and a selection from Nestle’s corrupt Greek text (John 1:1-9) as an example of the original text of the New Testament (p. 41).

¹⁶⁴ *Vanhoillisuuden hajaantumisen historiaa Amerikassa ja Suomessa*, pp. 47, 48. The cited resolution was issued at the “Oulu reconciliation meeting” of January 22-23, 1946.

¹⁶⁵ K. Hulkko, *Minä lähetän teidät* (Lahti: 1956), p. 147.

¹⁶⁶ K. Hulkko, *Armonmerkki alkulestadiolaisuudessa* (Helsinki: 1959), p. 36.

Juho Heilala asked, “What is to be thought of the spiritual condition of preachers who repeatedly fall into carnality and carnal conduct but always repent to a different father confessor?” Heilala explained:

Carnal liberty can lie close alongside Christian freedom. If a preacher has fallen and first tells the matter to one father confessor and then falls again but tells it to a different father confessor, this is a way of sparing the flesh, for it would hurt the flesh if one always went to the same father confessor. But here the words of the Bible are disregarded: ‘He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin [I Peter 4:1].’

Juuso Runtti said:

The disease of carnality appears in two forms: First, speakers speak evil of others, which is due to self-admiration. And I think that one reason for this is that not very many are able to regard praise as dangerous as it is. From these heights of vain glory, the path often begins into carnal liberty. The righteous indeed falls, but he also rises, and I do not believe that he repeatedly falls into the same slough. But if this happens with trust in the forgiveness of sins, then the gospel is made a gospel of the flesh. Then one begins to believe too much in the forgiveness of sins -- as precious and valuable a gift as it is. For if penitence, repentance and faith in the gospel have indeed occurred in the heart, it gives power to abandon and cease from sin. It does not entirely free the Christian from sin, but it makes him a soldier and one who keeps his body under subjection. I do not say this out of disdain for absolution from sin but so that it would not be made into a savior.

Runtti added later:

At times during these last 45 years, one has gone entirely to an extreme in the gospel, but when it was noticed that this wouldn't succeed long, one started to 'sharpen' the Word of God, and so one arrived at another extreme. I readily turn to the brothers present here with the wish that they would take the Word of the Lord in entirety. But I have been told, 'The consciences of Christians do not bear all the writings of the Bible.' But if we must once appear before the judgment seat of God, we should indeed become so familiar with the Word of the Lord that we could bear it. I have noticed a kind of 'competitive gospel,' that when someone preaches well, I don't want to be worse. But, in any case, I would hope that we discard all 'fashionable gospels' and that our only question would be what God speaks and to cease from our own words with holy reverence. . . . I remember when some spread the doctrine of public confession. When they cleared up from this, they noticed in their minds that they had gone under the law, and then they put away all words of counsel and reproof -- now grace and the forgiveness of sins were to be preached. Then, when the Reawakening came, all those, our most evangelical people, were in the forefront condemning the Christians and turning their hope toward hell. I think I have noticed that this fear of the law has made many sensitive, so that they cannot preach about anything other than false doctrine. So now let's not cease preaching the gospel to sinners on account of these faults, but neither must we be afraid of preaching the truth.

At the end of the meeting, Runtti proposed the following resolution, which was approved:

The preachers, gathered in the name of Jesus, have unanimously decided that all preachers who live and walk in works of the flesh -- insofar as such has become evident -- should cease preaching, and the Missionary Committee is authorized to present rebukes on behalf of this discussion meeting with the warning that if they do not desist and agree to improve they will be declared publicly.

A second resolution was also approved:

Preachers not recognized as preachers, who have not been invited by common consent and whom no one has sent, should be prevented from traveling as preachers of Christianity.¹⁶⁷

Runtti's statements, not surprisingly, were assailed after the meeting. Adolf Suoraniemi wrote in a 1917 letter:

Now I ask you, Brother: What is the difference between the gospel and the truth if the gospel isn't the truth? But with this trick, this fine trick of self-righteousness, they claim to be trying to set a barrier to carnality. But here they go now from 'one extreme to another.' For if the gospel isn't the truth, there isn't any other truth that would make a sinner righteous and thus saved, for 'ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free' [John 8:32]. Also: 'Ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation' [Ephesians 1:13]. And whoever abandons the gospel also abandons the truth, and whoever preaches the gospel according to the scripture, also preaches the truth, not a lie. The Reawakenists called the law the word of truth. Now those who have never really become clear about the Reawakening heresy call the words of counsel and instruction the word of truth, but whoever rightly understands the truth of the gospel and preaches it correctly also preaches the words of counsel and instruction, and reproof as well, and does not avoid them, but he doesn't make of this another power and savior, as in this case, even if it isn't their purpose, but what happens is that the gospel and truth are divided when they start watching that a person doesn't become too lax and thus a follower of sin. But the words of counsel and instruction haven't given anyone power, but only wholesome grace, the truth of the gospel, claimed by faith, has given power to become a child of God. This has given power to follow the will of God, and this has taught one to deny all ungodly conduct and to live virtuously and righteously in this world.¹⁶⁸

The Fear of the Lord

In a 1962 interview in Finland, Jaakko Perä, a son of Johan Perä, claimed that four preachers taught that "there is no need to fear God": Iisakki Rova, Adolf Suoraniemi, Kalle Heliste and Juhani Hautajärvi.¹⁶⁹ However, such a statement is an oversimplification, for when the issue was raised at the 1909 "big services" in Haaparanta, Heliste said:

Let's look at the children of God who lived during the period between the Old Testament and New Testament, as, for example, the Virgin Mary. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, she preaches of the mercy of God toward those who fear him (Luke 1:46-56). But then Zacharias says, 'that we might serve him without fear' (Luke 1:74). How is this to be understood correctly? The child of God also feels a kind of fear that is to be removed by preaching so that, as Zacharias says, we might serve him without fear.

Pauli Rantala commented:

I don't have the understanding that righteous souls should be in this fear: 'Am I acceptable to the Father?' For such is a wrong fear that comes from doubts, but I mean a fear that comes from God's love, which would

¹⁶⁷ The statements of the preachers and the resolutions of the meeting are from *Kertomus kristittyjen 10:istä yleisistä seuroista Oulussa kesäk. 24-27 p:nä v:na 1916* (Oulu: 1916), pp. 56-62.

¹⁶⁸ June 17, 1917 letter to J. A. Tauriainen in Oulu provincial archives; cited in *Vanhoillisuuden hajaantumisen historiaa Amerikassa ja Suomessa*, pp. 16, 17.

¹⁶⁹ Record of interview in Oulu provincial archives.

never again grieve the mind of the Heavenly Father in any way, for such a child's fear only leads the child closer to the heart of the Father.

Leonard Typpö, quoting Hebrews 12:28, agreed with Rantala, saying that he had the "same understanding of the fear of the Lord." A quotation from Luther, used by Typpö, was approved as a final statement:

Servile fear comes from the law and its curse, but childlike fear comes from the gospel and its comfort.¹⁷⁰

In a 1917 article, Matti Suo presented an imaginary dialogue, in which a "certain brother" says:

But at the same time that we were made free from that condemning law, we entered the law of Christ, which was now left for us to follow. In it, the Holy Spirit with love is a teacher, urging us to reject all ungodly conduct. Then the child of God promised, 'Now I no longer want to grieve the heart of my lover with willful sins and transgressions, but I want to show obedience to his holy will.' And this is precisely what it is to journey in the correct fear of God, which is effected not by the servile fear that flows from the law but by the eternal love of Jesus.

Another imaginary "brother," who was at first opposed to the "fear of God," now sees the light. He says:

If that is then to be understood as the fear of God, when a Christian struggles as a victor over sin and as a mortifier of the old man through faith, and as long as there isn't any secret treachery of the devil hidden under it, this is indeed entirely correct, and I don't have anything against it. For a Christian must always be in warfare here on earth, as the Lord's servant Job has also said [Job 7:1, Finnish Bible]. And, indeed, this old portion always has to be mortified and subjugated so that it doesn't bear fruit to death. If sin still besets us and slows our pace on the path of life, we always have to lay it aside and endeavor to struggle in steps of repentance, believing our sins forgiven in the blood of Jesus.¹⁷¹

In his 1917 letter, Suoraniemi replies:

But now fear, love and obedience are jumbled together, and so fearlessness [pelkäämättömyys], the nature of the mercy of God, entirely disappears. And fear is explained as 'childlike' fear, a fear of 'love' and a fear of 'obedience,' of which the whole dead Christian world also preaches and still doesn't know what fear and fearlessness are, that is, they don't understand the righteousness of God. And one has in places started to oppose carnality with this word of fear. But now it has happened here in Kuusamo that those who are in the so-called childlike fear and have been in disagreement from the beginning with the Kingdom of God, fearing that the teaching is too lenient, have now become the most zealous defenders of Herman Ahola. Therefore, as has occurred here, when a man goes astray in one thing, he goes astray in another, and so they finally end up as sheep without a shepherd. Thus, the complaint of the Lord through the Prophet suits them: 'This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men' (Isaiah 29:13). . . . Last fall in Kemijärvi, when I visited there, the enlightened children of God marveled that this childlike fear, which, before the Reawakening, was a matter of contention with those who were in the forefront headed into the Reawakening, had remained in the Kingdom of God after all. And, indeed, it does seem amazing, but as I have already said, it stems from the fact that they do not understand the righteousness of God. And so they have to start explaining with lame parables and novels, as does M. Suo in the February issue of *Siionin Lähetyslehti*, in which all fearlessness disappears.

¹⁷⁰ Statements at this meeting are from *Kertomus ja pöytäkirja, tehty kristittyjen suuressa kokouksessa Tornion ja Haaparannan kaupungeissa lokakuun 4:nä, 5:nä, 6:nä ja 7:nä päivinä 1909* (Oulu: 1910), pp. 16-21. See Luther's *Church Postil*, Sermon on Sunday after Christmas on Galatians 4:1-7.

¹⁷¹ M. Suo, "Keskusteluja," *Siionin Lähetyslehti*, Feb. 1917, pp. 39-41.

Therefore, a schism will yet occur in the Kingdom of God because of this word, for such signs are here, as I have already said above as to who are Ahola's most zealous defenders. And this indeed is what happened when the Reawakening began. When some became entirely fleshly, efforts were initiated to correct them with the law and childlike fear, and they became so well corrected that through false doctrine there came a heresy, and those who were corrected became the most zealous preachers of the false doctrine.

The concept of "fearlessness" was finally classified as a "false doctrine" in a statement of a 1931 meeting of preachers in Oulu, which includes the following words:

The doctrine of fearlessness toward God indeed reared its head among us to some extent in times past, but it was rejected as a false doctrine, and the brothers who found themselves in it have repented of their error.¹⁷²

Cliques Emerge in Finland

Saarnivaara writes, in regard to the beloved Minnesota preacher William Lahtinen, who died with his wife on the Titanic in 1912, that when he was in Finland in 1911-12, he criticized Juuso Runtti, Juhani Rautio, Pauli Rantala and others as being "teachers of the law." According to Saarnivaara, "he explained that teaching the words of instruction, counsel and reproof to Christians was to bind them to the law."¹⁷³

Pastor Vilho Kivioja of Kalajoki writes in a February 6, 1936 letter, "Here in 1917, at the time of the Easter services, [August] Back and Heikki Jussila were on the same side, and [Leonard] Typpö and [Juuso] Runtti were arguing against them, precisely over the matters of the minutes of the meeting of the previous year, and the same matters are at issue now."¹⁷⁴ Saarnivaara also writes, in regard to the same era, that in Rovaniemi there was a group that considered Leonard Typpö, Juuso Runtti, Juhani Rautio, Pauli Rantala and Matti Suo correct, and another group that was on the side of Juho Kanninen, August Back and Heikki Jussila. When Typpö or his friends preached, their group sat in front, and when Kanninen or his friends preached, the other group sat in front. Typpö and his friends, according to Saarnivaara, were called "little Reawakenists" because they proclaimed the Word of God more fully, "not just the gospel but also the words of counsel and reproof for Christians." Saarnivaara alleges in regard to Jussila, a member of the other -- "evangelical" -- group, that he was viewed for awhile as having been contaminated with the "three-cubit God" doctrine and also with Sandbergism (*samperilaisuus*), named after Heikki Sandberg of Kemi, who is also known as "viisas Sandberg" (wise Sandberg).¹⁷⁵

Sandberg's doctrine is described in Virkkala's history:

Although he preached of 'circumcision of the heart,' the work of atonement and sanctification in the manner of the Reawakenists, he was of the opinion that the way in which the Reawakenists presented the sufferings of Jesus and daily penitence led to a heavy spirit of bondage. As for himself, he wanted to speak more boldly about believing freely.

¹⁷² "Eräitä törkeitä syytöksiä kristillisyyttämme vastaan Norjassa," *Siionin Lähetyislehti*, Dec. 1931, p. 278.

¹⁷³ *Vanhoillisuuden hajaantumisen historiaa Amerikassa ja Suomessa*, p. 15

¹⁷⁴ February 6, 1936 letter in Oulu provincial archives.

¹⁷⁵ *Vanhoillisuuden hajaantumisen historiaa Amerikassa ja Suomessa*, pp. 13-16

According to Virkkala, after Sandberg's death in 1908, his followers, at least in Teuva and Kemi, joined the Reawakening.¹⁷⁶ Saarnivaara alleges that Heikki Jussila was urged to repent of Sandbergism at the 1910 Helsinki "big services" and that he finally did so, albeit privately, at the 1913 services in Kajaani.¹⁷⁷

Toivo Korpela

In 1929, a meeting of preachers was held in Oulu, to which Toivo Korpela of Ähtäri, Finland, was summoned to answer certain accusations in regard to his conduct that remain rather vague. According to Hulkko, who had access to the SRK archives, Korpela initially confessed some of his "transgressions" but retracted his confession during the meeting. Hulkko comments in his history that "continuing love for and tolerance of sin led to such spinelessness."¹⁷⁸ The meeting's resolution included the following words:

Since heavy charges have been made at this meeting against preacher Toivo Korpela in regard to matters over which Korpela's conscience does not appear to be convicted, the meeting views it necessary to firmly forbid Korpela from appearing as a preacher for the time being, until the Christianity of his community views his condition as such that he can be allowed to preach. Even in the event that Korpela is allowed to travel as a preacher, the meeting is of the view that he needs an older and tested preacher as his companion.¹⁷⁹

In spite of the ban against him, Korpela continued to preach in Sattajärvi, Kiruna and other localities in Sweden. When Korpela showed up at the 1932 New Year's services in Lannavaara, he was, at first, not allowed to preach. According to the account given by Pentecostal writer Frans Raattamaa, the "atmosphere was charged to the breaking point," for the opposition had grown so strong that the leaders were apprehensive of losing their power. According to Raattamaa, there was great interest in hearing Korpela, but the leaders demanded that he confess his offenses and ask for forgiveness. A document was drafted along these lines for him to sign, which he did, after which he thanked the brothers for having led him onto the right path. However, Korpela's supporters did not approve of the document, which was supposed to be sent to a newspaper in Finland. A few days later, in a sermon in Övre Soppero, where the services continued, he retracted his signature and claimed that he had been forced to sign the document. The other preachers, who were generally viewed as being "envious of Korpela because it was easier for him to effect the so-called liikutuksia," issued a statement against him, but all the people in the area, except for a few individuals, went over to Korpela's side, and the movement also "spread like wildfire" in Karesuando and Pajala.¹⁸⁰

In the summer of 1932, Korpela's case was discussed at the "big services" in Iisalmi, where the following resolution was passed:

¹⁷⁶ Virkkala, p. 98.

¹⁷⁷ *Vanhoillisuuden hajaantumisen historiaa Amerikassa ja Suomessa*, p. 13.

¹⁷⁸ *Minä lähetän teidät*, pp. 153, 198.

¹⁷⁹ *Minä lähetän teidät*, p. 154.

¹⁸⁰ F. Raattamaa, *Väckelser i svenska finnbygden* (Stockholm: 1946), pp. 18-21.

Inasmuch as Toivo Korpela, who has traveled in northern Finland and northern Sweden without being sent by God's congregation, has spread deceitful accusations that the preachers and the Board of the Finnish Central Association of the Associations of Peace have been motivated only by envy in banning him from making preaching trips, the general conference of Christians gathered in Iisalmi, having once again thoroughly studied the matter, resolves that since Korpela has been detected to be a liar and disobedient and slanderous of Christians, the congregation of God will continue to concur in the decisions made in regard to him, Korpela, by the meeting of preachers in Oulu and the Swedish brethren in Lannavaara.¹⁸¹

The Revised Finnish Bible

In early 1934, while Korpela was in Finland, it was "revealed" to Sigurd Siikavaara and Arthur Niemi, who had begun to preach to Korpela's followers in Sweden, that the abomination of desolation of Daniel, which they identified with the revised version of the Finnish Bible, had been set up on January 1, 1934. They calculated, therefore, on the basis of Daniel 12:12, that there would be 1,335 days to judgment day, which would occur on July 24, 1937.¹⁸²

The new corrupt Bible, strangely enough, has been accepted to some extent by Laestadians. It is used, for example, in a 1935 address of Väinö Havas to a meeting of pastors in Tampere,¹⁸³ in a 1957 address of Pastor Leonard Pietari Tapaninen to a meeting of preachers in Kuopio,¹⁸⁴ and in a 1963 book of Janne Marttiini.¹⁸⁵ At the 1930 "big services" in Kajaani, the following resolution was approved:

Since the old translation of the Bible is dear to the great majority of Christians, and we have become accustomed to it from childhood, and since there are a number of very weak points in the new translation, it is to be wished that all preachers of Christianity -- insofar as is possible -- would read their texts at services from the old translation and would also use it in writings in *Siionin Lähetyslehti*.¹⁸⁶

A committee was also established in Kajaani to examine the proposed new Bible. The members, which included Väinö Havas, who had repented from the Reawakening in 1929, examined it and presented a list of criticisms in a booklet published in 1933. Strangely, the booklet admits that the research in it is based on a comparison of the new translation with editions of the original texts prepared by Bible critics -- Rudolf Kittel's Hebrew Old Testament and Eberhard Nestle's Greek New Testament.¹⁸⁷ Thus the list overlooks many changes in the new translation, to which the committee should have objected, such as the omission of the Trinity in I John 5:7.

The Federationists are much more supportive of Bible revision than are other groups. Saarnivaara actually writes, in regard to I John 5:7, that it is an unwarranted addition to the original text:

¹⁸¹ *Suuret seurat Iisalmessa v. 1932* (Oulu: 1932), p. 17.

¹⁸² L. Lundmark, *Protest och profetia* (Lund: 1985), pp. 30, 31.

¹⁸³ *Sovituksen sana. Saarnoja ja kirjoituksia*. pp. 72-83.

¹⁸⁴ H. Leinonen et al., *Totuuden kuuliaisuuteen* (Pieksämäki: 1962), pp. 99-110.

¹⁸⁵ Marttiini, Janne, *Armo ja totuus* (Oulu: 1963). See, for example, page 63.

¹⁸⁶ *Suomen Rauhanyhdistysten Keskusyhdistyksen vuosikokouksen Pöytäkirja ja Kertomus sen yhteydessä pidetyistä isoista seuroista Kajaanissa kesäk. 30 ja heinäk. 1-2 päivinä 1930* (Oulu: 1930), p. 8.

¹⁸⁷ V. Kivioja et al., *Huomautuksia uudesta raamatun käännöksestä* (Oulu: 1933), pp. 7-16. Nestle's glaringly corrupt Greek text is based on the ridiculous theories of Westcott and Hort, which are demolished by John Burgon, though himself a Bible critic, in *The Revision Revised* and his other works.

This addition is indeed in accordance with the teachings of the Bible, but it (the so-called *comma Johanneum*) is not part of the original text of I John.¹⁸⁸

Surprisingly, Saarnivaara uses Revelation 22:19 -- which is normally used by opponents of textual revision -- to justify the omission:

Since according to this verse of Revelation, nothing is to be added that is not there, those who prepared the Bible translation have been obligated to eliminate from it the passages that are not in the oldest manuscripts and thus, judging from everything, were not in the original New Testament.¹⁸⁹

Since the 1642 and 1776 versions of the Finnish Bible were published, the Finnish language has not changed nearly as much as has the English language since 1611, when the King James Version appeared. Yet, curiously, it is often claimed that even the 1776 version is difficult to understand. The spelling of the 1776 version was updated in the last century, leading some, like Pastor Ossi Ylpekkala, to conclude that a new translation was made then. In a 1992 article, Ylpekkala justifies the then eagerly awaited newest Finnish Bible (which was published the same year):

It is rather difficult to understand the language of the 1642 translation. Neither is the newer translation published in 1776 easy. Perhaps we understand somewhat the so-called old translation, which appeared in the last century and is still used rather widely at services for the reading of the text. If the text is in old Gothic, many hardly understand it at all.¹⁹⁰

As for the SRK, its attitude toward the corrupt 1992 version appears to have been decided, to a great extent, by the rendering of Luke 17:21. Previous corrupt versions read: “Jumalan valtakunta on sisällisesti teissä” (The kingdom of God is within you). Here the Greek word “en,” which can be translated either “within” or “among,” is rendered “within,” as in the King James version (with “among” in the margin) and in the old Swedish Bible. In the 1992 version, however, the translators, apparently to please the Laestadians, rendered the passage as in the 1776 version: “Jumalan valtakunta on teidän keskellä” (The kingdom of God is among you), relegating the alternate translation to a footnote. The favorable attitude of SRK leaders toward the 1992 version, as expressed in the Finnish press, does not bode well for prospects of future publication of the old translation. The SRK has been the sole source of unaltered Finnish Bibles for decades.

The Flying Ark

Another matter that was “revealed” to Siikavaara and Niemi early in 1934 was that the ark mentioned in Revelation 11:19 would come from heaven to fetch the faithful to Palestine. According to press reports, various dates, beginning with March 14, 1935, were set for its arrival. When Korpela returned to Sweden in the fall of 1934, he preached with the two prophets to his supporters (korpelalaiset) in various places, but in January 1935, he returned home to Ähtäri and

¹⁸⁸ U. Saarnivaara, *Voiko raamattuun luottaa?* (Suolahti: 1982), p. 968.

¹⁸⁹ U. Saarnivaara, *Onko Jumala todella sanonut?* (Helsinki: 1966), p. 162.

¹⁹⁰ O. Ylpekkala, “Sanan kirkkaus,” *Elämän Sana*, No. 10, 1992, p. 201.

ceased preaching. In interviews he gave to journalists at his home in the spring of 1935, he rejected the doctrine of the ark, saying that he found it difficult to understand how such a doctrine could be taught.¹⁹¹ Siikavaara wrote later in the year to Hulkko:

In reply to your question as to whether I still believe in the coming of that ark, I believe most assuredly. I believe even with my whole heart that this ark will come at the time appointed by God to fetch his own out of this vale of woe and sorrow. How could I doubt one place (Rev. 11:19) in God's Word more than another?¹⁹²

The Korpela movement was characterized by much ecstatic singing and jumping. In March 1935, one of several new prophets began to jump up and down, clap his hands and cry out, "The whore of Babylon to hell!" Others followed his example, and during the following days such "cursing," as it was called, became popular at meetings.¹⁹³ The movement soon became a media sensation. For example, a 1935 article in a Finnish newspaper carried the heading: "Korpela sect expels oldster who couldn't jump high enough." The subhead read: "Flying ark will seat 666 people; due to arrive by fall." This article is based on a letter written by Gustaf Dahlbäck, pastor of Pajala, who tells how he arrived at the services in Kaunisvaara, where people had been waiting for the ark amid great agitation. There, the expelled "oldster," a gout-ridden man by the name of Ranta-Kusto, approached his car in a very bitter mood, threatening to wreak revenge on the members of the group with his cane. According to the article, the group believed that the higher you can jump, the closer you are to God. Dahlbäck tried to reason with an elderly woman who was highly respected in the group, asking her whether it wasn't a bit cruel to demand that an old man jump as high as the others, but he received the straight-faced reply: "You will not at all find it hard to jump as long as you are in the right faith."¹⁹⁴

Soon large crowds assembled to watch the commotion. The Swedish authorities, who were also keeping their eye on the group, could not resist becoming involved. Initially they felt they had no legal basis for interfering in religious affairs, but finally they decided to intervene, citing concern over public safety and the welfare of the children. Fear was expressed of a possible repetition of the infamous Kautokeino tragedy of 1852, when fanatical Lapps attacked and murdered a constable and shopkeeper in Kautokeino, Norway. Eventually, numerous arrests were made at their meetings, and children were even placed in foster care. Many individuals were interrogated by physicians, who forbade some from attending the meetings and committed others, including Siikavaara and Niemi, to insane asylums. After only 67 days, however, Siikavaara was released and began explaining the ark spiritually as "the Word and Christ."¹⁹⁵

By mid-1936, Siikavaara is said to have begun teaching that he was Christ, or at least that he "represented" Christ. It was not long, however, before the religious enthusiasm died down and the movement deteriorated into a kind of social club, with dancing, card playing and drinking. However, the sensational stories that appeared in the press about wild orgies are probably exaggerations. Siikavaara was taken in for more interrogations in April 1939 because of the rumor that minors were involved in sexual activities. At that time, he was found to be intoxicated and was

¹⁹¹ Lundmark, p. 34.

¹⁹² Letter written in the latter half of 1935 in K. Hulkko, "Piirteitä Länsipohjan Korpelalaishurmoksesta," *Suomen Heimo*, 15 Nov. 1935, pp. 292, 293.

¹⁹³ Lundmark, p. 36,

¹⁹⁴ *Lapin Kansa*, 22 June 1935. An abridged version of this article, based on Dahlbäck's letter in *Nya Dagligt Allehanda*, appeared the same day in *Pohjolan Sanomat*.

¹⁹⁵ Lundmark, pp. 46-64.

diagnosed as an alcoholic. He was also declared exempt from penal action because of insanity. In light of these facts, it is difficult to know whether there is any truth to his own admission to having engaged in sexual intercourse, from the summer of 1937 to the spring of 1939, with 30 women other than his wife. He remained in a mental institution until his release in 1950.¹⁹⁶ The Korpela movement is evidently now extinct even if it was rumored that some diehards were still alive as late as 1970.

Millennialism

It has been alleged that even in America there have been some who expected to be conveyed to Palestine aboard the ark. In 1974, this author visited John Kortes of Virginia, Minnesota, who had recently been banned as a preacher for the Reedites, a group that will be discussed later. When asked whether it was true that his late brother Matti Kortes had held the “Palestine doctrine,” Kortes replied in the negative, but his wife added that Matti’s wife had believed in it. On the same occasion, however, John Kortes admitted that he believed, as had his brother and mother, in the millennium, that is, that Christ, according to their interpretation of Revelation 20:2, would reign on earth for a thousand years. He claimed that this doctrine had been held by others as well but that with time it had “withered away.” He also admitted that he had recently taught millennialism in Waukegan. This, according to his wife, was his “downfall” as a preacher.

There is, of course, no reason for millennialists to assume that in the visions in the book of Revelation, which is, for the most part, symbolic, the times mentioned are not also symbolic. The thousand years of Revelation 20:2 are generally viewed by Laestadians as the “time of grace.” However, millennialism is held even by Saarnivaara, who believes, as do other millennialists, in the doctrine of two separate resurrections, which is based on a misunderstanding of Revelation 20:6.¹⁹⁷ Most Laestadians reject this doctrine as well. John Lumijärvi writes, for example, in a 1920 article, on the basis of Colossians 2:13, 3:1 and Ephesians 2:1-6, “The first resurrection takes place in man in the new birth. There he is translated from death into life and from sin into righteousness.”¹⁹⁸

The Kalajoki Revival

A revival occurred in the Kalajoki area from 1934 to 1936 as the result of the sermons of Juho Ansamaa of Haapavesi, who had a gift of revealing Christ from the Old Testament and an understanding of the gospel that was free of human works and compulsory confession. Kullervo Hulkko has written the only history of this revival, but, unfortunately, his work is unreliable. Even his chronology is, to a great extent, inaccurate. He writes, for example, that Ansamaa began preaching in Kalajoki as early as the spring of 1934 and that three “consultations” were held in regard to him by the spring of 1935.¹⁹⁹ However, this does not agree at all with the recollection of

¹⁹⁶ Lundmark, pp. 62, 63.

¹⁹⁷ *Voiko raamattuun luottaa?* pp. 1007-1012.

¹⁹⁸ J. Lumijärvi, “Tuhatvuotinen valtakunta,” *Kristillinen Kuukauslehti*, Feb. 1920, p. 35.

¹⁹⁹ K. Hulkko, *Ansamaalaisuus, muuan lestadiolainen hurmosliike* (Helsinki: 1965), pp. 269, 271-272.

Uuno and Martta Himanka and other Ansamaa supporters. These “ansamaalaiset” have told this author that they do not recall any visits of Ansamaa in Kalajoki before the fall of 1934. Furthermore, no open criticism of Ansamaa appeared until the winter of 1934-35, and no reason existed for any “consultations” at all in 1934. Even Vilho Kivioja, the pastor of Kalajoki, who was the first to openly turn against Ansamaa, writes in a November 11, 1936 letter to Havas, in which he tries to prove that Ansamaa’s doctrine constitutes a heresy:

If I have to repent of anything, it can only be, according to my conscience, that I defended the mentioned heresy at the beginning, as you noticed at the time, around Christmas Eve of 1934.²⁰⁰

Ansamaa’s supporters recall that Havas, preaching with Ansamaa in late 1934, said only that he was deeply satisfied to see that the “air had cleared” since the recent dispute with the Little Firstborn, which had marred the mood of the local “big services” earlier in the year.

Dissatisfaction with Ansamaa became evident only after Kivioja, during one of Ansamaa’s sermons, was heard whispering into the ear of one Einari Isopahkala, “Nyt meni rippi pilalle!” (“Now confession is ruined!”) Although Ansamaa, despite opposition, was invited to speak with Matti Pylkäs and Antti Kananen at the Easter services in Kalajoki in 1935, he was not asked to preach on Saturday, the first day of the services. That evening, a supporter of Ansamaa stood up, saying with tears, “Tomorrow, Ansamaa will preach first in the morning and in the evening.” The following day, Ansamaa’s sermons caused strong *liikutuksia* among the listeners. Again on Monday, when the services continued at a nearby school, Ansamaa was not invited and remained with certain others at Aukusti Myllymäki’s house. Before the services had ended, Myllymäki, a supporter of Ansamaa, showed up at the school, where he invited the preachers to his house. When Kivioja, Kananen and Pylkäs arrived, Myllymäki, who wanted matters clarified, rose up and, pointing at Ansamaa, said, “Here now is that guilty brother. Straighten him out now.” At first, no one could come up with any specific accusations, but finally Pylkäs, evidently implying that Ansamaa was too lazy to fetch firewood, uttered, “You burned that dividing wall in your house!” Ansamaa replied, “Was that at the time you taught yourself to preach with a mirror in the sauna?” When someone remarked that this answer was from the flesh, Ansamaa answered, “Mitä lihasta lähtee, se lihaan vastaa,” which can perhaps be freely translated: “A carnal accusation calls for a carnal response.” Hulkko writes, in regard to this confrontation:

Some preachers, especially Matti Pylkäs and Antti Kananen, who visited during Easter 1935, presented very strong accusations against Ansamaa and said that he had not been called as a preacher to any communities at all other than Kalajoki. It was even boldly asserted as an accusation that Ansamaa had proven himself an idler.²⁰¹

Ansamaa continued to be accepted as a preacher to some extent. Kivioja writes in the previously mentioned February 6, 1936 letter:

What is most regretful is that Jussila and Vepsäläinen were here during the first half of August, blessing Ansamaa’s activity in Kalajoki, even if Arvid Tikkala and others said that they had listened ‘with a tired ear’ to Ansamaa’s sermons, which are generally good in the presence of other speakers.

²⁰⁰ Letter in Oulu provincial archives.

²⁰¹ *Ansamaalaisuus, muuan lestadiolainen hurmosliike*, p. 271.

Kivioja adds in the same context, evidently referring to events connected with the 1935 local “big services,” that Ansamaa had asked for forgiveness for “weak words” and that he, Kivioja, had also asked publicly for absolution, after which the cry went out: “The pastor has repented of the false doctrine!”

By the end of 1935, Ansamaa’s supporters were increasingly estranged, holding services almost exclusively in homes, rather than in the meetinghouse. They tell how Heikki Jussila and Otto Raudasoja were preaching on one occasion at Heikki Heikkilä’s home with Ansamaa when men, under orders from Oulu, came to fetch the two preachers away. Jussila and Raudasoja left without even finishing the sermon that Jussila had been giving, saying only that they had come to the “wrong place.”

In late March 1936, a “reconciliation meeting,” chaired by Kauno Kemppainen, the SRK secretary, was held in Kalajoki, but it ended in squabbling and mutual accusations. Kemppainen wore three pairs of eyeglasses at the meeting, prompting one participant to remark, “Even three pairs of eyeglasses didn’t help.” Both sides now looked to Havas, who was to arrive in Kalajoki later in the spring. Havas, however, had already taken sides, as is made clear in a March 10, 1936 letter, which has been published in Hulkko’s history:

I have shunned Ansamaa’s influence from the beginning, but last winter, when he seemed to humble himself and preached correctly, at least in my presence, I hoped that everything would calm down. The good reports from there in Kalajoki last spring increased this confidence of mine. However, there must indeed be some basic fault in Ansamaa that the grace of God has not been able to correct because the poor fruits that you mention in your letter continue to appear. The man must be living in secret sins and with a polluted conscience after all. This understanding is supported by what I heard from Heikki Saari when we met on a train this winter. Saari said that he had ascertained that Ansamaa lives in sin and with an impure conscience. He said that he had confronted Ansamaa in regard to these bad points but with little success. This statement of Saari is very significant, in my opinion, because our brother Heikki has tried to understand Ansamaa to the last and to build love.²⁰²

Unaware of these views, Ansamaa’s supporters were greatly disappointed when Havas arrived in Kalajoki and, in a high-minded tone, joined Kivioja in heaping criticism on Ansamaa at the infamous meeting in the Hietala parsonage known as the “Hietala night meeting” (Hietalan yökokous), which was held on about May 1, 1936. As for specific accusations, Ansamaa’s supporters recall only that Ansamaa was accused of having spoken approvingly of finery for young people in a sermon, but Hulkko claims to know that he was accused of having condoned fornication -- a patently ridiculous accusation.²⁰³

Among the numerous accusations against Ansamaa and his supporters in Hulkko’s history is the following:

The conversation between a supporter of Ansamaa and a Christian peasant of the Kalajoki valley was particularly alarming. Ansamaa’s supporter asked the peasant, ‘If a thousand times a day you commit adultery and also murder, can you profess yourself to be a child of God?’ The peasant replied, ‘Even once is enough to prevent me from professing that.’ To this, the Ansamaa supporter retorted, ‘So, it’s the confession doctrine then!’ Then the other remarked, ‘Whom can you call an unbeliever if even such a one can still profess himself to be a child of God?’²⁰⁴

²⁰² March 10, 1936 letter to S. Naatus in *Ansamaalaisuus, muuan lestadiolainen hurmosliike*, p. 277.

²⁰³ *Ansamaalaisuus, muuan lestadiolainen hurmosliike*, p. 271.

²⁰⁴ *Ansamaalaisuus, muuan lestadiolainen hurmosliike*, p. 275.

Hulkko seems to be unaware that the doctrine he is assailing is that of Luther and Laestadius. Quoting an August 1, 1521 letter of Luther to Melanchthon, Laestadius says, in a sermon delivered on the Second Day of Rogation in 1856:

The pope's priests say, 'This Luther's preaching of faith is the speech of one possessed and an abomination of false doctrine, when he says that sin cannot separate us from the Saviour; even if we had committed adultery and murder a thousand times a day, yet we must believe. Is this doctrine of Luther a true doctrine?' In the ears of the papists, it sounds as though the devil himself had risen up from hell to proclaim such an abomination of false doctrine, but whoever correctly understands these words of Luther must know it to be true gospel. For a person who is truly awakened surely knows that he has committed adultery and murder, if not a thousand times, at least seven times a day. Nevertheless, he must believe that he is a Christian and a child of God.²⁰⁵

Kivioja, writing in his February 6, 1936 letter in the same vein as Hulkko, says that a neighbor had heard Martti Myllymäki, a supporter of Ansamaa, preach as follows:

You can believe from behind the dunghill and even from within it; those obstacles to faith do not exist anywhere but in the teaching of the devil.

It is interesting that Hulkko claims that the written question "Is sin an obstacle to faith?" was presented to the 1938 SRK annual meeting in Kajaani. He also says, "In the reply, it was said that the whole Holy Bible testifies that this is how the matter is."²⁰⁶ Hulkko admits that the words are not in the minutes, but if his account is true, it only confirms that two mutually contradictory doctrines were being taught simultaneously by Ansamaa's opponents -- that sin is to be believed forgiven and that sin is a hindrance to believing.

Ansamaa's Recantation

After being disappointed by Havas, Ansamaa's friends awaited, as their last hope for support, the "big services" to be held in Rovaniemi in July 1936. There, a discussion was held, in which Ansamaa and Kivioja personally participated. Afterwards, a July 9, 1936 note, signed by Kalle Lohi, Väinö Havas and Juho Kanninen, was sent to Kalajoki. The relevant portion reads as follows:

The meeting of preachers unanimously notes that in Kalajoki, even prior to the latest revival, there has been a precious flock of the Lord, which has desired to stand in grace against all heresies. It is also viewed that the revival that began at the services held by brother Ansamaa was a work of grace effected by God, to which, however, much human and sinful zeal was later intermingled even against those children of God and preachers of the Word of God who have opposed false spirituality. The meeting of preachers is also of the opinion that there is reason, in faith and repentance, to reject as sin the mutual accusations of false doctrine of justification and to reconcile the mutual lack of love around the bloody sacrificial altar, that henceforth all the children of God of Kalajoki should invite preachers in common consultation and that brother Ansamaa, who has humbled himself to repentance from his weaknesses and faults here at our meeting, should not, at least for the time being, travel alone on preaching trips but together with other brother preachers. It was hoped that brother

²⁰⁵ *Uusi Postilla*, pp. 562, 563. For Luther's letter, see *Luther's Works* (American Edition), Vol. 48, pp. 277-282.

²⁰⁶ *Ansamaalaisuus, muuan lestadiolainen hurmosliike*, p. 281.

Vilho Kivioja would abandon editorship of [the magazine] *Zions Missionstidning* and the hypocrisy that he has shown in his attitude toward the [Little Firstborn] heresy.²⁰⁷

Kivioja's view of the Rovaniemi discussion is given in his November 11, 1936 letter to Havas:

In Rovaniemi, the preachers -- including yourself -- kept returning again and again to this theme: 'Here there are only these two persons in opposition to each other, Kivioja and Ansamaa.' The truth is this: In opposition to each other here are Laestadianism and Hedbergianism.

Ansamaa's friends have told this author that they first heard the erroneous report that in Rovaniemi his doctrine had been approved and Kivioja's rejected, and so when Ansamaa preached in Kalajoki, they were surprised to hear him stressing confession in the manner of the confessionists. Eventually, Ansamaa repented openly, saying he had "gathered a flock for himself," and most of his supporters followed suit, also repenting publicly. Again, at services held in December 1936, Ansamaa confessed that he had purposely disparaged other speakers, had overly exalted himself and had been prompted by the Old Adam in his preaching. He urged his supporters to repent after his example, but most of them had repented previously, and the others remained faithful to the old doctrine, saying, "Although Ansamaa goes, we won't follow." According to Hulkko, at the end of January of the following year, 31 persons were excommunicated.²⁰⁸ A couple of years later, Ansamaa again repented publicly and urged others to do the same, saying, "I have committed the sin of whoredom, not with the opposite sex but in myself." In a 1948 letter, Ansamaa wrote:

Through this faith, God attached me to the obedience of cleansing of the spirit, so that confession has also become as holy and precious as faith. For it is impossible to separate faith and confession from each other, as impossible as it is to separate fire and heat from each other. But if we believe through confession, faith is dead, and if we believe without confession, faith is dead.²⁰⁹

The 1939 Kemi Resolution

At the 1939 "big services" in Kemi, a resolution was passed against preachers identified with the "heresy of carnal liberty." Four charges were included in it:

1. At this time, this damning spirit appears primarily in self-exaltation. A preacher tries to be something special and wants to get a kind of alleged gospel sweetness into his sermon for which scriptural expressions no longer suffice. As a consequence, many weak brothers and sisters excessively admire and praise such a preacher as being better than has ever been heard before. Many troubled strugglers, however, are saddened, and thus a seed of discord is sown. . . .

²⁰⁷ *Ansamaalaisuus, muuan lestadiolainen hurmosliike*, pp. 278, 279.

²⁰⁸ *Ansamaalaisuus, muuan lestadiolainen hurmosliike*, p. 280. Hulkko strongly implies that the 31 excommunicated persons were all supporters of Ansamaa. Although this appears to be confirmed by local researcher Mikko Himanka, pastor of Lohtaja, who writes in a newspaper article that 31 supporters of Ansamaa were excommunicated ("Ansamaalaisuuden isän syntymästä 100 vuotta," *Keskipohtajanmaa*, 25 Sep. 93), the same writer, in a 1997 draft article for *Vattulan kyläkirja* ("Ansamaasta ja ansamaalaisuudesta"), states that the 31 excommunicated persons were supporters of Ansamaa and the Rauhan Sana Group.

²⁰⁹ December 25, 1948 letter to Uuno Himanka. (Photocopy in author's collection.)

2. This false spirit manifests itself in evasion of the counsels and rebukes of the gospel. In regard to the stern points in the epistles of the apostles, it is said, ‘The children of God should not be alarmed with them!’ . . .

3. There appears in the heresy of carnal liberty a notable spirit of disputation against confession. The teaching may even be formally correct, but there is, in practice, a struggle against confession of sin and other such fruits of faith and repentance. A child of God who uses confession easily receives from these babblers the name of confessionalist. . . .

4. At services and in behavior elsewhere, this heresy causes inappropriate light-mindedness, boisterousness and even impurity as well as a mocking and malevolent attitude toward those who desire, even in weakness, to conduct themselves in doctrine and life in a manner worthy of the gospel.

The resolution states that this “false doctrine and spirit has appeared in many localities but specifically in Kalajoki” and that “the children of God have been grieved by the fact that in addition to Juho Ansamaa, even a couple of old preachers, A. G. Naatus and Oskari Raasakka, have, by their conduct, supported the heresy in question, and repentance is expected of them too for their injurious activity in this matter.”²¹⁰ Ansamaa was no longer invited to preach, though he was occasionally seen at services, a lonely and dejected figure. Oskari Raasakka was pressured into repentance by Saari. Martti Myllymäki joined the Little Firstborn and later the Pentecostal movement, where, it is said, he wasn’t happy either. Kivioja, as expected, ended up among the Little Firstborn.

The Drive Against Simppala

Hulkko writes that after the 1939 Kemi meeting, “the air, which had been musty for a long time already in localities such as Viipuri, Tervola and Karunki, cleared up, and the Ansamaa movement, which had managed to run like wildfire through the Conservative Christianity of the Kalajoki valley, continued to subside.”²¹¹ In the late 1930s, pressure was also applied against Erkki Simppala (also known as Erkki Vuokila), a preacher in the Tervola and Karunki area, who was accused of being in “carnal liberty.” According to a local tradition, as recounted to this author by Jouko Murama of Keuruu, Simppala was formally rebuked by Pastor Alfred Virkkula (son of Viktor Virkkula) at a meeting held at the house of Aarne Kivilompolo in Karunki in the summer of 1939, and at some point he submitted to repentance. Like Ansamaa, he may, of course, have repented repeatedly. When this author asked certain individuals about it, Ida Karhu of Långshyttan, Sweden, who had lived in the area in the 1940s, said that Vuokila told her in about 1945 that he had not submitted to the pressure, but Kyllikki Hoppari, who was still a local resident in 1972, said that he had repented in about 1946. When he was asked about the matter at his home in Tervola in 1972, Vuokila, by then an old man, described how he had repented in Raahe in 1962, the same year in which it is said that other repentances occurred from the Simppala movement (simppalalaisuus). A visitor, who, with this author, found Simppala and two friends sleeping on benches in his living room, recounts the visit:

²¹⁰ *Suomen Rauhanyhdistysten Keskusyhdistyksen vuosikokous ja suuret seurat Kemiissä 27-30.6.1939*, pp. 20, 21.

²¹¹ *Ansamaalaisuus, muuan lestadiolainen hurmosliike*, p. 282.

The man sat up, still drowsy, and the other sleepers awoke after him. We greeted him with God's greetings and said that we are American believers. I explained that we wanted information on a certain older religious group. The name Simppala was also mentioned. He explained that his name is Vuokila, not Simppala, and that the Simppala movement has never even existed. He now began to explain his past in detail, thinking apparently that we had come to accuse him of old matters. He said that even in his youth, when he was made a preacher, a certain neighbor woman had become envious because her own sons did not have as good a reputation as he, and so she started accusing Vuokila of being in carnal liberty. Vuokila now claimed that he has always been zealous in laying aside sin. A certain woman, who had been sleeping on another bench along the same wall, now supported him, saying that she has known Vuokila for ages and can confirm that he has always been zealous in purifying his conscience. I now asked Vuokila why he repented if the accusations were false. He explained, in response, that at the 'big services' in Raahe, preacher Heikki Saari had demanded repentance of him. Vuokila had replied that he cannot do such a thing and had added, 'If I were to repent of the doctrine, I would become a Reawakenist.' Saari answered, 'You do not need to repent of the doctrine, only of a fault of the spirit.' Saari appealed here to Paul's words: 'Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit' (II Cor. 7:1). 'Then I repented,' Vuokila now admitted, adding the words, 'as did Paul.' His throat quivered as he said this.²¹²

By the time of this conversation, the few individuals still known as "simppalalaiset" had joined the Clericalists, a group that will be discussed later.

The Campaigns Against Kosonen

When Juho Kosonen began preaching in Karelia in about 1914, after moving to Viipuri from the Savo region, the Reawakening still prevailed in all Karelian congregations. However, with the preaching of Kosonen -- and a visit of Heikki Jussila in 1916 -- large numbers of people began to return to Conservatism. Then, in the early 1920s, amid the renewed efforts at effecting a reconciliation with the Reawakenists, a drive was launched against Kosonen. It is said that names were gathered for a petition against him and that he was even banned from preaching and summoned to Oulu.

Elina Kurki of Kellokoski, a friend of Kosonen, told this author in about 1970 that Kosonen had run into trouble for approaching Paul Heideman in Viipuri, apparently after a sermon given by Heideman. Kosonen asked Heideman whether repentance shouldn't also be preached to unbelievers. According to this unverified story, Kosonen was not necessarily criticizing Heideman, but the manner in which Kosonen approached such an important figure was viewed as inappropriate. In any case, the specific charges made against Kosonen at that time remain unknown, and no action was taken against him in Oulu. Since then, however, he has been accused of many things, such as having a spirit of self-exaltation, teaching carnal liberty and rejecting the apostolic counsels and teachings as not being for Christians. Strangely, he has even been charged with legalism. Pentti Pelkonen writes, for example, in a December 8, 1965 article in the SRK newspaper *Päivämies*:

²¹² From an unpublished October 16, 1972 report (in author's collection), written by Hugo Hepokoski (author's father), entitled *Ensimmäinen Matka Tervolaan*.

When I asked my father, Taavetti Pelkonen, in what way Kosonen was wrong, he recalled that the same kind of legal spirit was in Kosonen as in the Reawakening. Matti Pylkäs once told me that, while on a trip with Kosonen, he asked, ‘Oh, when will the dear Heavenly Father manage to cut those horns with which you are now always butting the weak lambs of the Lord Jesus?’ but he remained without an answer.

Kosonen supporters Eino and Hilikka Summa of Helsinki told this author in about 1970 that preacher Ville Suutari, who, in his youth, had heard Kosonen preach in Oulu, said that “the teaching of the law was right, the teaching of the gospel was right, but something was odd in the carrying of the bed.” *The carrying of the bed* (Matthew 9:6) is for many a synonym for confession. Kosonen continued to preach in the various congregations in Karelia until a second campaign was launched against him about the time of the dispute with the Little Firstborn. The same Kosonen supporters claim that Pastor Kustavi Lounasheimo, acting as chairman of a certain meeting, recommended the election of persons who favored Little Firstborn preachers such as Rantala, Krekula, etc. When Kosonen voiced his opposition, he was banned from preaching.

Elina Kurki recalls that Kosonen still preached at the local “big services” in Saarenpää in 1935 but that he did not receive an invitation to preach at the 1936 services. He attended the services anyway, and there, when asked unexpectedly to preach with Arvid Tikkala, refused to do so. Kivioja’s letters confirm that by 1936, Kosonen was viewed as being in the same “heresy” as John Pollari, whose doctrine will be discussed later. In his February 6, 1936 letter, for example, Kivioja interrupts a tirade against Ansamaa to say that “Kosonen in Viipuri may also be in the Pollarite heresy.” Also, in a March 15, 1937 letter, writing in defense of the Little Firstborn, he says:

I am of the opinion that now Oulu + Suoraniemi + Jussila + Kosonen + Feija [Naatus] + Ansamaa have risen against the 1916 meeting + Runtti + Suo, and have risen to the surface. These are the main features. It doesn’t matter much that Kosonen, Myllymäki, etc. have been excommunicated. They are, in any case, the leaders of this front.²¹³

Recantations of Kosonen’s Friends

In a 1971 article, Toini Hyvärinen (nee Teittinen) of Viipuri, who was first a Reawakenist, then a friend of Kosonen, then an SRK supporter, and then a supporter of the Clericalists, before returning to the SRK, writes of her experiences as a friend of Kosonen. She is the writer of the well-known song “On syntini anteeksi suuret” (My sins oh so great are forgiven), which was published in 1935, while she was still a supporter of Kosonen. In her article, she tells of the experiences she had about three years after her conversion from the Reawakening (which occurred in about 1933):

I grew from the praise I received, and God’s grace became cheap to me, as did the love of the children of God. I had landed into the midst of the so-called ‘Kosonenism,’ for a brief time entirely away from the services of the children of God, my heart void of mutual love, which is the most important sign of a child of God, just repeating ‘believe, believe.’ Spiritual blindness had so overtaken me that I did not even know I was blind.

She then tells how Arvo Pellikka of Helsinki came to talk to her in the summer of 1936:

²¹³ Letter in Oulu provincial archives.

I still recall how, from his heart and in anxiety over my spiritual condition, he tried to show me by the Word of God that I did not have the same spirit of faith as the other children of God, nor love, in spite of my strong faith.

Later in the summer, Lounasheimo, her “former teacher,” who had repented from the Reawakening at about the same time as she had, met her on the street, saying sternly:

Don’t you see, dear child, the dangerous spiritual condition into which you have lapsed -- into a state void of love for the other children of God and into a faith of the skull. Understand now, dear child! Love is the greatest of all -- faith and even hope will remain behind, but love is eternal, and you have rejected it. Come quickly to services and repent for having despised the precious children of God!

She describes her reaction to these admonitions:

The sword of the Word found its mark -- God pressured me into obedience and gave me a godly sorrow and power to beg, in an entirely faulty state, for forgiveness in Zion. All my sins -- the alien spirit of faith and lack of love -- were removed as far as east is from west. The child was again pure and free, even had love, and her ‘sight’ returned.²¹⁴

Regina Laitinen, for whom Kosonen, as she admits in a 1962 article, was the Gamaliel at whose feet she was raised spiritually, was another who turned against him. She writes:

Kosonen separated himself entirely from the rest of the congregation with only a small group of friends around him. To them he taught -- even if not entirely word for word, he made it sufficiently clear -- that when once repentance has been done, it is sufficient. In grace there is room to always believe boldly. When we lamented our poorness and our doubts, he didn’t care for that, but with a scornful smile he used such a frank illustration that it isn’t appropriate to quote it in this article. Here I would ask: For whom are this and many other parts of the Bible written: ‘Lay aside every weight and sin which always besets us and slows us down’ [Hebrews 12:1, Finnish version]? So it always besets. And Luther urges us to journey in daily penitence and repentance. This is the view of the Bible and Luther on the walk of the child of God. The children of God have endeavored and will continue to endeavor to journey as travelers who lay aside sin and gather the blood of Jesus.

Laitinen also tells how she finally repented during a visit to Viipuri by preachers Valde Suomalainen and Lauri Koukkari:

That evening is etched in my memory as though it were a beautiful painting. The room was so full of children of God that Suomalainen could only stand by the table and there speak the words of God. I stood in the doorway and felt like such an orphan. There I thought: I have lost much when my conscience is without peace and I cannot rejoice in my salvation as those others. Are these God’s free children of Grace those whom I have criticized and watched over for their faults? A heavenly longing and craving grew in my soul, and I didn’t really notice when I started to lament: ‘Beloved children of God, I alone have had such strong eyeglasses that I have watched for your faults and exalted myself as better than others. Now it seems that grace no longer belongs to me because I have touched the apple of God’s eye.’ But no criticism or accusation was heard. No one asked whether I was now really penitent over my actions, but the gospel of boundless and infinite forgiveness echoed over me. I was allowed to press my tormented soul into the bloody wounds of Jesus and believe even such a heavy transgression as this forgiven. . . . At that time, God enlightened the precious nature

²¹⁴ T. Hyvärinen, “Armoa armonkin päälle,” *Siionin Lähetyslehti*, Nov. 1971, p. 232. Kurki tells the unverified story that Hyvärinen (Teittinen) and Hanna Rimpiläinen were afflicted in their consciences for “hugging” Lounasheimo at services and that Kosonen then “freed Teittinen from her doubts” (after which she wrote her song) and rebuked Lounasheimo, who was offended and soon began preaching the new SRK doctrine. Her song was published in *Siionin Lähetyslehti*, Jan. 1935, pp. 15, 16.

of his kingdom to my soul so that often I have had to wonder about my own case, that even I can be in this kingdom of grace. Here we are well cared for with the words of counsel, reproof and exhortation, and just as each of us is, we can believe our sins forgiven in the name and blood of Jesus.

Laitinen claims that “the Heavenly Father snatched Kosonen like a firebrand out of the fire.” She explains that Lounasheimo had told her that he had visited Kosonen in his final illness -- in the fall of 1937 -- with only Kosonen’s wife present. At first, Kosonen, “repented of Lounasheimo’s sins” - - that is, he criticized Lounasheimo -- but “under the strong hand of God, the Holy Spirit burned the dross from their hearts.” Finally, with Lounasheimo on his knees, “an accounting was made of one’s own affairs.” Laitinen presumes that Kosonen’s “heresy” was included in his confession on this occasion but asserts that he repented in no uncertain terms somewhat later:

A few days after this visit, [Rieti] Honkavuori and Jussi Suikkari came at the same time, without knowledge of each other -- thus led by God -- to visit Kosonen. When they opened the door, Kosonen’s first question was, ‘Does grace still belong to one like me?’ At that time, repentance from the heresy was also done in clear words.²¹⁵

The allegation of Kosonen’s recantation has been used as a tool to pressure Kosonen’s friends into submission to the SRK doctrine. There is, of course, no reason to assume, even if Kosonen asked for absolution on his deathbed, that he recanted his doctrine and faith. The story, as flimsy as it is, has succeeded, nevertheless, in troubling his friends, at least to some extent. Elina Kurki told this author in about 1970 that she believed that the story was based on false assumptions and spread by Kosonen’s wife, whose faith was basically Reawakenist. Kurki added that a few years previously, while under pressure to repent of Kosonenism, she had seen a vision of Kosonen at God’s right hand. Since then, Kurki had not been troubled over the matter.

There is in the SRK archives a document that purports to be a May 6, 1962 interview of Suikkari by SRK researcher Samuli Pentikäinen. In this interview, Suikkari appears to confirm Laitinen’s story of Kosonen’s deathbed repentance. Suikkari adds, however, that Kosonen repented a day or two before his death in the presence of not only Honkavuori and Suikkari but of none other than Daniel Airas, Kosonen’s loyal friend and brother in faith, who sat red-faced and sullen at the foot of the bed, speaking to neither the visitors nor to Kosonen. This statement is, of course, devastating to Suikkari’s credibility, for if Airas had indeed witnessed such a recantation, the event could not have been doubted by Kosonen’s friends, who would have had to say, in the manner of Ansamaa’s supporters, “Although Kosonen goes, we won’t follow.”

Expulsion of the Clericalists

In the late 1950s, it became apparent that L. P. Tapaninen and other ordained ministers held views that differed from those of the lay preachers. For example, the ordained ministers were

²¹⁵ R. Laitinen, “Omakohtaisia kokemuksia n.k. kososlaisuudesta,” *Päivämies*, 31 Oct. 1962, pp. 3, 4. Laitinen later modified her account of Kosonen’s repentance. In a 1992 interview by Mauri Kinnunen, she no longer presumed but stated unambiguously, “Lounasheimo told me that he visited Kosonen several times. Once there was a discussion of the matter of faith, and Kosonen then repented of the heresy.” She added later, “Honkavuori visited him, but it was to Lounasheimo that he repented. Lounasheimo told me this quite personally.” (From a transcript of a February 29, 1992 interview of Laitinen in Savonlinna in Mauri Kinnunen’s collection in Lappeenranta.)

criticized by the lay preachers for their cooperation with the state church in foreign mission work.²¹⁶ The main issue related, however, to baptism. The pastors, influenced by the state church and the Lutheran Confessions, felt that it was wrong to state flatly that unbaptized infants are in a state of grace. They quoted the Ninth Article of the *Augsburg Confession*: “It is taught among us that baptism is necessary and that grace is offered through it. Children too, should be baptized, for in baptism they are committed to God and become acceptable to him.” Their opponents referred to Christ’s words: “Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 19:14) and to the words of David, who says of his child, who had died before the eighth day, that is, before he was circumcised, “I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me” (II Samuel 12:23). The pastors would not state flatly that infants who die unbaptized are damned, asserting only that their fate is unknown. They claimed that the doctrine that unbaptized infants are saved is a new doctrine despite the fact that even Laestadius writes:

But since a child already has saving faith before baptism, of which the Saviour himself gives us a reliable assurance [Mark 9:42], the scriptural passages that deal with the child’s faith in the Saviour should also be recited either during or before the baptismal act.²¹⁷

The pastors define the basis of their doctrine in a 1960 document, which states:

This Christianity, in which God, in his grace, under the preaching of the gospel, has given to us the Spirit and life, has endeavored until now to consciously base itself, as far as doctrine is concerned, on that foundation which, based on the written Word of God, has been given us in the Confessions of our church. Attempts have indeed been made from time to time to crush this foundation over the years, but so far they have always been decisively repelled.²¹⁸

The pastors took an inconsistent position, admitting that the Confessions are subject to criticism in the light of the Bible while reacting vehemently to the slightest criticism of them. Their reverence for Lutheran doctrine sometimes surpassed that which they had for the Bible. In a 1962 defense of their doctrine, they write:

Now we are asked whether we are prepared to gratefully preserve the gift that we have in the Lutheran creed, even in the event that it may force us to revise our own views. Around us there are innumerable religious groups that have, as a common principle, a desire to base their doctrine exclusively on the Bible but have found entirely different and mutually conflicting truths in the Bible.²¹⁹

Kullervo Hulkko, though a pastor himself, became a prominent spokesman for the SRK but did not base his position entirely on the Bible any more than did the dissenting pastors. He writes in a 1965 book in defense of the SRK position, in which he explains that Laestadianism inherited its view of baptism from Pietism and Moravianism:

The view of baptism of Laestadius and his disciples, according to documents that have been preserved, is clearly pietistic. Some inconsistency is indeed detectable, but this is not really surprising. Even the baptismal theology of the New Testament is, in a way, inconsistent.²²⁰

²¹⁶ *Totuuden kuuliaisuuteen*, pp. 10-16.

²¹⁷ *Tidskriften Ens Ropandes Röst i Öknen*, p. 217.

²¹⁸ February 21, 1960 invitation to Liminka meeting in *Totuuden kuuliaisuuteen*, p. 120.

²¹⁹ *Totuuden kuuliaisuuteen*, p. 45.

²²⁰ K. Hulkko, *Kukistumaton valtakunta* (Kuopio: 1965), pp. 13, 14.

The pastors and their supporters, known as Clericalists (pappislaiset), were systematically expelled in 1960. The names used by the new group that they formed are “Laestadius-seura” (Laestadius Society) and “Vanhoillislestadiolaisten pappien veljespiiri” (Fraternal Circle of Conservative Laestadian Pastors). The name of their magazine is *Elämän Sana*. The few Laestadians that exist in Hungary sided with the Clericalists. Supporters in Sweden are known formally as the Kristna Fridsförbundet (Christian Peace Association) and in Norway as the Noregs Fredsforening (Norway’s Peace Association).

The Authority to Forgive Sins

The Clericalists tend to oppose the tradition that absolution is valid only when proclaimed by one who has received the Holy Spirit. Those who maintain this tradition cannot support it from the Holy Scriptures, nor can they ever be certain that the absolution they receive is valid, for the spiritual condition of the person who proclaims it is subject to undetected change at any time. This tradition, which is also that of the papists, is contrary to the doctrine of Martin Luther. According to Luther, absolution is unconditional. It is not based on man’s piety or worthiness, neither the father confessor’s nor the recipient’s, but on the Word of God, on which a sinner may safely rely.²²¹ A contrary position is taken by preacher Ananias Brune, for example, who describes his experiences in the Norwegian state church at the end of the nineteenth century:

Pastor Gjølme was for a time in the habit of asking us, when we wanted to register for communion, ‘Do you believe the forgiveness of sins from my mouth as from God’s mouth?’ Whoever did not reply affirmatively could not go to the altar. He was especially strict with me. It was a Maundy Thursday eve. On Good Friday, I was to travel out to the fishing villages as a telegraph operator and had a great desire to go to Communion before leaving. I had to sit for hours then in the pastor’s office and watch ungodly and unconverted people being registered without any questions. I said that I believe my sins forgiven in the name and blood of Jesus and that whoever has the Holy Spirit has the power to forgive sins. The pastor’s intention was to force me to approve him as a living Christian. Finally, I said that I believe, by the grace of God, my sins forgiven, and so I can also believe it when the pastor says it. This answer was approved, but I had to go to fetch a man to be a witness that I said it.²²²

The SRK position is stated in a 1956 article entitled “Who Has the Power to Forgive Sins?” In this article, Eino Rimpiläinen writes in regard to absolution:

It is no wonder if an awakened soul, in particular, finds himself wondering, ‘From whom will I take it?’ And he finally goes to fetch it where it does not exist. For can anything be obtained from one who does not have anything? By no means! The giver must have, for otherwise he cannot give to another.²²³

SRK defender Antti Kananen even separates the office of the Holy Spirit from the Word of God. He writes in a 1964 article:

²²¹ See, for example, *The Keys in Luther’s Works* (American Edition), Vol. 40, pp. 321-377.

²²² A. Brune, *Den levende kristendom i Vadsø. Den såkallte læstadianska menighet i Vadsø*. (Oslo: 1938), p. 53.

²²³ E. Rimpiläinen, “Kenellä on syntien anteeksiantamuksen valta?” *Rauhan Tervehdys*, June 1956, p. 9.

The keys have not been given to the individual but to the congregation, as Jesus points out in many places in the Bible. But every child of God has the forgiveness of sin in the name and atoning blood of Jesus, for it is the office of the Spirit, not the Word. The preaching of reconciliation cannot be proclaimed by a person who has not been born of God or come through the door into the house of God.²²⁴

Kananen's doctrine, which separates the Spirit from the Word, is clearly refuted by Christ's own words in many places, such as: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). Also: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth, for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak, and he will shew you things to come" (John 16:13).

The Case of Daniel Airas

Forced to leave Karelia, which was ceded to the Soviet Union after World War II, many Kosonenians (kososlaiset) settled in the Helsinki area, where they took the forefront in expelling the Clericalists from the SRK in 1960. Realizing that if the pastors were to maintain 10 percent of the membership, they could exercise a legal right to use the meetinghouse, a review of the membership rolls was initiated for the purpose of identifying "heretics," who were then expelled from the association. According to the story told by Kosonenians Eino and Hilikka Summa, it was during this period that Heikki Saari, who had come to Helsinki to explain matters related to the clerical issue, asked preacher Daniel Airas whether he had repented of Kosonenism yet. Airas replied that he had repented of Kosonen's faults, but Saari asked whether Kosonen's name had also been mentioned in the repentance. Airas answered that he couldn't repent of his faith, explaining that Kosonen's faith and doctrine were correct. Saari urged Airas not to be silly, explaining that he had always considered Airas' faith correct but that it was essential to repent not only of Kosonen's faults but that his name should also be mentioned. Airas then, convicted by this advice, submitted to the repentance.

In late 1961, Airas told Niilo Mäki that God does not erase the names of the elect from the book of life regardless of the sins they may commit. Later, he was asked by Pentti Pelkonen, "Does God appoint some to hell and others to Heaven?" Airas answered affirmatively. However, in early 1962, after being admonished by Pelkonen and Mäki, he repented of this answer, which was viewed as Calvinistic, and explained the eighth chapter of Romans in a manner acceptable to the congregation. Some of those who had been offended by his words asked for forgiveness for aggravating matters with their accusations, but Mäki felt that Airas had made an insincere repentance by explaining correctly the point that he and Pelkonen had accused him of teaching incorrectly. At another meeting, Airas again repented, saying that even he had not really believed what he had said initially regarding the point in question. However, absolution was withheld until he would admit that he had not had the Holy Spirit for the last thirty years. When Airas uttered a sound ("hmmm") that was taken to indicate assent, Pelkonen proclaimed absolution.

Airas now began avoiding the congregation's social events, which made Pelkonen conclude that Airas was headed back into Kosonenism. When Airas was offended, Pelkonen and Mäki viewed this as a demonstration of lack of love for them and called Saari to Helsinki again to deal with the

²²⁴ A. Kananen, "Taivaan valtakunnan avaimet," *Kointähti*, 1964, p. 9; cited in *Kukistumaton valtakunta*, p. 38.

matter. However, the Helsinki board decided that the matter would not have to be aired before the congregation but could be settled in the framework of Christ's church law (Matthew 18:15-17). Mäki and Pelkonen then requested that the congregation meet in regard to their *own* spiritual condition. At a preliminary meeting, Saari, who had arrived in Helsinki, claimed that Airas had, through his friends, again become polluted with Kosonenism, accusing him of incidents that had occurred 20 years before and saying that wherever there is Kosonenism there is always trouble and that there can be no peace until it is eliminated.

When the congregation met, Mäki and Pelkonen did not discuss their own conditions after all. Mäki detailed all the events connected with Airas and condemned them as products of a false doctrine and spirit. He said that Airas' repentances had been made in regard to the fruits, not the main matter. During this long explanation, Airas interjected repeatedly that he had already repented and been forgiven for the faults being mentioned. After Pelkonen had spoken in the same vein as Mäki, Airas was given a turn to speak. He asked whether Mäki and Pelkonen had ever repented of their support of Yrjö Liusvaara, the leader of the Helsinki Clericalists. Receiving an affirmative answer, he asked whether it was correct to accuse someone for faults that have been forgiven, explaining that his accusers had thrown Christ's church law into the wastebasket. He said that Kosonen's doctrine and faith are correct, that he had differed with him even to the point of disputing on matters in which, in his opinion, Kosonen was at fault but that these faults are common to us all. Saari then criticized Airas' initial repentance from Kosonenism, which had taken place about a year before, saying that Airas was now defending something of which he had repented, adding that he himself had never defended error from which he had received the grace to repent. Saari also blamed Airas and the late Kalle Liljeberg for the loss of the student hostel (ylioppilaskoti) to the Clericalists. Airas said that there have always been differences on Bible passages, even among preachers, but that previously those who understood differently were not accused of false doctrine. As examples of such issues, he mentioned the presence of the Holy Spirit in the disciples before Pentecost and the question of whether David lost the Holy Spirit. Saari then described David's sins as so ugly and gross that the Holy Spirit could not live in such a person. He explained that David had prayed that God would create in him a new spirit, regarding which he then prayed that it not be taken away (Psalms 51:10,11). To Airas' question as to whether he thinks that the Holy Spirit will leave if someone happens to "tilt a liquor bottle," Saari replied that it will.

After the meeting, Airas sought forgiveness, but a precondition was set that he would first have to deny his former faith and confess that he had never even been born into the Kingdom of God. When he would not do so, Pelkonen said that he and all who had come from Viipuri were firebrands of hell and that hell is full of Kosonenians. When a woman in tears "blessed" Airas, she was summoned to a session, where she was told that she has blessed one who is unclean. On the Sunday before Easter, 1962, Airas confessed his faults before the congregation and received "the blessing of the congregation," but his opponents still refused to accept him as a brother.²²⁵

Eino Vaherjoki was then called from Oulu, and a meeting was held at which it was declared that Kosonenism is a heresy and that all who had been involved would have to repent. Airas was the first to go before the congregation, where he said, "I don't know when this unclean spirit came into me but I repent of it." Nearly all the Kosonenians now filed to the front of the room individually to repent. This must have occurred before Suikkari's May 6, 1962 interview, in which he said that

²²⁵ This account of events related to Airas from 1960 to early 1962 is consistent with an undated document written by Eino Summa for the SRK in Oulu, entitled *Tapahtumia sekä niiden taustatekijöitä, jotka ovat vaikuttamassa nykyisiin kamppauksiin Helsingin kristillisyydessä*. (Copy in author's collection.)

Airas had already “repented of Kosonen’s spirit” and that he was “as much a child of God as are the other children of God.”

In the frantic drive to eliminate Kosonenism, even some who did not consider themselves such were forced to repent. For example, Heikki Ruikka of Muhos writes in *Päivämies* in 1964:

The issue of the so-called Kosonenism and my involvement in it, which was taken up at the Joensuu meeting of preachers and elders, came as a great surprise to me, and so I couldn’t even immediately recall all the points involved in the matter though I understood that repentance from Kosonenism was expected of me. I couldn’t directly repent because, in my opinion, I have never approved of false doctrine. Therefore, my repentance turned out as clumsy as it did. . . . Now I indeed recall that in some ‘discussions’ I found myself defending Kosonenians because I have considered them believers. I haven’t understood this matter previously as I do now since they have been confronted. And since I have thus found myself implicated in Kosonenism, I ask forgiveness for it from God’s congregation.²²⁶

By early 1965, the names of those who were “disobedient to the kingdom of God” were all removed from the membership rolls, and it was said that they only got what they deserved for what they had done to the Clericalists. It should be mentioned here that when questioned by this author in the early 1970s, recalcitrant Kosonenians Eino and Hilkka Summa and Elina Kurki expressed views of the sacraments that can only be viewed as constituting the same “three-cubit God” doctrine that is held by the SRK. They claimed that there is no forgiveness of sins, even for believers, in baptism or the Lord’s Supper, which is, of course, contrary to clear passages of Scripture, such as Acts 22:16 and Matthew 26:28.

Minor Groups

In northern Sweden there are certain Laestadians known as “akselsonilaiset,” followers of a certain J. O. Axelsson of Överkalix, who, though independent of the SRK, do not differ with it in justification. The differences, whatever they are, may relate as much to language and culture as anything else. A schism occurred in this group in about 1953. The more prominent of the two resultant groups is the one that sided with Axelsson. Among its supporters were Ivar Leskinen, Edwin Ekblom and Arne Nilsson. This group, which is sometimes referred to informally as “leskisläiset,” is organized as the Laestadianska Missionsförbundet (Laestadian Missionary Society) in Kalix, where Nilsson published the magazine *A och O* from 1955 to 1958.²²⁷ The group is said to be cooperating with certain Laestadians in the area of the Lofoten Islands and Narvik in Norway known as Hans Nilsen’s Group. Einar Sjölund of Arvidsjaur and Arvid Wennström of Nederkalix became prominent leaders of the group that split from Axelsson. This group, known as the Kristna Fridsförbundet, remained in fellowship with the SRK in Finland until it joined forces with the Clericalists in 1960, leaving the SRK only fragmentary support in northern Sweden, known formally there as the SFC -- Sveriges Fridsföreningars Central (Swedish Central Association of Peace Associations).

Over the years, minor groups also emerged in Finland for varied and vague reasons. In the 1960s, there was a small group of Kosonenians in Kajaani, led by Hanna Rimpiläinen. In the Imatra area,

²²⁶ H. Ruikka, “Kososlaisuus,” *Päivämies*, 26 Aug. 1964.

²²⁷ *Lestadiolaisuuden matrikkeli ja bibliografia*, p. 322.

there were “jantuslaiset,” followers of Maria Jantunen of Simpele, who is said to have brought “Pollarite influences” from the United States,²²⁸ and in Pirttikylä, there were “pirttikyläläiset,” who disagreed with the editorial policy of the SRK newspaper *Päivämies*. In Oulu, there were at least two groups of dissenters. Yrjö Paaso, the leader of one Oulu group, did not get along with two other dissenters there -- Simo Näppä and Niilo Karjalainen. Paaso accused Näppä of owning a radio and Karjalainen of being in “carnal liberty.” Näppä and Karjalainen gained the support, however, of the Kosonenians in Kajaani and elsewhere and the dissenters in the Imatra area and in Pirttikylä and became preachers for this ragtag group. These “näppäläiset” were, at least by the time this author attended their services in the home of Uuno Anttonen in the summer of 1969 in Vuoksenniska, as strongly bound by compulsory confession as were their accusers.

Sillanpää’s Group

In Finland, the SRK’s drive to suppress dissent became so heated and bizarre by the mid-1970s that it drew the attention of the secular news media, which launched a campaign against perceived abuses. Numerous articles appeared in regard to inquisitorial interrogations at “night meetings” and “consultations,” at which people were pressured to repent of sins and false doctrines, often without any personal conviction. Heikki Saari was again one of the main accusers until he found himself banned from preaching. The owning of a television set was viewed as a particularly heinous offense. A popular accusation was that of Kosonenism. People felt compelled, in order to remain on good terms with the SRK, to repent of Kosonenism even though they -- and often their accusers -- had no idea what the term implied. In the frenzy, one woman is said to have repented not of a “Kosonenian” (kososlainen) but of a “Colossian” (kolossilainen) spirit.²²⁹ Many who confessed but did not demonstrate sufficient submissiveness were denied absolution and expelled. The media reveled in stories of older persons who were conveyed to meetings, where, to the detriment of their health, they were interrogated long into the night. Non-Laestadian readers relished the tales of people suffering bouts of depression and even committing suicide.

Finally, in 1977, under the leadership of Paavo Sillanpää, a large number of disgruntled and expelled individuals, known as “sillanpääläiset,” accusing the SRK of self-righteousness and legalism, formed their own association, the Suomen Vanhoillislestadiolainen Rauhanyhdistys (Finnish Conservative Laestadian Association of Peace). The “näppäläiset” and “töroläläiset” (a group in America that will be discussed later) then joined forces with them under a common doctrine of compulsory confession. There is also a congregation of Sillanpää supporters in Morjärv, Sweden. The group established its own periodical, *Armon ja Rauhan Tervehdys*, and initially appeared to have a viable future, but internal dissension has led to a steady decline in membership, with most of the members either returning to the SRK or joining the Little Firstborn.

²²⁸ J. Talonen, *Pohjois-Amerikan lestadiolaisuuden osaryhmien kannatus ja toiminta* (Helsinki: 1995), p. 8.

²²⁹ L. Pietilä, *Sota perintöosasta* (Tornio: 1981), p. 86.

CHAPTER 6

FRAGMENTATION IN NORWAY

Koskamo and Palovaara

One winter, in the mid-1870s, Olli Koskamo of Kittilä preached in Vadsø while local preachers Kalle Huru (also known by the surname Neljäskunta) and Jaakko Björnström were on a trip to Finland.²³⁰ The situation that emerged is described in Ananias Brune's history:

In Vadsø there was on one side a good deal of legalism in some of the Christians, and on the other side there were those who wanted to use Christ's liberty as an occasion to the flesh, for carnal liberty. With patience and forbearance, with instruction, admonition and exhortation, such situations are eventually corrected. When Koskamo came and found things much different from what he had seen in his travels with Raattamaa, he acted as the great and powerful man who would straighten everything out at once in his own way. The legalists were the ones who were mainly affected, and they, of course, took the defensive, and a conflict arose. The simple and childlike Christians also had to distance themselves from his conduct. When Huru and Björnström returned, to their great sorrow they found the congregation in conflict and confusion. Most held fast to the old, but some had attached themselves to the new light that they thought had come.²³¹

Before the end of the decade, Paulus Palovaara of Rovaniemi, Finland, also began to preach in Norway, where he supported Koskamo. Palovaara preached in Vadsø in 1884, but certain Christians who sided with Huru were "quite legalistic" and closed the meetinghouse to him the same year. Koskamo, together with Hans Helander and Johan Sallinen, then went to complain to the elders in Swedish Lapland. In fact, Brune asserts that Koskamo and Palovaara traveled often to Swedish Lapland, where they posed as "evangelicals," accusing the others of legalism.²³²

To the surprise and dismay of Huru's supporters, Koskamo and Palovaara received the full support of the elders. The same year, Erkki Antti, in a stern letter to Norway, lauded Koskamo and his friends, saying of the others that "the big heads of Vadsø haven't needed to come often to sit by the congregation of the firstborn, to sit at the feet of the elders, any more than have the pedants of Kittilä." In a postscript, he addressed Huru personally:

And I will also ask you, Kalle Neljäskunta, Where did you, dear brother, get that spiritual authority, though you aren't known to me by face or by heart -- even if you are from the Tornio valley -- and you do not agree

²³⁰ Brune mentions in a footnote (p. 55) that there is "some uncertainty" as to the year of Koskamo's visit: "Both 1874 and 1876 are mentioned," Brune admits, "but 1876 cannot be right -- that winter, Parkajoki and Tapani were in Vadsö, and Huru was not in Finland then; he was home." The year 1876 is given for Koskamo's visit in S. Paulaharju, *Ruijan Suomalaisia* (Porvoo: 1985), p. 495.

²³¹ Brune, pp. 55, 56.

²³² Brune, pp. 56-60.

with men like Olli Koskamo and Helander, Paulus and others, who have received the pure gospel through the laying on of hands of the elders?²³³

In December of 1885, Huru went with a delegation from Vadsø to meet with the elders in Swedish Lapland. The support of the elders for Koskamo and Palovaara then waned to some extent, and relations between the two men deteriorated. According to Brune, the same men who had denied Palovaara use of the meetinghouse now arranged to have him preach again so that he could castigate Koskamo. In the winter of 1886-87, Palovaara preached, therefore, almost daily in the meetinghouse for six weeks. During this period, he raged against others and magnified himself. One Sunday, however, Huru preached the gospel in the meetinghouse, and, as Brune writes, “hearts were comforted, and there was joy and gladness, and praise and thanks were offered to God.” According to Brune, Palovaara, who arrived late, was heard to say that six weeks of work were wasted because he had overslept. The listeners now had enough of Palovaara, and those who had previously denied him use of the building did so again.²³⁴

In the fall of 1887, a reconciliation occurred. Huru and Koskamo asked for mutual forgiveness, as did their supporters. The reconciliation, which also included Palovaara, was reported to the elders, who were pleased and sent Abram Tapani and Aapo Hietanen to Vadsø, where they preached the following year. Brune tells what happened next:

In order to maintain peace, we agreed to sign a letter in which it was said, among other things, that the letters of ‘the firstborn elders’ are to be held in the same esteem as the rest of God’s Word, even placed alongside the Scriptures. This indeed was and is excessive, but in Acts 15 we see that the apostles also agree to a letter in which the eating of things strangled and blood is set alongside fornication. They did this in order to avoid a schism. We also wanted to do all we could to effect unity. Even if full unity was not achieved, now it was at least more tranquil.

In spite of these efforts, Palovaara began holding his own separate meetings in March of 1889, and Koskamo began doing the same in January of 1892, though the latter also preached subsequently in the meetinghouse as well. By this time, the split between Palovaara and Koskamo was also complete.²³⁵

In 1894, Lapp preacher Antin Pieti arrived on a preaching tour in Norway. Brune writes that Koskamo’s supporters in Vardø complained to Antin Pieti about the other Christians there and in Vadsø, saying that “they do not bear teaching, warning and exhortation.” Antin Pieti then, according to Brune, preached only “teaching, warning and exhortation” in both Vardø and Vadsø but in an “evangelical spirit, as do the apostles in their epistles.” It then turned out that those who had been accused of not bearing this kind of preaching loved him more each time they listened to him while those who had complained distanced themselves from him.²³⁶

The elders now sent Johan Sirkanmaa, who arrived in Vadsø in February of 1895 with a letter from Raattamaa, Erkki Antti and Pastor Laitinen, highly recommending him and asking him to take Koskamo, Huru and others as partners.²³⁷ However, Koskamo and Huru were away, and Sirkanmaa preached without them once or twice in the meetinghouse in Vadsø. He preached in a humble spirit, but then Koskamo arrived and preached with him one evening, after which Koskamo

²³³ December 12, 1884 letter in Juhonpieti, pp. 129-131.

²³⁴ Brune, pp. 61-63.

²³⁵ Brune, pp. 64, 65.

²³⁶ Brune, pp. 66, 67.

²³⁷ For the complete text of this January 5, 1895 letter, see “Kirje Norjaan,” *Sanomia Siionista*, Feb. 1895, pp. 24-28.

returned to Tana, where he lived, taking Sirkanmaa with him. Sirkanmaa spent a week there with Koskamo, after which he was entirely changed and approved of Koskamo without listening at all to the others.²³⁸

Brune also writes that Huru and many others understood the congregation of the firstborn, mentioned in Hebrews 12:23, to mean the Old Testament believers mentioned in chapter 11 of the same epistle, while Koskamo and Sirkanmaa took it to mean the congregation that had been born with travail in Swedish Lapland. When the issue was discussed in a committee of 12 men from each side, which had been established to examine the differences, “Huru humbled himself so far for the sake of peace as to ask for forgiveness.” According to Brune, “he was not actually asking for forgiveness for his understanding but only for having argued about it.”²³⁹

Soon the men who had closed the meetinghouse to Palovaara did so to Koskamo and Sirkanmaa as well, and Antin Pieti, preaching again in Norway the same year, 1895, approved the action. The schism was now complete, and Koskamo’s followers began building their own meetinghouse.²⁴⁰

After Raattamaa’s death in 1899, Palovaara and his followers joined forces with the Firstborn, but Koskamo, who would not submit to the leadership in Gällivare, was rejected by them.

Erik Johnsen

Huru died in 1905, the year Erik Johnsen of Lyngen, Norway, began to make visits, with his friends, to Vadsø. Johnsen is known for his strict loyalty to the Lutheran Confessions and acceptance of the third use of the law.²⁴¹ Brune writes of Johnsen and his friends:

Gradually, there appeared certain strange understandings with which we could not agree since we did not find them to agree with God’s Word. These understandings were then made into a dividing wall in Christianity. Those who do not understand thus are shut out. Their ugly statements about unbaptized infants and condemnation of infants who die without baptism were particularly offensive.²⁴²

By about 1910, Johnsen’s supporters were separate from the other groups. According to Dagmar Sivertsen’s history, Johnsen has accused the other groups, including Brune’s, of teaching that confession “purifies” the heart. Sivertsen describes Johnsen’s view of confession, as expressed in his sermons:

²³⁸ Brune, pp. 67, 68.

²³⁹ Brune, pp. 68, 69. There is a dramatic description of services that were held during Sirkanmaa’s visit to Vadsö in 1895 in *Ruijan Suomalaisia* (pp. 496, 497), according to which, after Sirkanmaa and Huru had preached, Koskamo rose to “roar out” about man’s depravity and the need for a mediator, which evoked a great outburst of *liikutuksia*. The large assembly began to confess their sins to one another and to ask for forgiveness, and the mingled cries of contrition and rejoicing were so great that the sounds could not be distinguished. The scene of heavenly intoxication, according to this account, based on a manuscript written by Koskamo-supporter Iisakki Tiberg, resembled that of the first Pentecost.

²⁴⁰ Brune, pp. 69-71.

²⁴¹ See, for example, E. Johnsen et al., *Læstadianernes tro og lære* (Oslo: 1938) and “Eräitä törkeitä syytöksiä kristillisyyttämme vastaan Norjassa.”

²⁴² Brune, p. 75.

He found that when 'Peter preached in the house of Cornelius, he did not give these heathen any command to confess their sins, but when he preached of the forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus, the Holy Spirit came upon them.' From this, Erik Johnsen concluded that the confession of sin is not to be set as a demand, because if it is set as a demand or if any significance is placed on confession for salvation, everything will become work-righteousness and self-righteousness.²⁴³

Reawakenist preachers Juho Pyörre and Matti Junttila arrived from Finland in the winter of 1913-14, preached in Vadsø and gained support among the followers of Erik Johnsen. The Reawakenists joined forces with Johnsen's followers in Vadsø but eventually found reasons to disagree with them on various issues, including doctrinal ones such as baptism, original sin and confession. According to Sivertsen, relations between the two groups since 1951 have been so cool that they can hardly be viewed any longer as one body.²⁴⁴ In 1967, Johnsen's followers were listed as a separate group by Raittila under the name "Lyngenin suunta" (Lyngen Group) and with their own periodical, *Under Vandringen*, which had been established in 1948.²⁴⁵ Informally, they are known in Norwegian as Erikianerne, in Finnish as Erikiaanit, and in English as Erikians.

By the mid-1980s, these Laestadians were arguing over the the right to remarry after divorce and the age of the world. In 1987, the leadership decided that both opinions could coexist as long as the modern views were held only privately. However, a grass-roots rebellion ensued against this position, and by 1992, a split resulted in the emergence of two separate groups. The Fundamentalists (fundamentalistene or fundæne), led by Knut Evanger, take Moses' account of creation literally and forbid the remarriage of divorced persons. The Liberals (liberale), under Andreas Esbensen, allow Moses' days of creation to be interpreted as eras and permit remarriage by the innocent party in a divorce. The formal name used by the Fundamentalists is "Den luthersk-læstadianske menighet, Lyngen-retningen" (The Lutheran-Laestadian Congregation, Lyngen Group). The Liberals have retained the group's original name, "Den luthersk-læstadianske menighet" (The Lutheran-Laestadian Congregation), and continue to publish *Under Vandringen*. A number of small groups have split away from the Fundamentalists, claiming that the position on divorce has not been consistent. Remarried persons, according to them, should be told to divorce their current spouses and remarry their former ones. They also insist on women wearing scarves. One group in Kvænangen, which broke away from the Fundamentalists in 1998, is known as "De kvite engler" (The White Angels). This splinter group has also broken relations with the state church because of its ritualism and false doctrine. In Kåfjord there is another group that separated from the Fundamentalists, and in Ramfjord there are actually three or four groups as the result of an earlier local schism.²⁴⁶

Vanhala vs. Brune

In 1910, a reconciliation of sorts occurred between Koskamo and the supporters of Huru and Brune. Koskamo asked for forgiveness and promised to maintain peace, and then joint services were held in the two meetinghouses. Thus, in the winter of 1913-14, when Hjalmar Vanhala arrived

²⁴³ Sivertsen, pp. 361-363, 486.

²⁴⁴ Sivertsen, p. 203.

²⁴⁵ *Lestadiolaisuuden matrikkeli ja bibliografia*, pp. 322, 344.

²⁴⁶ Ø. Eggen, *Troens bekjennere. Kontinuitet og endring i en læstadiansk menighet* (Tromsø: 1998), p. 127.

in Vadsø on a visit from Finland, he preached in both meetinghouses.²⁴⁷ However, when Vanhala preached in Norway again in 1915, a dispute emerged in regard to him. Brune writes:

It was known that he had lived in open works of the flesh, and there was no true repentance. He would confess something to one and deny it to another, and he asked publicly for forgiveness only for weaknesses. In spite of everything, there were some who considered him the light and did not want to believe anything bad about him. We who wanted to walk in the truth had to dissociate ourselves from this. We had to part company with those who now received Vanhala.

Koskamo and Vanhala preached together for awhile but eventually, Brune says, they argued about the funds that they had collected. When they parted company, Koskamo found that he had lost most of his supporters, and now he and his followers had no trouble seeing Vanhala's sins. Brune writes:

We, who for a time had tried to be together with them in the new meetinghouse, were now excluded for awhile from both buildings. In the new one, they approved of Vanhala, and we could not go along with this. In the old one, Erik Johnsen had such great power that he got us shut out from it.²⁴⁸

When Vanhala, a strong opponent of the Firstborn, died in 1921, his followers in Vadsø, under Karl Sirkka, invited Firstborn elders Björkman and Parakka to preach, which they did the same year. Most of Vanhala's followers then followed their new leader into the Firstborn group.²⁴⁹

In view of the broad-minded approach that Huru and Brune took in the disputes, even placing the Word of God on the same level with the words of the elders, it is not surprising that Brune joined forces with the Little Firstborn. His group is known as the Alta Group because of its close association with the Laestadians in Alta, Norway. In the manner of the Old Firstborn, the group's mouthpiece, *Sions Blad*, has identified Laestadius with an angel in the Bible -- the one "standing in the sun" in Revelation 19:17.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁷ Brune, pp. 76-77.

²⁴⁸ Brune, pp. 78, 79.

²⁴⁹ Brune, p. 80.

²⁵⁰ *Sions Blad*, No. 10, 1948; cited in Sivertsen, p. 430.

CHAPTER 7

DISINTEGRATION IN AMERICA

Three Legalist Preachers

In his 1920 history, Pollari mentions a new dispute involving three ministers in America. He writes:

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.²⁵¹

Although Pollari does not mention the names of these men, there is a tradition among the Evangelicals that two of them were Kalle Daniels and Israel Hagel. Saarnivaara mentions these men in similar contexts, adding the name of Abel Johnson and sometimes that of Heikki Martinmäki and others.²⁵²

Paul Heideman vs. John Pollari

Paul Heideman, who was ordained in Finland in 1916, made a trip in 1917-18 to the West Coast with John Pollari. It is recalled among the Evangelicals that they preached in harmony in Berkeley, California, at the new church, which the Evangelicals had built after being expelled from the old one because of their support of the much maligned preacher Antti Itänen.²⁵³ However, it is said that

²⁵¹ *Apostolis-Lutherilaisten hajaantumisen syyt Amerikassa*, p. 8.

²⁵² *Amerikan laestadiolaisuuden eli Apostolis-luterilaisuuden historia*, pp. 174, 175, 180, 209, 226. *The History of the Laestadian or Apostolic-Lutheran Movement in America*, p. 54.

²⁵³ Saarnivaara’s treatment of Itänen (*Amerikan laestadiolaisuuden eli Apostolis-luterilaisuuden historia*, pp. 207, 208) is typical of the prejudice and inaccuracy that mar his works. He claims that “Itänen supported socialism and was even sympathetic to communism, ordering their newspaper *Toveri*,” that he was not content with his own turns to preach but even “demanded the right to preach during [Bernhard] Färdig’s turns” and that “with his supporters, he separated and established a new congregation in 1920, which acquired a small church, the smallest of American Finns.” However, the truth is that gospel preachers are viciously labeled with various epithets by those who are jealous of their popularity (John 11:46-48). When Itänen preached, the church was filled with those who loved the gospel, but when Färdig’s turn came to preach his confessionism, the crowd dissipated. According to Itänen’s obituary in *Lännen Suometar* (2 Sept. 1938), he was not even in Berkeley in 1920, having moved to Astoria, Oregon, from Fort Bragg, California, 21 years before his death, that is, in about 1917, the same year the

then in Astoria, Oregon, a young woman asked whether it was sufficient to settle a certain quarrel she had with someone privately or if it had to also be confessed before the congregation. Pollari took the position that a private settlement was sufficient, but Heideman demanded public confession. It is said that Heideman and Pollari separated as a result of this dispute and never preached together again.²⁵⁴

Paul Heideman then made a trip to Finland in 1920, and later the same year, his friend Oskari Jussila arrived in America on a preaching tour. Jussila, an ordained pastor and editor of *Siionin Lähetyslehti*, played a key role in the SRK's subversion of Conservatism and the establishment of compulsory confession in Finland. Saarnivaara tells how Jussila, after traveling with Paul Heideman in Minnesota in early 1921, reacted to the "evangelical" spirit that he had witnessed there:

On his return [to Michigan], he is said to have complained that matters were awry in Minnesota and that a false spirit had spread there. He was particularly offended by the unusually violent 'liikutuksia' of the 'evangelicals.' They did not generally occur during the sermons, as in Laestadianism generally, but at the end of the services, during the singing. While singing, they started to tap their feet to the beat, moved the chairs against the walls and began to jump and 'praise.' The 'liikutuksia' were often so violent that furniture was broken, clothes were torn and even limbs were injured. It is claimed that 'liikutuksia,' particularly among the young, have sometimes become almost like ring games and that even unbelievers have participated in these bouts of 'cold jumping,' as it was called by those not belonging to the group because they could not believe that it was effected by the Holy Spirit.²⁵⁵

Gust Latvala, an Evangelical, replied, in a newspaper article, to the criticism of *liikutuksia* that he heard during the services in Virginia, Minnesota, on February 22, 1921, where he saw the "lofty and honorable" Jussila arrive with the "delicate" Heideman. He mentions that preachers John Ylen, John Oberg, Oskari Sandell, Isaac Lamppa, William Alajoki, Pekka Raattamaa and Pastor Niilo Saastamoinen were present at these services, where Jussila and Heideman also preached to a large assembly of persons of various spiritual conditions. He writes:

During these services, I heard criticism of *liikutuksia*, that the preachers incite joy or *liikutuksia* among the people and that this is not right. I have heard it said even previously that at services people tap their feet and jump in anger together with other blasphemous speech against the *liikutuksia* of the children of God. Here I will point out some places in the Bible in regard to these matters: Exodus 15:20; II Samuel 6:16,21; Job 38:7; Jeremiah 31:12,13,14; Psalm 47:1; Psalm 149; Matthew 5:12; Luke 19:37-40; Acts 2:3 and 3:8. The aforementioned passages speak of the praises of the children of God. Therefore, I urge you, if you read these lines, to also read the Holy Book so that the Bible would not remain just as a decoration for your home, on some shelf or table. And you, vain man, who are weighed in the balances and are found entirely wanting, you speak blasphemies against the *liikutuksia* of the Holy Spirit, and you who thus criticize, whether you are a listener or pastor, parson, vicar or bishop, will find your judgment in Hebrews 10:29.²⁵⁶

Evangelicals built their own church in Berkeley (according to a plaque in front of the building), from which they were later expelled by the Heidemans.

²⁵⁴ This incident is recounted from the legalist-confessionist standpoint in *Amerikan laestadiolaisuuden eli Apostolis-luterilaisuuden historia*, p. 167.

²⁵⁵ *Amerikan laestadiolaisuuden eli Apostolis-luterilaisuuden historia*, pp. 168, 169.

²⁵⁶ "Muistelmia seuroista Virginiassa," *Valvoja*, 19 Mar. 1921. Latvala signed his article "Valvojan lukija."

Heidemanian Accusations

When Jussila and Heideman returned to Michigan, a meeting was held in Calumet, where, it is said, a decision was made to bar certain preachers from Minnesota and Wisconsin, namely John Pollari, Isaac Lamppa, Sam Kovala, Alex Puotinen and others, from preaching in Calumet. It was not long before the Evangelicals were denied use of all churches over which Paul Heideman gained control. The Heidemanians claimed that they constituted the only true Christian congregation and that only they had the authority to forgive sins. They used this doctrine as a tool to pressure the Evangelicals and to suppress all opposition. Those who did not recant the old doctrine were shunned and no longer greeted with the traditional greeting “Jumalan terve” (God’s greetings).

The Evangelicals were accused of rejecting confession and of having a spirit of carnality. In a March 21, 1921 letter, written during his return to Finland, Oskari Jussila, equating the foot washing of John 13:14 with confession, writes:

It is not divine light when someone -- even an angel from Heaven (Gal. 1:8) -- brings something that is supposed to be brighter, which the congregation that has received the Holy Spirit lacks. The spirit of ‘new brightness’ has never stooped to wash the feet of the guilty after the example of our Lord and Master, for the lesson of foot washing is still as strange to the spirit of carnal self-exaltation as it was incomprehensible to Peter and the other disciples who were still uncircumcised in heart.²⁵⁷

Similar accusations appeared in a 1927 article of Matti Suo in the Heidemanian mouthpiece *Rauhan Tervehdys*:

Do those who walk after the flesh really have a free conscience, as they boast? Far from it! For whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin (John 8:34). Even if the mouth is full of faith, yet the heart is empty and the conscience full of unrest, which they have to try to satisfy with that honey-sweet doctrine of carnal liberty, explaining that this rebuking by God in the conscience is the devil’s work, which one doesn’t have to be concerned with -- just believe up and down the dung heap without any concern for any counsels or warnings, though the conscience is afflicted with the wounds of death. That is, if it isn’t already entirely hardened in its fleshly mind.

At the end of the article, Suo makes it clear that he does not believe that faith, without confession, is sufficient for salvation. He writes in regard to the “old man”:

Therefore, he has to be dragged to the cross so that he can’t bear fruit unto death. However, if the devil has, in spite of this, inflicted wounds in the war, they won’t heal by watching over them, by hiding them, or by believing over them, but by rushing to the fountain and appearing on the stage just as you are, believing without doubt the forgiveness of sins in the precious blood of the Lamb.²⁵⁸

One question that is often pondered is whether Paul Heideman was fully supported by his father. As Saarnivaara points out, Evangelicals sometimes quote what Arthur Heideman is reported to have said in regard to his wife and son: “Paul [Paavo] and Mamma have a new cap but I have the old one.”²⁵⁹ However, too much should not be deduced from the occasional terse remarks of a man

²⁵⁷ O. Jussila, “Kirje Amerikan kristityille,” *Siionin Lähetyslehti*, May 1921, pp. 69, 70.

²⁵⁸ M. Suo, “Uskonvanhurskaus,” *Rauhan Tervehdys*, June 1927, pp. 87, 88.

²⁵⁹ *Amerikan laestadiolaisuuden eli Apostolis-luterilaisuuden historia*, p. 169.

who is said to have avoided arguments.²⁶⁰ Furthermore, not all Evangelicals interpret his remarks in the same light. For example, when this author asked preacher Antti Koskela for his opinion of Heideman in 1968, he replied that he had reliable information on the matter. He explained that he had been present on a certain occasion when Pekka Raattamaa was complaining about the situation in Calumet to the older Heideman, saying, for example, that “there was only clay earth there,” Heideman replied lamentingly, “Poor Peter, poor Peter” (Pekka parka, Pekka parka). Asked in 1968 to interpret these words, Koskela replied, “Previously Pekka was a precious brother in faith; now he was only poor Peter.”

The Reaction of the Evangelicals

Pollari, in a December 22, 1941 letter to Saarnivaara, defends himself and tells how the Evangelicals, who are also known as Pollarites, differ from the other groups:

But now I will tell where we differ from the Heidemanians, Federationists, Reawakenists and Old Firstborn: In all of them there appears compulsory confession, for I was of one opinion with [Arthur] Heideman many decades, and we struggled against legalism, and God effected awakenings at that time. Thus many dozens came into faith each winter when we were in the Copper Country, and the sounds of joy and rejoicing were heard from the tabernacles of the righteous. But then, when Pastor Jussila came, he and [Paul] Heideman brought a better doctrine, and all the legalists approved their doctrine, and we were condemned as heretics -- and when we did not submit to this, it caused the schism, which still exists. We are accused of being rejectors of confession and of having a doctrine of carnal liberty, and there are many other accusations that are not true, but we indeed accuse the others of having compulsory confession and of using the apostolic counsels to bind people to the law.²⁶¹

Pollari also writes in an April 2, 1942 letter to Saarnivaara:

I have never opposed scriptural confession but only compulsory confession. My understanding is that the devil accuses one with old sins and oppresses one with them, as Luther also understands. But all the Laestadian groups say that this is the Holy Spirit. Isn't there a big difference when they demand obedience to the Holy Spirit even though they themselves are not obedient? For they say and do not and lay heavy burdens on people's shoulders [Matthew 23:3,4]. They indeed shout that we oppose confession of sin and the asking of forgiveness and that we reject the teachings and counsels for believers, which is not true. A person is so slow to confess that it doesn't need to be forbidden, but neither must it be demanded. If it is left free to each person, no dispute will occur.²⁶²

Pollari asks in the same letter, “Why do the Heidemanians close the churches to us, although I am in the same doctrine as before, when we were together?” Saarnivaara agrees:

Pollari's presentation is true from the standpoint of his group. Pollarism did not emerge in 1920-21 by the 'concocting' of a new doctrine. This doctrine of the 'evangelical' group was the original doctrine of

²⁶⁰ *Amerikan laestadiolaisuuden eli Apostolis-luterilaisuuden historia*, pp. 214, 215.

²⁶¹ December 22, 1941 letter in U. Saarnivaara, *Mikä on totuus Amerikan laestadiolaisesta kristillisyydestä?* (Hancock: 1947), p. 8. The words “and there are many other accusations which are not true” are supplied from a citation from the same letter in *Amerikan laestadiolaisuuden eli Apostolis-luterilaisuuden historia*, p. 152.

²⁶² *Amerikan laestadiolaisuuden eli Apostolis-luterilaisuuden historia*, p. 313.

Heidemanism. Finding itself separated, it just preserved the doctrine that Heideman had taught for a long time already with Pollari and his other friends.²⁶³

Saarnivaara also admits that there are no real differences in the doctrine of justification of the groups opposed to the Evangelicals. He writes, for example:

The actual doctrine of salvation is the same in Firstbornism and Conservatism, for both belonged originally to the ‘firstborn congregation’ led by Raattamaa. In Firstbornism, however, confession [rippi], the confessing of sins to some Christian person and also before the congregation, is sometimes stressed more than in Conservatism.²⁶⁴

In a November 8, 1945 letter to Saarnivaara, Evangelical preacher Matt Reed also writes of confession:

Preacher Pollari began to oppose confession in the form that some were demanding it, namely, that when sins that have been committed are enumerated, the conscience is purged. We do not oppose confession of sin itself (nor private confession either) but only the understanding that it is a purging of the conscience . . . , but the conscience is purged only by the blood of the Son of God claimed by faith, which cleanses from all sins. This, therefore, is the work of God, and let it alone be glorified, but when that work of confessing became more precious, there also came a demanding spirit, and with the demanding spirit a condemning spirit. Many have made confession to me (not that I would have demanded it but of free will, and I have granted forgiveness). We understand that the law contains an unconditional command and prohibition, and if we place confession of sin behind a command or prohibition, we are faced with legal spirituality. . . . I have spoken with some who understand confession of sin as repentance, but repentance is to cease from the former life, whether it was false worship of God or overt commission of sin, for both are the result of unbelief, and then, on this journey, to stand against the devil on both the right and left, armed in faith with the weapons of God.²⁶⁵

The Törölä - AALC Schism

By 1972, the Heidemanians, who are known formally by the names Apostolic Lutheran Mission and First Apostolic Lutheran Congregation, found themselves at odds with the SRK, which accused them of “carnal leniency” and expelled them from fellowship. A minority in America, led by Peter Nevala, Elmer Alajoki and others, remained loyal to the SRK and formed its own organization in 1973 under the name Association of American Laestadian Congregations (AALC).²⁶⁶ In 1996 the name was changed to Laestadian Lutheran Church (LLC). The aged Paul Heideman died in 1973, and his followers became known as “töröläläiset” after their chief preacher, Walter Törölä. However, both sides, in fact, claim Heideman as their own. The Törölä group publishes its views in *Greetings of Peace* and the LLC in *Voice of Zion*. Although the Törölä group is viewed by some as

²⁶³ *Amerikan laestadiolaisuuden eli Apostolis-luterilaisuuden historia*, pp. 171, 172.

²⁶⁴ *Amerikan laestadiolaisuuden eli Apostolis-luterilaisuuden historia*, p. 119.

²⁶⁵ *Amerikan laestadiolaisuuden eli Apostolis-luterilaisuuden historia*, pp. 312, 313.

²⁶⁶ In Michigan there is also a small faction of Heidemanians, led by Nathan Ruonavaara, who is said to have been expelled from the AALC for having a “dry spirit.” His group is said to be more strict than others in regard to the concept of Santa Claus, visits to hairdressers, association with unbelievers, etc. See L. Pietilä, pp. 150, 151. Ruonavaara has preached occasionally in Federation churches.

more “evangelical” than the LLC, Törölä admitted, in an October 6, 1977 letter to this author, that there is not much doctrinal difference between the two groups:

In doctrine, in its main features, even among those who did the expelling, perhaps no particularly radical changes have occurred, but the spirit has acquired a tone based on legalistic zeal. And, of course, it is self-evident that the spirit of the law also effects legalistic change in doctrine. But as for those who have been expelled, they have the same doctrine and Spirit as before. Sin is considered sin, from which one endeavors to struggle to repentance, and the sins of the penitent are forgiven in the name and blood of Jesus.

Lamppa, Mäki and Koskela

Isaac Lamppa, a gifted and popular Evangelical preacher, eventually adopted a doctrine that was similar, if not identical, to that of the Heidemanians. A 1933 letter from a Heidemanian in northern Minnesota to Oskari Jussila in Finland criticizes preacher Robert Vepsäläinen, who had visited America in 1930-31, for being soft on a group of Evangelicals that had modified its doctrine and had separated from the others but had not submitted to repentance. The same letter criticizes certain other preachers as well, including even Paul Heideman, who was viewed as being too friendly with Lamppa.²⁶⁷ Estranged from the Evangelicals and unable to gain firm support among the Heidemanians, Lamppa retained only a small group of supporters, known as “lappalaiset,” on the Iron Range of Minnesota from 1929 until his death in 1943.

By 1934, it became evident that there was another kind of trouble among the Evangelicals, for some were rejecting the apostolic instructions regarding conduct, as had been charged by the legalists. Pressure was first applied against Victor Mäki of Van Buskirk, Wisconsin, and later against John Koskela of Kettle River, Minnesota, for accepting invitations to preach to these people. Although there were no disagreements among the speakers in regard to justification, Koskela had indeed mentioned in his sermons that we have police to handle evildoers, and this led to accusations that he was lax in instructing believers to pursue good works. Koskela’s supporters, known as “koskelalaiset,” replied that the duty of a preacher is to preach the gospel, and pointing to Titus 2:11,12, they began to stress that it is the grace of God, not the preacher, that teaches believers to lead godly lives. Koskela writes in a 1949 letter:

Hirelings are not appointed to chasten and teach the children of this house, for the children of this house are taught and chastened by the master of the house himself, and it would indeed be senseless if an earthly father, who has chastened us on rare days as he was minded, were to now appoint a stranger to whip his children. Neither does the father view it as fitting that the children chasten one another.²⁶⁸

Koskela’s opponents eventually charged that he condoned sin, and his supporters charged, in turn, that Pollari’s group had adopted a legalist doctrine, and some even said that Pollari’s sermons gave birth to devils. In an April 2, 1942 letter to Saarnivaara, Pollari writes in regard to the negative view of Koskela’s followers with regard to the apostolic counsels and exhortations:

I agree that in our group a negative position has appeared in a few here and there, but we are in disagreement with them. There are some preachers who support them. Some of them use such blatant carnal liberty that

²⁶⁷ December 25, 1933 letter of Hanna Kangas of Eveleth, Minnesota, in Oulu provincial archives.

²⁶⁸ February 9, 1949 letter to Ivar and Fanny Luoma of Menahga, Minnesota. (Copy in author’s collection.)

everyone may live as he lists; as long as you believe, you will be saved. These indeed do not tolerate the counsels of the apostles but consider them law. These are those antinomians, who take the gospel as a cloak for evil. But from this you can see that we have a pure scriptural doctrine when such people appear. They appeared already in the time of the apostles and Luther. Nothing like this can appear in legalist Christianity. Luther says that if we cover the gospel because of the hypocrites, the poor will die of hunger.²⁶⁹

This dispute began to cause division as early as 1934, but it took several years -- as much as a decade in some localities -- for the schism to be complete. Preachers who sided with Pollari were Sam Kovala, Arthur Romberg, Alex Pesonen Sr., Walter Isaacs (also known as Kuoppa-Valteri), Matt Reed, Gust Juola and others. Preachers on Koskela's side included Johan Taivalmaa, Ivar Luoma, Kalle Luoma (a brother of Ivar) and Antti Leskinen. Songwriter Senja Efraimson and Elma K. Anderson, a well-known translator of songs, also supported Koskela.

In California, Koskela's supporters eventually fell into other forms of extremism. Some claimed that the sayings of Jesus that are not recorded in the Bible (John 20:30) had been revealed to them by the Holy Spirit. Kalle Luoma of Fort Bragg, California, asserted that there was no end to the world and no resurrection of the body. According to him, in the new birth the spirit is resurrected and even ascends to Heaven while the body remains on earth. He also held the Calvinistic doctrine that once a person is truly converted he can never fall away.²⁷⁰ At first, there was much support for Koskela together with a great deal of enthusiasm and *liikutuksia* in the movement. However, as the zeal subsided, a steady decrease occurred in the number of his supporters. After Pollari's death in 1945, some Koskela supporters even shifted to the other group when the preachers in it began to lay less emphasis on "counsels and teaching," and others drifted away from all religion. In any case, by the early 1990s Koskela's group had virtually ceased to exist.

Arthur Romberg

In 1950, Arthur Romberg (son of Johan Roanpää) of Hancock, Michigan found that he was no longer acceptable as an Evangelical preacher after publishing his views on the nature of the Church. When the 1950 Christmas services in Iron River, Michigan, at which he was scheduled to speak, were canceled, he expressed a reluctance to preach in other localities and finally ceased preaching, at least in Evangelical congregations. He writes in a 1951 letter:

My letter in *Valvoja* caused sermons to be given in which it is said that not a single soul will be saved, even if he confesses faith in Jesus, unless a shift occurs into our congregation before death, which is an understanding that I can by no means accept. . . . Outward affiliation, even with our congregation, does not justify. One has to be translated into that kingdom that is spiritual, which is not meat and drink but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.²⁷¹

In the same letter, he mentions that he has a son who supports the Federationists but who has as a foundation of his faith only "Jesus Christ and what he has done." Before his death in 1956,

²⁶⁹ *Amerikan laestadiolaisuuden eli Apostolis-luterilaisuuden historia*, pp. 316, 317.

²⁷⁰ Luoma's doctrine as described by Hugo Hepokoski, who lived in Fort Bragg in the late 1940s.

²⁷¹ January 25, 1951 letter to Kalle Johnson of Embarrass, Minnesota. (Photocopy in author's collection.)

Romberg preached in the Federationist church in Hancock but was not fully accepted because of his past association with the Evangelicals.

Ben Salmela

In the early 1950s, Dr. A. Benhart (Ben) Salmela, a native of the Iron Range who was respected as a scholar in secular matters but with minimal understanding of the Bible, began delivering very simple but emotionally charged sermons, which, in contrast with Romberg's, stressed the uniqueness and exclusiveness of the Evangelicals, known formally as Independent or Finnish Apostolic Lutherans. Some of Salmela's sermons also discouraged Bible reading. In one sermon, for example, he added a sarcastic twist to Christ's words in John 5:39:

For they use and study the Bible, but they read it to their own condemnation. If they would believe, then they would have eternal life. In many places it says: Search the scriptures, for in them ye think there is eternal life, but they are only they which testify of me.²⁷²

In regard to *explaining* the Bible, Salmela took a position similar to that of the Reawakenists. He said in a 1954 sermon:

People always say this, that the Bible has to be explained. The Bible doesn't have to be explained when you believe it. If you just believe by the power of God, the Bible is entirely clear. It doesn't have to be explained.²⁷³

The doctrine that it is "wrong" to study or explain the Bible now began to be heard among the Evangelicals, but the preachers continued to teach the old doctrine of justification for several years.

Matt Reed vs. Aunes Salmela

In 1962, a dispute erupted over whether a church should be built in Duluth, Minnesota. Matt Reed of Kettle River, a very popular preacher by that time, won the support of two other preachers, Arvid Isaacs of Minneapolis and William Prusi of Negaunee, Michigan, and began instructing the dissenters to display Christian love and good works by cooperating in the building of the church. When such instructions went unheeded, these speakers, who had fully supported Ben Salmela -- who died before the dispute erupted -- began stressing the Word over the Spirit and "counsels and instructions" more than faith. Their sermons consisted mainly of accusations against the dissenters and included much repetition of words such as "instructions," "exhortations," "teachings," "love," and "unity," while their listeners, who were indeed in sore need of spiritual guidance and instruction, heard little more than these bare words.

²⁷² From a recording of a sermon (date unknown) on I John 2:1-29 in author's collection.

²⁷³ From a recording of a sermon on Ephesians 1 in author's collection.

The opposition, charging Reed with legalism, now chose Aunes Salmela of Duluth, a brother of Ben Salmela, as a preacher. Reed, however, took the stand that he would not preach with Salmela until the latter became reconciled with the Duluth congregation. The Aunesites (auneslaiset) also received the support of preacher Antti Koskela -- a son of John Koskela. In their sermons, Salmela and Koskela generally avoided the issues that were being debated, but some in their group, which included former supporters of John Koskela, asserted that preachers are not allowed to teach believers to maintain good behavior and avoid sin. Hence, Reed's side accused the Aunesites of having adopted the "Koskela doctrine."

In late 1963, an attempt was made at achieving a reconciliation. It was said that the congregation in Marengo, Wisconsin, had experienced exceptionally "good services." Both sides having been comforted, they decided to lay aside their differences and invite all the ministers to preach together. In spite of his previous refusal to speak with Salmela, Reed now accepted the invitation, and he and Prusi preached in Marengo. In their sermons, they concentrated on the doctrines under dispute, but Salmela and Koskela, in their typical manner, ignored the issues. There were no signs of hostility until after the services, when, as is said, a young woman approached Reed and asked whether it is permissible to believe one's sins forgiven without being reconciled with the Duluth congregation. When Reed did not give a direct answer, Melvin Hanka of Duluth began prodding him for a reply in a hostile tone. When a crowd had gathered, in which this author was present, Hanka began accusing Reed of having preached the law in Duluth. Although Reed repeatedly and adamantly insisted on receiving a more detailed explanation for the basis of this accusation, Hanka stubbornly refused to elaborate and finally turned away, singing a song, in which he was joined by the other Aunesites, thus ending any hopes for reconciliation.

In spite of Reed's sermons on love and good works, his followers displayed deep resentment against their former brethren. The Aunesites were denied use of the churches over which the Reedites (riitinmattilaiset) gained control, even though the Aunesites shared the churches in which they were in the majority. Reed's followers were also instructed not to greet the others with the greeting "Jumalan terve." Such steps were taken even though the Evangelicals had taken issue with the Heidemanians for closing the churches to them and refusing to greet them. Sermons given by preachers who emerged later among the Reedites leave no doubt about the pelagianism that infects their doctrine of justification. A 1975 sermon of Otto Hietala is typical:

These two commandments were left us by Jesus Christ. He fulfilled all the other demands and commandments of God, but he left us two commandments: Believe on him, on Jesus Christ, and love one another.²⁷⁴

By the early 1980s the number of preachers in this group had grown considerably. No major doctrinal issues existed, but a pruning was, in any case, necessary. About half a dozen men were eventually eliminated as preachers, most of whom accepted the decision graciously, but Elden Ollanketo of Marengo, Wisconsin, who lost his position in the fall of 1982, separated from the group entirely. He died in 1984, but his large family continues to hold regular services with Elden's sons Michael and Martin as preachers.

²⁷⁴ From a recording (in author's collection) of a sermon on Ephesians 4, given in Brooklyn, New York, on October 4, 1975.

Melvinites and Davidites

Signs of fanaticism appeared from the beginning among the Aunesites. David Salmela, a nephew of Aunes, stressed in his sermons that the Bible is only ink and paper and claimed that the unrecorded words of Christ are revealed by the Holy Spirit, which he identified with the *new man*. Melvin Hanka taught that one who is truly converted can never fall away, a doctrine not shared by all Aunesites. Hanka exposes the fanatical basis of his doctrine in a 1964 letter:

They that believe the Word of God are comforted by it and their faith is strengthened, and they have this assurance in their hearts that they please God. Because by believing we have received the gift of the Holy Ghost, which reports to us all the things that Jesus has done and said. By the Holy Spirit we have this assurance, for God comforts us through it, 'by the effectual working of his power,' as Apostle Paul says. The Kingdom of God is in the power, not the Word, for the Word deadens, knowledge puffs up, but the Spirit quickeneth. The world has the Word, but they have not the power with the Word because they don't believe.²⁷⁵

Eventually these preachers began stressing the Spirit over the Word to the extent that their doctrine began to resemble that of the Kautokeino faction.²⁷⁶ Thus, by the early 1970s, "Spirit, Spirit, Spirit" was almost all that was heard. It was claimed that the Spirit made them infallible and that anyone who dared oppose them blasphemed the Holy Ghost. Preacher Helmer Hanka, a brother of Melvin, asserted in a 1973 sermon that the teaching of children is "all in vain" because the word "deadeneth." Therefore, his confirmation classes were devoted mainly to songs and *liikutuksia*.²⁷⁷ The infantile and often incoherent sermons of the Aunesites did not even relate much to the text, the main aspect of the services being the loud singing and powerful "rejoicing," which were sufficient proof for the participants of the correctness of their doctrine.

By the late 1970s, it became evident that there was dissatisfaction with this state of affairs, particularly with the ban on teaching children. Finally, William Jouppi of Marengo, a strong advocate of teaching, was invited to preach in Minneapolis in the summer of 1978 and then elsewhere, to the chagrin of the more radical preachers, who boycotted his sermons. By fall, the Aunesites found themselves divided into three groups. The supporters of the first group, whose preachers were William Jouppi, Calvin Rengo, Edwin Kumpula, Aunes Salmela and others, being by far the largest of the three, are still sometimes referred to as Aunesites, even though Aunes lost his position of prominence after the schism. The second group, the Davidites, a more radical but much smaller one, is led by David Salmela. The third and smallest group, the Melvinites, which split from David Salmela's group, is led by Melvin Hanka and is located mainly in Maple, Wisconsin.

Despite Jouppi's emphasis on teaching, his group is no better informed on basic Christian doctrine than are the others. His group has retained its disparagement of the Bible, even if it is more subdued than in the other two groups. An old catchword is still heard even in Jouppi's group: "The world has the Word, but we have the Spirit." All three groups have the same doctrine of

²⁷⁵ December 16, 1964 letter to Hugo Hepokoski in author's collection.

²⁷⁶ For more on this Lapp faction and its fanatical ravings and deeds, see the section entitled "The Kautokeino Tragedy" in this author's 1993 work *Lars Levi Laestadius and the Revival in Lapland*.

²⁷⁷ Based on a recording (in author's collection) of a sermon on Romans 8, given in Cloquet, Minnesota, on June 16, 1973.

justification, which is well documented in a 1982 sermon of Aunes Salmela in which he says -- in sharp contrast to Hietala's words quoted above:

There are ten commandments, but there is one commandment which the Bible says -- that you must believe!
There is one commandment you cannot get by -- you must believe!²⁷⁸

The groups are divided mainly by their views on whether it is right to judge others. Jouppi's group opposes all judging. The other two groups feel, however, that it is their right and duty to judge others, but Melvin Hanka feels that the Davidites have taken the doctrine of judging to an extreme, wanting to be "top-dog" judges. Although the Davidites have accused Melvin Hanka of trying to negotiate with the main group, two of their own preachers, Howard Ihme and Hugo Hanka (a brother of Melvin and Helmer), eventually defected to Jouppi's group, where, surprisingly, they were allowed to preach again. By the 1990s, the two smaller groups had fossilized into insignificant cults. In the majority group, the zeal of the older preachers has subsided and the brief sermons of the younger preachers are void of any real substance.

²⁷⁸ From a recording (in author's collection) of a sermon given on September 5, 1982 in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

APPENDIX 1

*A Firstborn View of the Differences Between the Conservatives (East) and the Firstborn (West)*²⁷⁹

East	West
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Laestadius preached mainly law. Raattamaa, on the other hand, preached mostly gospel.2. Raattamaa's second wife falsified his letters when he became old and blind.3. When Raattamaa died, the spiritual government remained in Lannavaara, where August Lundberg was the elder.4. Raattamaa rebuked Joonas Purnu at the 1897 Lannavaara meeting. No laying on of hands occurred.5. Joonas Purnu has had whores in the villages.6. The origin of the rules in regard to work areas, by which only specific preachers have been allowed to travel and preach, is evil.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Holy Spirit does not tolerate any such rules.• These rules conflict with Christian love. All are to have permission to call any preacher at all to preach in their localities.• These rules hinder God's work among men.• Unfamiliar preachers draw more listeners together, and God's work advances better.7. The sermons of Laestadius are not suitable for our time. They are inappropriate for use at meetings.8. Laestadius was just a human being. There are shortcomings and weaknesses in his sermons. It is not necessary to take all passages seriously.9. Setting an outward example is just self-righteousness. It is the fruit of bondage of the law.10. The songs of Zion are of a pure spirit. They edify Christianity of the heart and convey good fruits.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Both Laestadius and Raattamaa preached full law and full gospel.2. Raattamaa's second wife wrote in full accord with Raattamaa's intention.3. Raattamaa disavowed the "light of the south," which shined from Lannavaara.4. Raattamaa left the spiritual government to Joonas Purnu by a public laying on of hands in Lannavaara in 1897. Instead of rebukes, Joonas received the elder's blessing in the highest measure.5. Joonas Purnu has not had whores anywhere.6. The rules in regard to work areas, by which only specific preachers have been allowed to travel and preach are of the wisdom of God.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Holy Spirit has revealed the need for these rules.• These rules do not conflict with Christian love. Unfamiliar preachers may be called upon only via those preachers whose work area is in question.• These restrictions prevent opportunists (Korpela and others) from corrupting God's congregation.• Unfamiliar preachers do not know the Christian in heart, and, therefore, they can do damage even unintentionally.7. The sermons of Laestadius are best suited for our time. It is essential that they be used at meetings.8. Laestadius was the seventh angel (Rev. 10:7). Every word he preached after 1844 is by the Holy Spirit. Every word is God's Word and is to be taken seriously.9. Setting an outward example is part of sanctification. It is the fruit of living faith.10. Raattamaa called the songs of Zion spiritual whore-songs, of which one-third are honey, two-thirds poison. They lull the conscience to sleep and convey spiritual death.

²⁷⁹ Translation of pages 124-126 of Lauri Koistinen's *Hengellisen hallituksen vaiheet ensinsyntyneessä laestadiolaisessa seurakunnassa Ruotsin Lapinmaalla*.

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| <p>11. Music belongs in the New Testament congregation.</p> <p>12. Erkki Antti Antinpoika was a bright star to the end. He had much greater spiritual wisdom than Joonas Purnu, and he left, as a legacy, work areas that testify of doctrinal purity. Finally, he joined the heavenly light of Lannavaara.</p> <p>13. P. O. Grape promoted pure doctrine and was an orthodox Laestadian.</p> <p>14. Aatu Laitinen was born again and remained in the original Laestadian doctrine until the end. He has left, as a legacy, devotional books that are appropriate for use. Aatu Laitinen is justifiably called "Finland's Laestadius."</p> <p>15. The old tradition is promoted by always concocting new lies.</p> | <p>11. The Son of God has left all David's instruments on Golgotha. There are no musical instruments in the New Testament congregation.</p> <p>12. Erkki Antti Antinpoika was a dim star in his old age. He never had as great wisdom as Joonas Purnu, and he left, as a legacy, work areas in which the fruit of full heresy flourishes. Finally, he joined the "light of the south" in Lannavaara.</p> <p>13. P. O. Grape fought against pure doctrine and was an orthodox pastor of dead faith.</p> <p>14. Aatu Laitinen was born again but soon fell from the state of grace. He opposed Raattamaa, and as a result, he did penance and repentance from the Laestadian heresy before the Bishop of Kuopio. His devotional books are inappropriate for use. Aatu Laitinen is not justifiably called a Laestadian after his trip to Kuopio.</p> <p>15. The old tradition is promoted by constantly gathering crumbs from that first Christianity.</p> |
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APPENDIX 2

*Minutes of the March 11, 1897 Meeting in Vittangi*²⁸⁰

On March 11, 1897, the following lay preachers were gathered in Vittangi, at the Nikukka meetinghouse, explaining the Word of God: Johan Raattamaa, Erik Anders Andersson, Isak Poromaa, Per Persson Nutti and Joonas Purnu, all of whom had been selected as preachers already in the time of L. L. Laestadius. Certain new preachers were also gathered there: Samuel Erikson of Vettasjärvi, Isak Kuoksu and others. When Johan Raattamaa had given the first sermon, Schoolmaster August Lundberg, who had been selected by the congregation to present the following questions, said after an appropriate introduction: “Since strange news has been heard here, this congregation has asked me to publicly ask you, Elder Raattamaa, whether in your opinion Pastor Laitinen and Pastor Grape are true Christians.”

Johan Raattamaa’s answer: “Pastor Laitinen and Pastor Grape are definitely true Christians, who have come through the true door and are precious workers in God’s vineyard.”

Question: “Erik Anders Andersson, what is your understanding?”

Answer: “I was at the meeting where Pastor Grape started following Jesus, and I know that since then he has remained in the truth through precious struggle.”

Question: “Isak Poromaa, what is your understanding?”

Answer: “I am by all means of the same opinion as the aforementioned brothers.”

Question: “Antin Pieti has from the beginning been with Pastor Laestadius and has since then been a faithful worker. What is your understanding of this?”

Answer: “I have known Laitinen from the beginning, and I know that he has correctly undertaken the journey and that he is a precious brother in Christ and is surely acceptable as a preacher of God’s Word.”

Question: “Elder Joonas Purnu, what is your understanding of this?”

Answer: “I have definitely always considered Laitinen a precious brother and have defended him everywhere, for a man who has undertaken the journey in this way will also surely be saved.”

Question: “Has Brother Laitinen changed since he came into the congregation of the firstborn?”

²⁸⁰ Translation of an anonymous and untitled document found among Erkki Antti’s papers in the Oulu provincial archives. It bears the archivist’s notation: “This account is unlikely to be Erkki Antti’s, for his sermon is lauded in the final sentence. It could be A. Lundberg’s.”

Antin Pieti replied in this regard that during severe persecution Laitinen did not dare rebuke the world as boldly as before but that since then he has repented of this and is now as much in the truth as before. All agreed with this, but Joonas Purnu added that he considered it inappropriate that Laitinen asked for forgiveness in Lannavaara, at the school dedication, for his fanaticism. A man as precious as Laitinen could not have had any fanaticism.

The questioner remarked in this regard that Elder Raattamaa has in love rebuked Laitinen for a few rash words in writing, and since he himself became convicted in conscience in regard to the truth of the matter, he asked for forgiveness not only then but also afterward in *Siionin Sanomat*, which was not a fault but an exceptionally praiseworthy matter, for it showed that he wants to remain steadfast in the doctrine of the Bible and to be submissive to the older Christians. He did not, in the manner of some others, conceal his errors and was, as Luther in Worms, willing to abandon all that might be against the Holy Scriptures and wanted to ask for forgiveness for it. This was confirmed as true by Elder Raattamaa.

Isak Kuoksu pointed out that it was a fault that Laitinen wrote that it is not permissible to preach the forgiveness of sins to all within the walls. To this the questioner remarked that Brother Kuoksu is a poor fisherman if he salts good and rotten fish in the same crock. Peter did not testify forgiveness to Simon the sorcerer but said, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this word, for thy heart is not right in the sight of God" [Acts 8:21]. We must correctly divide the Word of God, proclaiming to the penitent, grace and the forgiveness of sins, but to the impenitent, God's judgment and punishment until they repent. The expression "forgiveness of sins to all within the walls" is not found in the Bible. Neither is this expression found in Laestadius' postil, nor is it found in his written sermons. In the house of Cornelius only penitent persons were present. Since no one uttered anything further in response, the questioner presented another question:

"Since this congregation has understood that Elder Joonas Purnu, in his sermon yesterday evening, referred to Laitinen in speaking of the Finnish lad who allegedly does not care at all about the congregation of the firstborn, was this your intention?"

Answer: "I could by no means have referred to such a precious man because from my heart I love Laitinen, and everywhere I urge people to consider him a precious man."

Question: "Pastor Laestadius has urged people to attend church and to pray there. If the sermon is unacceptable, at least the minister reads the Word of God, and Elder Raattamaa has always diligently attended church whenever the opportunity has arisen. Is this so?"

All then testified this as true and also said unanimously that they thus teach and urge their listeners. All considered it precious that worship services are held and that people can gather in the house of God to pray. Here ended the questions, and the questioner reminded the listeners that here one has spoken before God and his congregation. In the fifth chapter of Acts we see in the case of Ananias how dangerous it is to lie to the Holy Ghost. Therefore, it would be best, if the brothers are deficient in some regard in these matters, anyone conscious of fault should here publicly confess and ask for forgiveness. Since Joonas Purnu replied that there is nothing of the sort, the discussion ended. Erik Anders Andersson explained the sixth chapter of Ephesians with great competence.

APPENDIX 3

*Letter Written by Erkki Antti to America in 1898*²⁸¹

Dear Brother in the Lord,

The grace of God, the love of Jesus and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you and us now and forever. Amen! I will now write a few lines from love in reply to your letter, which I have gratefully received, which I have also, dear Brother, also hoped for in my thoughts many times. By grace, I have been in health in both body and soul, and, together with you, I am believing my sinfulness forgiven in that name and in that blood that flowed on Golgotha on Good Friday for the forgiveness of sins.

The trip down south was so long that I really deteriorated physically, but it was a precious trip. Many became Christians there, and there is also burning love among the Christians. And it was also really due to the providence of God that I was conveyed to Haparanda while that swarm of Finnish gnats came from Kittilä to Haparanda, heading south, for since they themselves have not been able to believe to the point of freedom, they think the Christians in the Tornio area are sleeping, the wise with the foolish. So they hovered like a swarm of gnats on a summer evening behind the window. They neither rose up to heaven nor fell to the earth. May the dear Father have mercy on them too, who think they are teachers of babes and instructors of the ignorant and that they have the form and knowledge of the truth in the law [Romans 2:19-20], but, in spite of this, they themselves do not understand the spiritual nature of the law. They themselves break the law daily. Neither are they judged by the law, for they do not know the law. There are also many voices in the world, as the Apostle noted already in his time [I Corinthians 14:10]. Indeed, voices are heard today as well. “But if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle” [I Corinthians 14:8]? By no means do we intend, dear Brother, to become whore-Christians, that is, to start living for Moses and at the same time for Christ. It pays for him to obtain a pure virgin, for he alone has, after all, purchased a pure virgin and has purified her with his precious blood. He is worthy to obtain her in entirety, and we would even give a better one if we had such, and this is, my beloved, our only consideration: that we would live in a manner pleasing to our eternal Lover and love one another. Here is that new commandment, which our King has given us. And if we could remain close to Gethsemane and the hill of victory of Golgotha, the holy forge of love would also warm our hearts more. But soon he that shall come will come and will not tarry [Hebrews 10:37]. Then we can enjoy that which has been believed here and has been borne in weak vessels of clay.

²⁸¹ Translation of letter in Typpö, *Armo ja Totuus. Ynnä Kristillisiä kirjeitä*, pp. 75, 76, where it is entitled “Kirje Juhonpietistä v. 1898.” The recipient of this letter was apparently Matti Pekkala of New York Mills, Minnesota. See P. Raittila’s editorial comments in *Juhonpieti, Kirjeet ja kirjoitukset* (p. 292), where the letter is republished on pp. 290-292.

Be free, o flock purchased for freedom in America and everywhere. Sins are forgiven to all penitent souls by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of his testimony. Here up north many people have become Christians, in Vittangi and Jukkasjärvi. The young in that area have preached many sermons there. Thanks to the Father! Greetings of love from here to the flock that is there. Nothing special is heard here. I send the greatest greetings to the Wuollet brothers, P. Raattamaa, Mursu and the other brothers and sisters. Pray for me! Signed by your old and new brother, who is loved by you and who loves you, and your traveling companion to the true fatherland.

Erik Anders

APPENDIX 4

*Letter Written by Erkki Antti to a Brother in Gällivare in 1900*²⁸²

Juhonpieti
September 1, 1900

Dear Brother in the Lord, Nils Jönsson,

May grace, mercy and peace grow and be multiplied to you and to us now and forever. I have received a letter from you for which I thank you. I have also received many letters from there in the West this summer, even from trustworthy sources, but it is sad when the lads there scourge Pastor Grape and Pastor Laitinen, even as far as to America.²⁸³ Where have they received this spirit? At the time of the apostles, when a doctrinal issue emerged, they could not decide by themselves but had to go to the elders in Jerusalem although it was a journey of about 120 miles, and there the matter was decided, and to confirm it they even wrote a letter and sent two Christians. Dear lads, read the Bible better, and it is in accordance with the testimonies of the Bible that even this Christianity is constructed. And the youngsters in the West should recall what the late Elder Raattamaa said about Pastor Grape and Pastor Laitinen at the Nikukka meetinghouse in Vittangi when we had come from Lannavaara. Several Western lads were indeed there. Poor lads, be not overly bold in making decisions. Human souls are precious. Do not cast bone fragments into the corner, as you are in the habit of doing. Remember, after all, that you were in your father's loins when the great war began between Michael and the dragon. You do not even recall as much as this, that others labored, and you are entered into their labors, into the trouble suffered by others [John 4:38].

Elder Joonas Purnu also testified at that time, and I confirmed even the place where Pastor [Grape] became a Christian, and the late Antin Pieti confirmed that Aatu Laitinen had become a Christian. Do you, poor lads, know how to view sin as sin? Otherwise, penitence will not come, and the sins of the penitent are forgiven, but for the impenitent there is no room for it, for they do not feel their need. We have spoken somewhat of these matters previously, or is the counsel of the elders no longer acceptable to you? But to all those who are conscious of their faults and incompetence, even I, the weak servant of our Lord Jesus, in accordance with his command and in his name and precious shed blood, testify that the sins of penitent souls and believers are forgiven though they be as scarlet and as crimson. Let's not be surprised even if we have to dwell here among lions and vipers, for the Lord of Glory has given himself into their company in order to redeem us from there. To him be the highest praise, thanks and honor, power and strength, in time and eternity. He always helps us, as he has done thus far.

I also tell you, dear brothers and sisters: Let us remain in the doctrine and Spirit where we received life and breath. We just have to let the muddled heads spin since the counsel of the elders

²⁸² Translation of letter in Juhonpieti, *Kirjeet ja kirjoitukset*, pp. 310, 311. The letter is also found in *Vanhinten Kirja III*, pp. 107-110, under the heading: "Erkki-Antti parjaa esikoisten seurakuntaa N.J:lle" (Erkki Antti Reviles the Congregation of the Firstborn to N. J.).

²⁸³ According to P. Raittila, "Erkki Antti, in his latter years, also appears to have criticized Laitinen." See Juhonpieti, *Kirjeet ja kirjoitukset*, pp. 290, 312.

is unacceptable to them, but we pray for them too, that all true hearts would remain secure, that all inflated spirits would be lowered and that timid spirits would be raised up by the power of the Lord. Amen.

And if the young call us older ones old fools, what does it matter? Let them first show clearly from the Bible where we have been delirious and then speak. Otherwise, it is human babble.

But now, my beloved, I convey heartfelt greetings from the Lord's flock here to the Lord's flock there, although unknown by face, but all the letters testify that there is a precious flock there too, as we already knew. But it is very sad to hear, in regard to the young, that the son is older than the father and the egg wiser than the hen. And I greet all my friends with love. I do not know many of you by face, but in your many letters there is the smell of honey and honey cake. And bear me too with a forgiving heart. Signed by one who loves you and is loved by you, an old and new brother, and a companion with you in grace and in the kingdom.

Erik Anders Andersson

P.S. Two letters were written from there in Leipojärvi. I answered the first one, but the second one had an unfamiliar odor. I did not dare reply -- one person receives one understanding and another person another understanding -- to avoid aggravating the situation. Read the fifteenth chapter of Acts, and don't jump the fence.

APPENDIX 5

*Excerpt from a 1949 Letter of John Koskela*²⁸⁴

We have, however, this spiritual tabernacle, not made with hands, which came down from heaven, as a bride adorned for her husband. “And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God” [Revelation: 21: 3]. A tabernacle -- that is, a house that has been built to be lived in, protected from storm and tempest and even from wild animals. It has walls and a roof so that the members of the family are safe and secure in it. And the occupants (or occupant) of that house are adorned as a bride for her bridegroom. You have undoubtedly seen a bride in her adornment. We hear that this bride has a garment washed in the blood of the Lamb [Revelation: 14], for the Bridegroom has washed her with his own blood, clothed her with the garment of righteousness, covered her with his own salvation [Isaiah 61:10], and even given a new song into her mouth and a heart to sing to the Lord [Revelation 14:3]. Hirelings are not appointed to chasten and teach the children of this house, for the children of this house are taught and chastened by the master of the house himself. And that would indeed be senseless if an earthly father, who has chastened us on rare days as he was minded [Hebrews 12:10, Finnish Bible], were to now appoint a stranger to whip his children. Neither does a father view it as fitting that the children chasten one another. Indeed, a father forbids, saying, “Do not fight!” The Heavenly Father is also like this. He knows how to chasten in due time and does not strike amiss, as Pekka R. has said. The child just has to endure it when the Father punishes, for he corrects every son whom he scourges.²⁸⁵

“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing. But if that servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken, the lord of that servant shall come when he looketh not for him and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” [Matthew 24:45-51]. Indeed, the Father does not think it good that his children are plagued with hunger and are chastened. We need food and good care if we want to make it home well. And a good year has come in heaven, and so there is no mention of lack in this house of the Father. Jesus says, “I came that you might have life and have it more abundantly” [John 10:10]. Indeed, soon he that shall come will come and will not tarry” [Hebrews 10:10], and

²⁸⁴ This document, the substantive portion of a letter in the author’s collection, was found among the papers of the late Ivar Luoma. It bears the notation at the end: “This letter was written to us by John Koskela, Esko, Minn., February 9, 1949, to Fanny and Ivar Luoma. This is a copy of that letter.” It is translated and included here to document Koskela’s unbiblical stance on the issue of instruction in regard to Christian conduct and his disregard for Pollari’s word of warning to him in a 1935 letter: “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 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?” See the section on John Pollari in this author’s 1998 work *The Laestadian Movement: Background Writings and Testimonies*.

²⁸⁵ The word “receiveth” in Hebrews 12:6 is in the Finnish Bible “korjaa,” a word that can also mean “corrects.”

his reward is with him, a crown of glory that fadeth not away [I Peter 5:4]. It is no mistake to say that things are going well. Praised be God and the Father of our Lord Jesus, who has cared for our affairs so well that he has opened life before us in time and eternity.

APPENDIX 6

*An 1898 Letter of a Conservative*²⁸⁶

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:1).

With these words of the Apostle, I approach you, my dear brother and faithful workman in the harvest field of the Lord. I indeed feel my great inadequacy and great ignorance in writing to you, but the love of Christ compels me to remind you that Jesus, “by his own blood, entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” [Hebrews 9:12]. Here is a new and living way for us poor children to approach the merciful and pacified Father! This foundation remains eternally and never becomes old. Let’s always build on this foundation in the unwavering hope of the gospel and in the faith of Jesus Christ. Let’s preach without fear, as Jesus has commanded, that is, in accordance with the scriptures, repentance and the forgiveness of sins (Luke 24:47). Here no distinctions have been made, that is, that it is only for them who call for it, but in all nations, both are to be preached: repentance together with the forgiveness of sins unconditionally. As Peter preached in the house of Cornelius, “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43).

By this forgiveness of sins through grace, God has effected a desire and zeal to struggle in faith of the heart after purity and peace of conscience. The sweet message of the gospel does not corrupt anyone but effects life in the inner man, and belief in it brings to the conscience the testimony of God’s Spirit and ignites a desire of love to follow the will of God. The heart’s desire is thus always to hear the gospel of peace, by which God always strengthens us in our most precious struggle of faith and supports, secures and establishes us. So the matter is again revealed as so true that it can be said from the heart, Praise to you, dear Father, that God is reconciled, and we have heard of this reconciliation in the preaching of reconciliation that he has ordained (II Corinthians 5:19). And thus God has purified us through faith by the blood of his only begotten Son. But as for those who do not believe the forgiveness of sins in the blood of Jesus, it is of no avail even if they confess their sins, although sins should be confessed, but they must be believed forgiven because of the bloody merit of Jesus and not because of confession. Luther says, “If you believe that only the former saints are saved and not yourself, great sinner that you are, such a faith is worthless, but you have to believe in regard to yourself.” What does it avail, after all, if you believe someone else will be saved and not yourself? Indeed, we can believe thus: that we are saved by grace through faith on the Lord Jesus [Ephesians 2:8]. “For he that cometh to God must believe” (Hebrews:11:6). And it is also written that “whatsoever is not of faith is sin” [Romans 14:23]. And the Apostle also says, “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:10).

²⁸⁶ Translation of letter to unidentified recipient in L. Typpö, *Kirjeitä virvoitukseksi köyhille matkustajille elämän tiellä*, pp. 161, 162.

So it is my understanding, my dear brother, as the Bible shows, that the law is not for the righteous. The law is not the teacher or rule of life of the conscience of a justified person, but the Holy Spirit is the one who will teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance and guide you into all truth [John 14:26 & 16:13]. My heart desires to know the gracious God and to soon be freed from this bondage of corruption into the glorious freedom of the children of God! To the dear Father and to the Son, the Bloody Bridegroom, be praise and glory! Remain under the protection of God and his beloved Son! Cry from the sun, children of light, to the birds of heaven that fly under heaven: "Come to the supper of the great God!" [Revelation 19:17]. I ask that you bear even me in your intercessions before the throne of grace.

Signed by your brother in faith,
Matti Pahkala
Himanka, July 3, 1898

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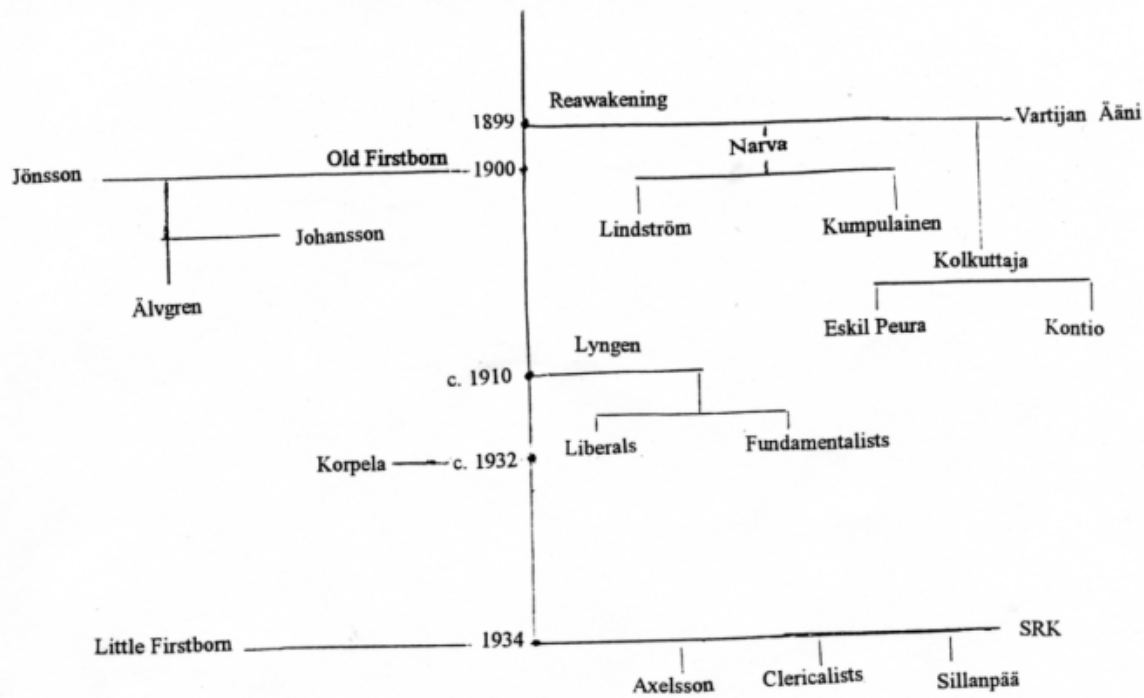
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