

Lars Levi Laestadius and the Revival in Lapland

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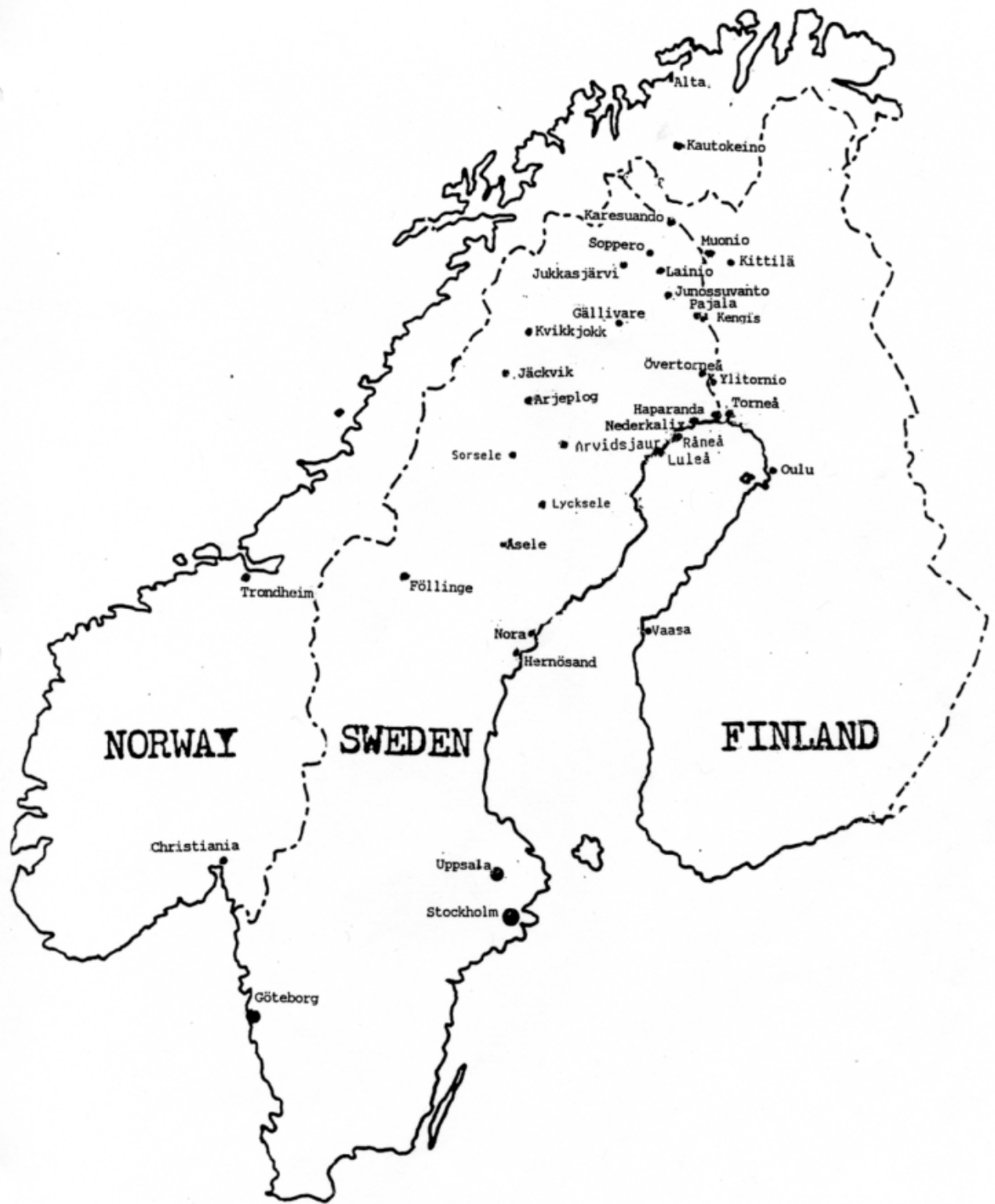
Lars Levi Laestadius
1800-1861



Brita Kajsa Laestadius
1805-1888



The old church in Karesuando
(1816-1905)



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Birth and Childhood

Lars Levi Laestadius was born on January 10, 1800, in a remote, desolate region of Swedish Lapland. The site, known as Jäckvik, is on the western end of Lake Hornavan and at the foot of the snow-capped tundra Peljekaise. The one who would become a voice crying in a spiritual wilderness was born in an area inhabited only by wolves, foxes, hares and ptarmigans. The nearest real settlement, Arjeplog, was about 40 miles to the southeast, where his ancestors had served as respected pastors for a century and a half.

In his autobiography, Laestadius has described his father Carl as cheerful and playful, except when he had been drinking.¹ Obligated to leave his low-paying job as superintendent of the Nasa Silver Mine, a failing enterprise, Carl Laestadius tried to eke out a living from the land with his first wife, a city woman from Stockholm. Failing at this, they settled in Arjeplog, where Carl earned money by selling glue, which he obtained by boiling reindeer antlers.

At fifty years of age, after the death of his first wife, Carl married Anna Magdalena Johansdotter, a forty-year-old widow from Sorsele. With this country woman, he moved to Jäckvik and made a second attempt to earn a living as a settler. However, he was away much of the time, at least in the winter, selling his scant produce and buying supplies. Lars' younger brother Petrus has aptly commented in his memoirs that their father, who was accustomed to being among people, "did not have any Eden to which to return." He has also described the lot of their mother: "Just imagine the fate of a woman who has to sit alone through the long winter with small children in this kingdom of shadows, not even being able to go to the church or talk with a friend or relative. No human being is to be found in this realm of death during the whole winter, not even a lost traveler."²

In his autobiography, Lars tells of his "melancholy" mother, who had to "pay in bitter tears" for her husband's drinking but was never heard to complain over her harsh fate, "for she bore her cross with patience." He goes on to describe how he was named: "While pregnant she dreamed that a little boy named Levi was running after her husband, and she marked this name in her memory. When the child was about to be born, she dreamed again, while in labor, that someone shouted, 'Lars.' Born healthy, the child entered the world in a cold, wretched cabin. When the mother recovered, she had to bear the child in her arms to the pastor, who lived about 40 miles from her home. There the child, whose name had been revealed in a dream, received in baptism the name Lars Levi."³ Laestadian legend expands on this account with the story of the mother carrying the baby to the church in a birchbark basket on her back, in the manner of the Lapps. It is told that on the way she was caught in a snowstorm and found in a snowbank by a Laplander's dog, which saved her by barking for help. Petrus Laestadius says, however, that it was he, rather than Lars, who was carried about six miles from Buokt, where the family settled after spending less than two years in Jäckvik, to Arjeplog to be baptized. He says that "for easily understandable reasons this could not be done with Lars Levi," who received an "emergency baptism" in Jäckvik. The accounts

¹ L. L. Laestadius, "Om första anledningen till väckelserna i Torneå Lappmark" (Autobiography), *Tidskriften Ens Ropandes Röst i Öknen* (Pieksämäki: 1994), p. 9.

² P. Laestadius, *Journal av Petrus Laestadius för första året av hans tjänstgöring såsom missionär i Lappmarken* (Stockholm: 1928), vol. 1, p. 82.

³ Autobiography, p. 9.

can be reconciled when it is understood that, in any case, the mother would have had to take Lars to the church for confirmation of such a baptism later in the year.

Petrus was born on February 9, 1802. A year later the family moved from Buokt to Arjeplog. Petrus describes the poverty that followed them: “At that time all the settlers were in great want, and only a few could be said to have their daily bread. Their children were reared in extreme poverty and indigence, but there were none in the whole parish as despised and ragged as we. We were the most lowly of all, and no one wanted to acknowledge any relationship with us.” He also tells how, in order to sustain two cows and a few sheep and goats, their mother had to gather hay with a sickle or by hand from between rocks and from marshes. The boys had to be tied down while she worked outside because, once, Lars had accidentally poured hot ashes on his brother and then hid in fear of punishment. He was found outside in the dark, lying on the ground crying.⁴

Carl Erik Laestadius, a half brother of Lars and Petrus had, in the meantime, worked his way through school and was ordained to the ministry in 1803. Assigned to Kvikkjokk in 1806, he invited his father to bring the family there in 1808. Lars and Petrus had already been taught to read at home, mainly by their mother. Their father had taught them to recite morning and evening prayers. They were also able to give simple answers to questions regarding the articles of faith. Now, with Carl Erik as their teacher, the boys received an education that qualified them to enter secondary school.

During childhood, Lars saw certain visions, which he describes in his autobiography: “I saw as though in a dream that a woman was sweating blood over Christianity. This woman aroused in me intense sympathy, an amazingly exalted sense of reverence and admiration. It was a majestic spectacle, but I did not feel worthy to participate in her martyrdom. The woman was as though in a seated position. She endured her suffering with a courage and patience that made me marvel. I have never forgotten this sight, but who this woman was, who sweat blood over Christianity, has not yet become clear to me. Early in my childhood, I also smelled the strange odor of a dead body in the woods, and this occurred often. I conclude that it was actually a spiritual odor because my dreams often involved dead people. They greatly beset me, but I obtained a remarkable power to fly high over the earth so that they could not harm me.”⁵

Laestadius believed that the visions of dead people signified an “internally dead condition.” He explains: “The recurring odor of death and the struggle with dead people were undoubtedly a reminder, a premonition, of spiritual and eternal death, but the flight that freed me from the deathly agony was a mysterious indication of a higher power. Although these dreams came in the form of clear images and caused a certain anxiety even while awake, the impression they made did not last long. At times I tried to connect these premonitions of a higher world with my internal condition, but I couldn’t achieve any clear insight into my inner life.”⁶

Laestadius describes an otherwise normal childhood. He says that he was quite daring when skiing in the winter and climbing cliffs in the summer. He also enjoyed playing pranks on the old Lapp women, a trait he believed he had inherited from his father.⁷ However, he also says that he shared his mother’s melancholy nature. As an example, he describes an experience he had at 16 years of age. The young people of the village were at a dance. Lars enjoyed such events but this time he was not there, and so his girlfriend left to search for him in the surrounding buildings, including the parsonage, where he lived, asking for him everywhere. She finally found him sitting

⁴ P. Laestadius, pp. 83, 84.

⁵ Autobiography, pp. 26, 27.

⁶ Autobiography, p. 27.

⁷ Autobiography, pp. 9, 10.

hidden behind an outhouse. She could not persuade him to go to the dance, nor could she learn the reason for his strange withdrawal from the world.

Laestadius did not attribute his behavior on this occasion solely to his “melancholy nature.” He says that he became aware of another reason for it 27 years later: “There can hardly be a person who has not been troubled at some time in his life without knowing why, but there are very few who heed that mysterious inner voice. When the written word does not cause a person to come to his senses, the Spirit of God must work directly through an inner voice to awaken the careless sinner to reflect on his condition. However, even this inner calling is often disregarded because the effects of grace of God’s Spirit are not recognized. Often, people who have been warned by such a voice view it as an omen of great impending misfortune, that either they or close relatives are near death, but it does not occur to them that this inscrutable and inexplicable depression, for which there is no outward cause, must be a reminder from God’s Spirit for people to reflect on their spiritual condition.”⁸

Education and Ordination

Lars and Petrus were admitted to the secondary school in Hernösand in 1816. Though beset by financial difficulties as a result of Carl Erik’s death from tuberculosis the following year, they were successful in their studies. Lars was particularly interested in botany and made trips as far as Trondheim, Norway, with only a small amount of pocket money, and endured great hardships to study plants. He later analyzed his motivation with a critical eye: “Botany is generally viewed as an innocent study, but upon closer examination I have found that nothing at all that the natural man undertakes is without sin. As innocent as it may seem, botany evokes passions of ambition in those who pursue it. The first time a young man discovers a new plant, the devil of pride leaps for joy. Why? Because he hopes that thereby he will become known among botanists as the discoverer of a new species. This devil now gave me, as poor a lad as I was, the courage and strength to undertake such a hazardous trip in a foreign land.”⁹

Laestadius says that during his school days he was scorned because of his poor clothing and was excluded from the world’s clubs and activities.¹⁰ Later in life, however, he was recognized as an expert in the vegetation of Lapland and was invited to membership in the Uppsala Scientific Society and the Botanical Society of Edinburgh. It should also be mentioned that he discovered a number of new plants, which are named after him.¹¹ In addition to articles on botanical subjects, he wrote books on the mythology of the Lapps and crop cultivation in Lapland. In recognition of the assistance that he lent to a French scientific expedition to Lapland in 1838, he was made a knight of the French Legion of Honor and received the medal of honor displayed on his chest in the familiar portrait of him made by a member of the expedition.

As a student, Lars maintained high moral standards and was highly respected by the girls with whom he associated. He says in his autobiography that he engaged in the practice of bundling,

⁸ Autobiography, pp. 10, 11.

⁹ Autobiography, pp. 16, 17.

¹⁰ Autobiography, pp. 28, 29.

¹¹ The name *Carex laestadiana* recurs in biographical works, but researcher A. Saarisalo renders the name of this plant *Carex laestadii*. He also mentions a *Salix laestadiana* and a *Papaver laestadianum*. See his *Laestadius, Pohjolan pasuuna* (Porvoo & Helsinki: 1970), p. 49.

adding that, in spite of how incredible it may sound to the “whoremongers of Stockholm,” the devil of honor kept him from taking advantage of the girls. However, he admits that in his twenty-ninth year he began engaging in vile and shameful vices, trying at the same time to stifle his conscience with Bible passages in order to make sin permissible. Without naming the sins specifically, he says, “So that the reader would know that the one writing his own confession of sin before the world does not lack sins, we will mention that the creatures, which groan over man’s deep depravity and yearn for the manifestation of the sons of God, would come forth as accusers on that great day if the debt were not erased by the blood of atonement.” He then describes his state of mind: “Mother’s endless patience, her silent submission to the will of God, her restrained groans and tears when she was mistreated, and her hushed prayers in bed made an indelible impression on my heart. I always felt as though these tears were reproaching me when a sin was committed, and their voice seemed to utter these condemning words: ‘Your mother has wept in vain over her corrupted son.’ Therefore, a kind of contrition followed the act. My conscience reproached and condemned me, but dead faith prevented true awakening and contrition. The devil was always ready to comfort me with a feeling of grace, which was nothing more than a false trust in the grace of God, for a contrition that brings no abhorrence of sin and a faith that brings no power to improve one’s life can only be imagination, mockery.”¹²

Having completed secondary school, Lars and Petrus moved to Uppsala in 1820 to continue their education. They enrolled, in addition to other subjects, in a full course of study in the theological seminary of the University of Uppsala. Lars completed his theological studies in December 1822, but did not seem anxious to take the examination required for ordination. In fact, earlier in the year he had applied for the position of magistrate in Västerbotten. While Petrus, who had entered the seminary later than Lars because of an age requirement, continued his theological studies, Lars pursued his interest in botany, taking, for example, a field trip to Lapland to collect specimens.

One day in Stockholm, Samuel Casström, a patron of young botanists and friend of Carl Erik, suddenly asked Laestadius what he intended to become. “A settler in Lapland” was the reply. “Come now,” Casström retorted, “You should become a pastor. I am a good friend of Bishop Almquist in Hernösand. I want to recommend you for a speedy appointment, and you should quickly take the ordination examination.” A few days after taking the examination in Hernösand, Laestadius was called in by Almquist, who asked if he “wanted to make him a liar.” The Bishop explained that he had, on his own initiative, submitted an application on behalf of Laestadius for the position of pastor of Karesuando, Sweden’s northernmost parish.¹³ The two brothers were ordained in Hernösand in 1825, after which Petrus returned to Uppsala to continue his studies. The same year Laestadius informed a botany professor that he would be moving to Karesuando, where, he said, “I have been appointed pastor almost against my will.”¹⁴

¹² Autobiography, pp. 17, 18.

¹³ Autobiography, pp. 18, 19. Researcher G. Wikmark, who could not find any application from Almquist in church archives, concludes that Laestadius’ account is exaggerated. Laestadius was ordained on February 20, 1825, and the period for submitting applications had expired on February 12. However, according to the minutes of the March 2, 1825 meeting of the Consistory, Almquist said at the meeting that he had spoken with Laestadius about the vacant position, for which there were no applicants, and that the latter had agreed to fill it. Laestadius was then, though not present, tentatively appointed to the position. The appointment was confirmed on May 18, 1825 to take effect on May 1, 1826. Wikmark fails to note that it was not Laestadius but Almquist who claimed that an application was submitted and was afraid of being exposed as a “liar” for overstating Laestadius’ willingness to accept the position. See G. Wikmark, *Lars Levi Laestadius’ väg till nya födelsen* (Lund: 1980), pp. 80, 81.

¹⁴ December 21, 1825 letter to Göran Wahlenberg; cited in Finnish in A. Laitinen, *Muistosanojaja Lapin kristillisyydestä* (Oulu: 1926), p. 11.

Life in Karesuando

After serving briefly as assistant pastor of Arjeplog and missionary to the Lapps, Lars began his ministry in Karesuando in 1826. The position of pastor in this harsh region, inhabited by nomadic Lapps and Finnish settlers, had no redeeming qualities. The salary, which was the lowest of any pastor in Lapland, provided only a meager subsistence. The Lappish dialect that Laestadius had learned in his youth was not used in Karesuando. Thus he had to learn a new dialect of Lappish, in addition to Finnish, the *lingua franca* of the area, which he had been studying even before arriving in Karesuando.

In spite of his own dead spiritual condition, Laestadius sought a wife who was “gentle, humble and had experienced grace,” one who “from a spiritual standpoint, was marked by mild fanaticism.”¹⁵ He felt that such a woman could not be found in refined circles. Finally, he decided that a woman by the name of Brita Kajsa Alstadius, a settler’s daughter from the area between Arjeplog and Kvikkjokk, came closest to his high ideal, and they were married in Karesuando in 1827. He wrote 25 years later that this period seemed to be “the only reality in life’s dream; all other joys of life have vanished, leaving only a dim memory of what is past.”¹⁶

Laestadius went to great lengths to teach the Lapps to read, visiting their tents, for example, to give them reading examinations. His confirmation classes lasted four weeks, and those who could not read were not admitted to communion. His main concern, however, was over the liquor trade and its consequences. Men abused their wives. Children went unattended while their mothers lay in a drunken stupor. Families were drained of their resources, selling even the clothes off their backs for liquor. The state was well aware of the disastrous effects of the liquor trade but its prohibition decrees went unheeded.

It was apparently during the winter of 1832-33 that Laestadius came down with what he believed to be typhoid fever and gave up all hope of recovery. His concern at that time was not over the fate of his soul but over the welfare of his family. He explains: “I had always believed that God is good. I had always been convinced that God provides for our earthly subsistence. Now this faith in Providence gave way when it was needed most, but my spiritual faith didn’t seem to waver.”¹⁷

Personal Awakening

Laestadius recovered, and in 1836 his wife gave birth to the twins Levi and Elisabeth, the fourth and fifth of 12 children. In 1839, however, Levi died of measles. The mother, who was also ill at the time, did not appear to be as deeply affected as the father. In the words of Laestadius, “she counted herself fortunate to have been viewed worthy to bear fruit for the kingdom of heaven.” As for him, however, the death had a deep and lasting effect, which was reinforced later, when he again fell ill. He comments: “A man indeed needs some reminders of his mortality. Otherwise, he will entirely forget the purpose of his existence on earth. Levi’s death was such a reminder, but I had an even stronger reminder in 1842, when pain in my chest led me to think that I had

¹⁵ Autobiography, pp. 19, 20.

¹⁶ Autobiography, p. 25.

¹⁷ Autobiography, p. 30, 31.

tuberculosis, which would inevitably end in death. This thought then took hold of me: ‘Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die’ [Isaiah 38:1]. Now, for the first time, I had a serious and deep fear of death.”¹⁸

Laestadius thus came to true awakening, that is, he was made aware of his dead spiritual condition, as he says, “For me the fear of death was an eyesalve. My eyes were opened to both the past and future. I saw the consequences of my ungodly life facing me in eternity, for, on the whole, my life had been more ungodly than godly, even if, in the eyes of the world, I could have been considered a model of virtue. All the sins of my youth now came into view before me. Afterwards, I have wondered how all these deeds were as though forgotten until this fear of death appeared. It couldn’t have been anything but dead faith that had concealed them until then, and what else but the same dead faith could have prevented all fear of death from appearing ten years previously when I was close to dying? At that time I thought I was prepared to die, but ten years later, plagued by this illness in my chest, I was totally unprepared to die.”¹⁹

Laestadius also became concerned over the spiritual condition of his congregation. He continues: “I only recall that from that time I was drawn, as though forced by a higher power, to feel, think and act directly against my own will, and thus my awakening and that of others is not a work of my own will. Even if the world should say that it is a work of the devil, as the Jews and heathen believed about Christianity, I know in my own conscience that it is not my own work. My own will and my own evil nature have been as reluctant as was Moses when God ordered him to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt.”²⁰

Recovering from his illness, Laestadius began to preach more sharply against drunkenness. A new prohibition law, which established a heavy fine for the import, sale or consumption of hard liquor in Lapland, was read aloud in church.²¹ However, only one Laplander, Pekka Piltto, took a vow of temperance. The others continued to drink, and the chief liquor trader, who was also the sexton, would even stand at the door after services and take a swig as the Pastor was leaving. This man felt especially threatened by Piltto’s pledge and kept a watchful eye over him. When he saw Piltto drink a glass of wine at a wedding, “his conscience would give him no peace,” Laestadius says sarcastically, until he reported the incident to the Pastor.²²

The constable ignored the law, for, as was pointed out by one pastor of the time, a swig of liquor was the “hub around which the life of Lapland turned.”²³ In the spring, when the Lapps left for the tundras and Norway, the liquor trader would give them liquor to take along, and when they returned in the fall he would expect reindeer as payment. If they refused to pay, he would threaten to have them prosecuted for drinking or refuse to have any dealings with them in the future. Laestadius says of this period, “The methods by which to effect a change of mind in the congregation remained hidden from me.”²⁴

¹⁸ Autobiography, p. 32, 33.

¹⁹ Autobiography, pp. 35, 36.

²⁰ Autobiography, p. 36.

²¹ Royal prohibition edicts of 1740 and 1743, which were being ignored, were confirmed by a new edict in 1839, which banned the sale and consumption of hard liquor in Lapland. An 1842 edict banned imports from Norway, and an 1848 edict banned certain previously exempted alcoholic beverages. See M. Miettinen, *Pohjoisen Tornionlaakson oloista lestadiolaisen heräysliikkeen syntyäikoina* (Oulu: 1943), pp. 116-119.

²² Autobiography, p. 39.

²³ 1836 letter of Jukkasjärvi pastor; cited in M. Miettinen, *Lestadiolainen heräysliike I. Perustajan aika* (Helsinki: 1942), p. 3.

²⁴ Autobiography, pp. 36, 37.

In the fall of 1843, Laestadius, seeking a new position as pastor of Pajala, traveled to Hernösand, to take the required pastoral examination. He says that when he arrived in Hernösand he was still viewed as an “orthodox Lutheran.” There, however, he published a Latin work that lamented the low moral and spiritual state of Swedish society and caused him to be viewed henceforth in a different light. The translation of the full title of the booklet, referred to generally only as *Crapula mundi* (the world’s intoxication), is the best description of its contents: “An examination of the world’s intoxication or the contagious disease of the soul, whose cause is hidden, under the guise of liberty, in moral bondage, with visible symptoms appearing in the turbulent agitation of nations and woeful end of spiritual death, together with applications to the life-styles of all social classes.” In Hernösand, he enjoyed listening to the preaching of Pastor Pehr Bylund, who was known as a *reader* and wondered why this man, who did not “wound” the human heart but only “pricked it with the truth,” was so hated.²⁵

Under the Conventicle Edict of 1726, the laity could not hold religious services or preach in Sweden. In remote areas, however, people were allowed to gather to read the Bible and postils, and thus awakened persons, who eagerly participated in such activities, became known in Swedish as *läsarna* or *readers*. Laestadius says that even in his younger days he had a “secret predilection” for these people and that he occasionally acted in ways that “must have appeared suspect to genuine Lutherans.” He recalls incidents in which he offended others when discussing religion, mentioning, as an example, the words spoken to him by one exasperated woman: “Go join the *readers*!” Laestadius concluded from this that the *readers* were hated but he “could not grasp the reason for this spiritual hatred.” However, at that time he did not agree with them because his “self-righteousness” could not bear their notorious “spiritual pride.”²⁶

Petrus Laestadius, who came into close contact with the *readers* after being assigned to Piteå as a missionary to the Lapps, refers sarcastically to them as “champions of faith,” saying that the “whole fanaticism is really based on misunderstood writings of Paul and Luther” and that, “instead of the mild, philanthropic and peaceful doctrine of Jesus,” the *readers* have a “most intolerant and contentious fanaticism, full of arrogance and spiritual pride, which almost hates the very name of virtue and Christian conduct, and, under the misunderstood slogan of *salvation by faith alone*, dashes blindly over all limits of social order, modesty and sensibility.” Petrus admits, however, that in conduct the *readers* were irreproachable. He says, for example: “In Kvikkjokk there is a large village, or rather family, by the name of Sirkas, which together with Kaitom in Gällivare, was the most uncivilized and barbaric in Lapland. Thefts, fights and even murders were the order of the day here. *Readerism* came here too, and, as I have been told, manners have entirely changed since then, so that those who live in Sirkas are now said to be the most religious, quiet and well-behaved Lapps.”

Petrus was frustrated by the attitude of the *readers* toward the state church, from which some had begun to separate. He writes: “If you enter into a discussion with them, they only preach and scream their old routine at the top of their lungs, never listening to what you say, and the one who screams the loudest and holds out the longest is usually the greatest prophet in the eyes of the uneducated crowd.” Petrus was particularly offended because they condemned “the pastors and their doctrine and all who heed them to the pit of hell.”

The *readers* were a heterogeneous lot. There were not only the pietistic *old readers* and the more evangelical *new readers*, but the latter also disagreed among themselves on various issues. In fact, anyone who took a serious or unique approach to religion, whether Lutheran, Methodist, or Baptist,

²⁵ Autobiography, pp. 40, 41. Bylund’s name is given as Nylund in the 1994 edition, but see the 1909 edition, p. 31.

²⁶ Autobiography, pp. 28, 29.

conformist or separatist, eventually became known as a *reader*. Petrus continues: “In Arvidsjaur, an *anti-reader* approached a leader of the *readers*, pretending he was becoming one himself. The following conversation took place between them: *Anti-reader*: ‘I am a terribly great sinner. I am unable to improve.’ *Reader*: ‘It doesn’t matter as long as you believe.’ *Anti-reader*: ‘Yes, but it is so dreadful. I have such a desire to steal.’ *Reader*: ‘Steal freely. It doesn’t matter. We have One who has settled accounts for us and has also acquitted us.’ *Anti-reader*: ‘Yes, but I have such a desire to commit fornication.’ *Reader*: ‘Go ahead, it doesn’t matter.’ *Anti-reader*: ‘Yes, but still worse, I want to commit arson.’ *Reader*: ‘Burn freely, it doesn’t matter as long as you believe.’ *Anti-reader*: ‘Yes, but it is precisely your house that I have been thinking of setting on fire.’ *Reader*: ‘Come now, good fellow, that changes things!’ Then the *anti-reader* dropped his mask and told the *reader* what a scoundrel he was for encouraging all kinds of vices and crimes as long as they didn’t affect him. Once, an avid *reader* entered a house where people were gathered and said in a genuine *reader* tone, ‘I have the keys of the kingdom of heaven.’ Then one of those present said, ‘If you have them, you have indeed stolen them.’ It should be noted that the man really was known for having, as they say, *long fingers*.”

“Many *readers*,” Petrus writes, “even claim to be Christ himself. In Råneå, there is said to have been one such *reader-Christ*, who had the saying ‘I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end’ [Revelation 22:13] embroidered in large letters on his clothing. In Arvidsjaur, there still exists a *Christ*, but his fanaticism is so peculiar that it does not appear to have any connection with *readerism*. His creed is, moreover, almost simpler than that of Mohammed and consists of the following: There are only two sins, drinking and smoking. If one refrains from these and believes in him, he will be saved. The question is not one of strong drink in general, for he himself drinks cognac and rum and he -- the Christ that he is -- has been fined for drunkenness, which is rare in Arvidsjaur. He had previously been a churchwarden, but Pastor Rhén removed him with the words: ‘Since you have become Christ, the job of churchwarden in Arvidsjaur is too mundane for you.’ It is, moreover, characteristic of *readerism* to misinterpret Bible passages and to apply things, whether appropriate or not, to themselves. When you tell *readers*, ‘Judge not, that ye be not judged’ [Matthew 7:1], you are sure to hear in reply: ‘He that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man’ [I Corinthians 2:15]. In Uppsala, I often engaged in heated disputes with a *reader* who was a student and a relative. Once, I really cornered him for interpreting all Bible passages with reference to himself. During the heat of the dispute, he put forth the passage: ‘Ye are all gods’ [Psalms 82:6]. Then I said, ‘So this too applies to us?’ He said, ‘Of course.’ I said, ‘But then even I am God, for I must indeed also be allowed to be among the *all* there. He said, ‘Indeed you are.’ I said, ‘Well, how can you allow yourself to argue with me since I am God?’ This was followed by a burst of laughter from all those present.”²⁷

²⁷ P. Laestadius, pp. 119-129.

New Birth

Petrus evidently retained his attitude toward the *readers* until his death from tuberculosis in 1841. Lars, however, began to view them in a new light. In Hernösand, he was ordered to carry out an inspection tour of a number of churches and schools on his way home from the examination. After the first inspection in Föllinge, he began a two-day inspection in Åsele on New Year's Day, 1844, just before the beginning of the annual fair, which attracted many Lapps from Föllinge. According to the record of the inspection, Laestadius asked, in the presence of the congregation, whether the clergy had detected any spiritual life in the parish. Assistant Pastor Olof Lindahl replied -- a bit too lightheartedly perhaps -- that any real zeal of that sort was rare in Åsele. When Laestadius retorted with the question of whether this lukewarmness in Christianity could be attributed to the teachers, a member of the congregation spoke up to defend Lindahl, saying that he had presented the word of truth with zeal and ardor.²⁸

It was apparently later the same day that Laestadius came into contact with a young Lapp woman, who showed him the way of salvation. Known for over a century simply as Maria, Lapin Maija or Mary of Lapland, she has finally been identified as Milla Clementsdotter of Föllinge.²⁹ The meeting is best described by Laestadius himself: "In the winter of 1844, I came to Åsele, Lapland, to conduct a church inspection. Here I met some *readers* of the milder sort. Among them was a Lapp girl by the name of Maria, who opened her whole heart to me after hearing the message from the altar. In the order of grace this simple girl had experiences that I had never heard before. She had wandered long distances, seeking light in the darkness. In her travels she had finally come to Pastor Brandell in Nora, and when she had opened her heart to him, he freed her from doubt. Through him she came to living faith. And I thought: Here now is a Mary who sits at the feet of Jesus. Only now, I thought, do I see the way leading to life. It had been hidden from me until I could talk with Maria. Her simple account of her travels and experiences made such a deep impression on my heart that the light dawned even for me. On that evening that I spent with Maria I felt a foretaste of the joy of heaven. But the pastors in Åsele did not know her heart, and she also knew that they were not of this sheepfold. I shall remember poor Maria as long as I live, and I hope to meet her in a brighter world on the other side of the grave."³⁰

Although it is assumed by some who consider themselves followers of Laestadius that he confessed his sins to Maria and that she freed him by proclaiming absolution, he nowhere indicates that anything like this took place. His focus is not on his own experiences -- which he may indeed have shared with her -- but on hers, and by hearing her story he saw the light. Furthermore, individual absolution was not practiced by laymen during the first six years of the revival, and if the Pastor himself had been absolved from his sins by a "simple" Lapp on that day in 1844, there could have been no subsequent *discovery of the keys*. The teacher Juhani Raattamaa writes about the discovery: "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

²⁸ Report of inspection in Hernösand provincial archives; cited in E. Bäcksbacka, *Lars Levi Laestadius' andliga genombrott 1844* (Helsinki: 1945), pp. 213, 214.

²⁹ For the story of how Mary was identified, see G. Wikmark, *Lars Levi Laestadius och lappflickan Maria* (Stockholm: 1961).

³⁰ Autobiography, pp. 41, 42. The *altartalet*, the message from the altar that opened the proceedings, is erroneously rendered *communion sermon* in the English edition of the autobiography. According to church records, Communion was not served in Åsele on January 1, 1844.

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.”³¹ Raattamaa has also left an account of the event in Åsele that agrees with that of Laestadius: “He lived impenitent until he lost a child and feel ill himself. Then he noticed that he was not ready to die, and he became contrite. So he started to seek salvation, but he did not understand it until the Lapp girl Maria said to him that he should believe his sins forgiven in the condition in which he found himself. Then he obtained peace by faith in Jesus and began to preach by the power of the Spirit.”³²

During his inspection trip, Laestadius became acquainted with the work of the schools established by the Swedish Missionary Society, which was viewed by orthodox Lutherans as a “fanatical” organization infected with Methodism. Laestadius, however, was impressed with the reading skills and enthusiasm of the Lapp children, who shed tears when they were separated from their teachers. In his official report of the inspection in Lycksele, he praised these teachers, “who had sacrificed themselves entirely to this cause and whose names each and every friend of living Christianity will find written in the book of life.”³³

During the inspection in Sorsele, Laestadius again met *readers*, some of whom were related to his mother.³⁴ They were divided into two groups. After Laestadius had delivered his sermon, Johan From, the leader of one group, spoke up to complain that the pastor in Sorsele, Anders Fjellner, did not correctly distinguish between law and gospel. The leader of the other group, Pehr Königsson, a cousin of Laestadius, submitted a handwritten document for the King in which he complained that the new church handbook contained doctrines that conflicted with God’s Word and Lutheran doctrine. The two leaders apparently shared the same concern over the prevailing pelagianistic doctrine of justification, but in a discussion held the following day, Laestadius learned that they differed on other issues, such as the use of coffee, tobacco and fashions in clothing. Königsson approved, for example, of the action of Greta Mårtensdotter -- another cousin of Laestadius -- who, motivated by visions and revelations, had cast fashionable items of clothing into fire, which From, who had been present, snatched out of the fire, quoting Joel 2:13: “Rend your heart and not your garments.” He felt that it was better to sell such items and to use the money for some useful purpose.³⁵

³¹ “Elämäkertoja II, Juhani Juhonpoika Raattamaa,” *Kristillinen Kuukauslehti*, Dec. 1881, p. 180.

³² J. Raattamaa, “Kertomus L.L. Laestadiuksesta (toukokuussa 1890),” *Sanomia Siionista*, May 1890, p. 94. Also in J. Raattamaa, *Kirjeet ja kirjoitukset* (Helsinki: 1976), p. 362. Contrary to the clear words of Raattamaa and Laestadius and a long and consistent Laestadian tradition, G. Wikmark believes Laestadius’ new birth occurred on his birthday, January 10, 1844, after becoming afflicted in conscience for participating in a toast with the other pastors. For Laestadius’ story of the toast, which, according to church records, must have occurred in Lycksele, rather than Åsele, if it occurred on his birthday, see his autobiography, p. 89, where he in no way connects this event with his new birth. For the whole basis of Wikmark’s creative theory, see *Lars Levi Laestadius’ väg till nya födelsen*, pp. 247-253.

³³ Report of inspection in Hernösand provincial archives; cited in *Lars Levi Laestadius’ andliga genombrott 1844*, p. 215.

³⁴ For details see A. Sandewall, *Lars Levi Laestadius och Sorsele-läseriet* (Uppsala: 1951), pp. 145, 146.

³⁵ Report of inspection in Hernösand provincial archives; cited in *Lars Levi Laestadius’ väg till nya födelsen*, pp. 257, 258.

The Preaching of the Law

When Laestadius returned home, the change that had occurred in him became evident in his sermons, which had always been more legalistic than those of his predecessor, Zacharias Grape, though he admits that he had tried to imitate his style. He writes: “If any preacher, without awakening by the law, could accomplish any good in a spiritual respect, it was indeed this teacher, who was zealous in his own way and whom I should mention with grateful memory. He indeed tried to move the hearts of his listeners with the gospel. He made the hearts of the old peasant women melt in tears. At times, speaking extemporaneously, he milked a whole bucket of tears. It almost seemed, however, that he squeezed their soft breasts rather than their hard hearts. These tears were shed in vain in the temple of the Lord, for they dried up as soon as the listeners went out into the open air. No change appeared in their lives. Pastor Grape’s sermons were praised, but not a single word of his sermons followed them home. No awakening, no unrest, no spiritual sorrow, resulted. They drank and lived in as ungodly a manner as before.”³⁶

Laestadius now “preached the law” so sharply that no conscience should have escaped, but this had no better effect than did Grape’s evangelical sermons. In fact, the temperance movement advanced somewhat, for Pekka Piltto, who had suffered a great deal of abuse for taking his temperance pledge, was finally joined by a number of other individuals, but there was no sign of any spiritual awakening. In a letter written in May to one of the Swedish Missionary Society’s teachers whom he had met on his inspection trip, Laestadius describes his predicament: “Here in Karesuando the literal knowledge of Christianity is indeed comparable to that of the Lapp peasantry of Arvidsjaur, but there is, unfortunately, no spiritual knowledge, that is, the kind based on experience. Oh, how I would like to find here some souls as experienced in the order of grace as I found in Åsele! Can you, Mr. Norberg, tell me the means by which a sinner is awakened from his stupor after he has become somewhat established in literal knowledge? The *readers* say, ‘Through the law.’ I have preached the law as sharply as I could, but it doesn’t have any effect. My predecessor, Pastor Grape, preached mostly pure gospel, and the old ladies blubbered in church, but there was no sign of serious repentance or new birth.”³⁷

At first, the listeners, who understood almost nothing of the sermons, reacted by ridiculing them and staying away, but after about a year, in the winter of 1844-45, premonitions of a revival began to appear. Laestadius says that certain parables of the Saviour began to have a “strange effect on the hearts of the listeners.” They could not dislodge the figurative language from their minds. Laestadius explains: “One person recounted this parable and another person that one to the folks at home. People laughed and pondered what all this could mean. Finally, some of them became troubled without knowing why. Mysterious tremors shook the whole body. The heart began to feel tender, hard or swollen. Some began to come to the parsonage after services to seek advice and enlightenment in spiritual matters. Never before had a spiritually troubled soul come to the pastor to request enlightenment and comfort.”

Laestadius proceeded cautiously with these “lost sheep.” He continues: “Almost timid and inexperienced in the proper tending of sheep, I explained a number of Bible passages that described the condition of their souls, assuring them that the Holy Spirit had begun his work in their hearts and telling them that they should diligently examine their hearts in the light of God’s Word and

³⁶ Autobiography, p. 26.

³⁷ May 16, 1844 letter to Fredrik Norberg in archives of Swedish Missionary Society; cited in *Lars Levi Laestadius’ andliga genombrott 1844*, pp. 216, 217.

pray to God for grace and help in their spiritual distress. Finally, I added that he who had begun a good work in them would also finish it, etc. I did not dare assure them of God's grace or the forgiveness of sins, for I felt ashamed and didn't dare interfere in the work of the Holy Spirit, fearing that I might ruin everything if I were to promote a premature deliverance." Applying Christ's parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30), Laestadius urged the rare souls who were awakened to talk to their neighbors. People became angry, but, in spite of this, they began to return to church to listen to the sermons. However, as Laestadius says, "no real cries or loud sobs were yet heard in the church, for the Holy Spirit was not yet working and no really contrite heart was found in the whole congregation."³⁸

The Beginning of the Revival

In the fall of 1845, a woman looked out her window and saw a group of Lapps sitting in a circle in the yard. Strangely, they were not passing around a liquor keg. Instead, one was reading a book and the others were listening. The woman reacted by saying, "Look! Those must be the false prophets who have appeared here in the parish recently."³⁹ Finally, after the law, which is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ (Galatians 3:24), had done its work, the first "signs of grace" appeared, which Laestadius defines as a "voice from heaven, saying, 'Thy sins are forgiven' or 'Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.'" On December 5, 1845, a Lapp woman, identified by tradition as Pekka Piltto's second wife, Margareta, became the first person to experience grace. This woman, who had long suffered under the law, "jumped high above the ground for joy," and at the same time, an earthquake occurred. Laestadius writes: "I was sitting at home with Knoblock, the vaccinator, who may yet recall the earthquake, which covered a radius of about 60 miles, and since I was keeping a weather log at the time, I made an entry of 'earthquake.' But it was only afterward that I was informed that the Lapp woman had found grace the same moment the earthquake was felt."

Laestadius continues: "This sign of grace, which the doubting woman was the first to experience, now became a sacred goal for all who were awakened but had not yet received grace, an infinitely great and lofty goal, which all who are troubled in spirit should seek."⁴⁰ It was not long before it became quite evident that others were also experiencing grace. The same winter the effects of grace became visible in the form of emotional outbursts. These phenomena are referred to in Finnish as *liikutuksia*, a term equivalent to the Swedish *rörelser*, meaning motions, movements, agitation, excitement, etc. People shrieked and screamed, rose and embraced one another, swung their arms, jumped, spun in circles, danced and fell in heaps on the floor or even in snowbanks.⁴¹

The district magistrate, H. W. Hackzell, who witnessed these phenomena in church in 1851, described them as something that is not ordinarily seen, "even when visiting an insane asylum." He

³⁸ Autobiography, pp. 42-44.

³⁹ Autobiography, pp. 48, 49.

⁴⁰ Autobiography, pp. 51-53.

⁴¹ For descriptions of *liikutuksia*, see *Lestadiolainen heräysliike I*, pp. 161-211.

said that, though he had an ideal spot and Laestadius spoke in a loud voice, it was impossible to hear the sermon.⁴²

In an 1857 letter to the Hernösand Consistory, Laestadius gives the reasons for these outbursts: “If the lightning of Mount Sinai strikes a contrite heart, a cry of anguish rises from a group of women. If a beam of light of the gospel strikes a contrite heart, the penitent one has to let out a cry of joy. It is not at all in their power to suppress these exalted feelings. They have to vent their feelings through sounds, for otherwise their hearts would break.” He explains that these outbursts are manifestations of living faith: “The spiritual voices of the *readers* in church cannot fall silent as long as there is a spark of living faith in their hearts, but with spiritual death the silence of spiritual death enters the church: no one sighs, no one weeps, no one whines, no one wails, no one cries out from agony or joy.”⁴³

In an 1858 letter to the well-known pastor and temperance leader Peter Wieselgren, Laestadius again describes *liikutuksia*: “In their ecstatic state, some come at a flying pace and jostle me roughly, so that at times I have to guard my eyes and ears. When they have calmed down after perhaps a quarter of an hour, they show clear insight into the order of grace, based on real experience, and a knowledge of God’s Word that is surprising. Thus they have an understanding that is as clear as their feelings are intense. While they fly high over the earth with wings of faith, I stand with my big intellect and insensitive heart, like a bump on a log, unable to respond to their expressions of love, for only a few flashes strike my heart, which is hardened by self-righteousness.”⁴⁴

The mood that existed at the beginning of the revival is described in the memoirs of Anders Baer, a Lapp who had journeyed from Kautokeino, Norway, to hear the preaching of Laestadius: “We stayed in the Pastor’s servants’ quarters during the holidays, and on each of the four days of the Easter season we were in church twice, morning and afternoon, for Laestadius preached in the morning and in the afternoon in Finnish and Lappish. I witnessed something remarkable during the whole Easter season when Laestadius preached in church. The whole congregation would sigh heavily and weep from time to time, but the more the congregation sighed and wept, the more Laestadius raised and altered his voice. And when the congregation was quiet again and had ceased weeping and sighing, Laestadius would also lower his voice and speak slowly, to soothe and comfort them, so that they no longer would fear as much as before, for God is merciful to all penitent sinners for Christ’s sake. Tears would also run from Laestadius’ own eyes when he preached in church.”

Baer then describes the mood that existed after services: “It was not enough that Laestadius preached in church twice each day during the Easter season, but he would spend the evenings in his quarters, speaking of conversion and awakening, especially with his own parishioners. I would also go there to watch and listen, but the Pastor’s quarters were so filled with people every evening that it was almost impossible to find even an inch of space. Some would sit there, some would stand, and some would go in and out. I did not speak at all with the Pastor about conversion. The people who had been in the Pastor’s quarters earlier in the evening would ask those who came later to the servants’ quarters, “What else did the Pastor talk about?” And thus the discussion of conversion, awakening and rebirth would last as late as midnight. After Easter, when we were about to return

⁴² March 29, 1851 report in Hernösand provincial archives; cited in Finnish in M. Miettinen, *Kruununvouti Hackzell lestadiolaisen heräysliikkeen kuvaajana ja arvostelijana* (Helsinki: 1945), p. 244.

⁴³ September 30, 1857 letter in Hernösand provincial archives; cited in J. A. Englund, *Lars Levi Laestadius. En kyrklig tidsbild* (Uppsala: 1876), pp. 41, 42, and in Finnish in *Lestadiolainen heräysliike I*, p. 195.

⁴⁴ March 22, 1858 letter in *Lars Levi Laestadius’ brev till Peter Wieselgren* (Uppsala: 1946), p. 285.

home from Karesuando, those of us from Kautokeino asked, ‘How much do we owe you for the lodging?’ The Pastor answered: ‘Nothing.’ When we thanked him for the lodging and said farewell, he answered, ‘Go in the Lord’s peace.’⁴⁵

Many of the awakened fell into trances and saw visions. They saw the Saviour weeping over spiritual Jerusalem, bathed in blood in Gethsemane, hanging on the cross or risen from the dead. On other occasions, they viewed the bliss of those in heaven or the agony of those in hell. At times, they smelled brimstone when they were in the presence of those who were suffering severe pangs of conscience and saw vapor rising from their mouths. They also saw black birds sitting on the shoulders of the chief liquor trader, plucking the heavenly seed out of his ears with long beaks.⁴⁶

Laestadius held these visions in high regard and even published accounts of them. He valued them, however, only insofar as they were in agreement with the Holy Scriptures, as he says in one of his pamphlets: “I do not find anything in this revelation that is in conflict with the Bible. Therefore, I have had this revelation printed so that it would be of edification to other awakened souls in their precious faith, and perhaps it might also awaken some impenitent souls, although the impenitent indeed do not believe revelations because they do not believe Moses and the prophets.”⁴⁷ For Laestadius, these visions had no inherent authority in themselves but were only a reaffirmation of the written Word of God. Thus he says, “That which has now been said about visions may suffice since it is not a question here of a new revelation. For the believer, these revelations are to be viewed as a new confirmation of the old revelation, with which the worldly minded man is not concerned.”⁴⁸

Laestadius also mentions his own experiences: “At times, bright streaks have been seen hovering over persons being moved by intense emotion or joy. I have often seen these bright streaks, flashes or lightnings, but I am unable to decide with certainty whether they were outside myself or within myself. It seems most credible, however, that the flashes or lightnings that I saw were within my own heart. On Christmas Eve of 1847, as I was walking to church and saw the church road filled with people, my heart was struck by an inner flash or lightning, which I have often felt on such occasions. It was like a brighter breeze from a higher world. In other words, the viewing of this mass of people streaming to church prompted a fleeting sensation that flashed like lightning through my heart and was followed just as quickly by the thought: Is such a wretch as I to be the guide of these blind people to eternity? A few seconds later, I saw a great bright flame streaming from the church roof in Karesuando in a southerly direction. On the same evening, some members of the congregation saw black specters fluttering around the burning candles in the chandelier. It appeared to them that these specters had a great desire to extinguish the candles but that their efforts were in vain.” Laestadius viewed the “flashes” that he saw as coming from “Mount Sinai” and felt that they were a reflection of his own internal conflicts. He came to this conclusion on the basis of later experiences in his struggles with the devil and with “the law in our members” (Romans 7:23). He also tells how the devil, “who lives within man,” appeared to him in various forms, once as a person trying to pull him through a window, on another occasion as a bear trying to lift up his bed under him, and on yet another occasion as a dragon baring his teeth.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ *Erindringer 1825-1849* (Oslo: 1926), pp. 64-66. Baer wrote this account in prison, where he was serving a life sentence for his participation in the Kautokeino murders. He was pardoned and released from prison in 1853.

⁴⁶ Autobiography, pp. 63-69.

⁴⁷ *Klavun Annastinan Ilmoitus, 24 p. syyskuusa 1848* (Piteå: 1851), pp. 7, 8.

⁴⁸ Autobiography, p. 63.

⁴⁹ Autobiography, pp. 61, 62.

Laestadius had only harsh words for the theologians of his day and their attitude toward the effects of the Word of God. He says, “The genuine Lutherans of our day do not approve of these *sensationes internas* [internal feelings], which they regard as fanaticism. Thus they have to reject heartfelt contrition and heartfelt grace. For the sake of appearance, our rationalistic theologians have allowed the doctrine of penitence, repentance and new birth into our Christian textbooks, but this order of grace is so deficient and defective that no one can obtain correct enlightenment from it regarding matters related to true conversion and rebirth. Moreover, according to them, only gross sinners need to be contrite over their sins. Refined and noble offenders do not have to confess to anyone. They usually say, ‘It’s no one’s business how I live. I am the one who must answer for my deeds.’”⁵⁰

Laestadius’ criticism was not limited to the religious establishment of his day but also included contemporary revivalists. In 1845, Fredrik Hedberg, the leader of the *evangelicals* (evankelist), published the book *Pietism och Christendom*, in which he rejected the doctrine of Jacob Spener and the German Pietists of the seventeenth century, who called for true penitence and stressed the good works that flow from faith. Laestadius, in his main work, *Dårhushjonet*, which was not published in entirety until nearly a century after his death, defends the Pietists and says of Hedberg, “Except for faith, which he insists on with all his might, the author of this little book appears to have forgotten how the new man was born and how he is sustained and kept alive.” Laestadius admits that Hedberg had “effected much good” when he was regarded as a fanatic by the Finnish authorities and was “banished” by these “inquisitors” to Oulu to serve as prison chaplain. He adds, however, that “now that he has obtained a good pastoral position in Finland, he is said to be leading a worldly life.”⁵¹ Hedberg’s attitude toward Laestadius and his followers is made quite clear by the title of a critical article that he published a few years later: “The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, even less is it jumping and shouting.”⁵²

The *awakenists* (herännäiset) of the Savo region of Finland and their lay leader, Paavo Ruotsalainen, were on no better terms with Laestadius than was Hedberg. After reading one of Laestadius’ sermons, Ruotsalainen, whose doctrine was too much like that of the German Pietists to suit Hedberg, suddenly had a burst of evangelical fervor and wrote Laestadius off as “spiritually insane” and as a “chief doorkeeper of hell,” accusing him of leading people back into the “pope’s darkness” and knowing “nothing of faith in Christ” but clinging only to “the works of the law.”⁵³ As for Laestadius’ view of Ruotsalainen and his fellow preachers, he could not understand how they could tolerate the use of that “devilish drink” whose unclean spirit “drives the Holy Spirit out of the human heart” and accused them of depending on the bottle “to get the gifts of the Spirit flowing.”⁵⁴

By the end of 1847, the whole Karesuando area was in revival. People confessed their sins and returned stolen property, either to the rightful owners or to their heirs. Feuding neighbors were reconciled. Liquor traders poured their liquor on the ground, and taverns were closed for lack of business. In an 1848 report, District Magistrate Hackzell writes that the peasants, instead of smuggling and distributing large quantities of liquor, as they had done previously, now ordered and disseminated large numbers of religious books. Sundays, which had been spent in drunkenness and

⁵⁰ Autobiography, pp. 54, 55.

⁵¹ *Dårhushjonet. En blick i nådens ordning* (Helsinki: 1949 & 1964), vol. 1, pp. 310, 311. For the story of the discovery of the lost first part of the manuscript, see the introduction to vol. 3.

⁵² *Kristillisiä Sanomia*, No. 34, 1864, p. 1.

⁵³ Excerpt of letter in M. Akiander, *Historiska upplysningar om religiösa rörelser i Finland* (Helsinki: 1857-63), vol. 6, p. 117.

⁵⁴ Autobiography, pp. 86-88.

fighting, were now spent in studying books and seeking spiritual enlightenment. In a report published a year later, Hackzell writes: “Anyone who is familiar with the Lapps and their irresistible lust for hard liquor and strong drink and has seen the liquor trade and how it has been used by the settlers and other swindlers to cheat and strip them of everything they own and has witnessed the drunkenness of the Lapps and heard them shouting and chanting their *joiks* at fairs and other gatherings can only be highly amazed at the change that has occurred in them, when now on such occasions he sees them all sober and as quiet and reserved as though gathered in a churchyard to enter the church.” It is also pointed out in the report that if a traveler were to want a drink with his meal he would have to have his own bottle and drink secretly to avoid rebuke. By 1849, according to the statistics in this report, criminal cases had entirely ceased to exist and illegitimate children were no longer born. In an 1850 report, Hackzell writes that granaries and storehouses could have been left unlocked if there had been no threat of theft by persons from other areas.⁵⁵

As early as the winter of 1847, Laestadius made efforts to spread the revival to other localities. The first person to be sent to another community was Pekka Piltto, who was now not only temperate but also awakened. Piltto went to Soppero and other villages, discussing Christianity from house to house. Later in the year, Laestadius decided to send out Juhani Raattamaa’s brother Pekka, a converted drunk, who first had to be taught to read. Lay preaching being banned by the Conventicle Edict, Raattamaa and the missionaries who followed him were sent out as representatives of a temperance society founded by Laestadius. They carried letters of recommendation and written sermons, which they read to listeners in various communities. At first, the men were received with contempt, anger and violence and were often driven out of town, but eventually the Word took root and the revival began to spread to other areas of Lapland.

Laestadius now submitted a request to the Swedish Missionary Society to sponsor the establishment of a school for Lapp children. The society was favorably disposed after two of its representatives visited the area in 1847. In September, however, Laestadius wrote a letter to G. T. Keyser, the most influential figure in the society, criticizing the articles in the society’s periodical, *Missions-Tidningen*, edited by the well-known lay religious leader Carl Rosenius, and other literature of the society: “If I were permitted to voice a criticism of the missionary society’s editorial policy for its books and *Missions-Tidningen*, it would be that the person who writes the main articles appears to pussyfoot too much with the world. The reason for this may be that the society consists of heterogeneous elements. Dead and living faith are combined in it, and in this mix, living faith appears to have more respect for dead faith than dead faith has for living faith.” In the same letter, Laestadius also criticizes a booklet in which the society, reviewing its history, ignores the key role played in its establishment by the Methodist George Scott, who, bitterly hated by orthodox Lutherans, had been expelled from Sweden. He said that he was surprised that “the missionary society, which is supposed to be promoting Christianity in Sweden, allows untruths about its very establishment to have a place in its publications.”⁵⁶ The society, ever fearful of renewed persecution, apparently did not want to be too closely identified with such an outspoken individual as Laestadius and decided not to finance the school. Funds were obtained, however, from the church authorities in Hernösand and from supporters. Thus on New Year’s Day of 1848, Laestadius established his own itinerant school, which functioned independently of the missionary society, in the nearby village of Lainio in Jukkasjärvi Parish. Moreover, under a new 1846

⁵⁵ Hackzell’s report to governor in Hernösand provincial archives; cited in Finnish in *Kruununvouti Hackzell lestadiolaisen heräysliikkeen kuvaajana ja arvostelijana*, pp. 234-241.

⁵⁶ Letter cited in Finnish in *Pohjoisen Tornionlaakson oloista lestadiolaisen heräysliikkeen syntyaikoina*, p. 251.

regulation, Laestadius became the inspector of all congregations and schools in the northern district of Lapland, which included Jukkasjärvi, until the end of 1858, precisely when the Conventicle Edict expired and laymen were once again free to expound the Bible. Thus Laestadius had a free hand in managing this school, where the Holy Scriptures could be freely expounded by laymen.

Juhani Raattamaa, who had previously taught confirmation classes, became the first teacher of the new school. According to Laestadius, adults became curious about this “strange school, where children were said to be going crazy,” where “some suffered pangs of conscience and others jumped for joy.” Visiting this school, they heard Raattamaa read Laestadius’ sermons and explain Bible texts that he had selected for reading. Some left angry but others remained at the school late into the night.⁵⁷ A visitor has left an account of what he saw there: “The children sit there all day long, learning spelling and memorization. The more advanced ones read God’s Holy Word clearly and loudly from the Bible, which Raattamaa explains in a manner that is so simple and understandable to children that they listen with the greatest attention and desire. And the children indeed demonstrate an unusually good knowledge and understanding of the basic truths of Christianity. . . . Adults who have not had any previous instruction have also become anxious to learn to read and understand God’s Word. Raattamaa gathers these persons into his schoolroom during recesses, teaching them not only to read but also to understand the doctrine of Christianity. When he explains the Holy Scriptures or speaks in other ways about the doctrine of salvation, it is done in a manner that is so easily understood and amiable that the attention of the listeners remains constantly fixed on him. His neighbors say that they do not know when he sleeps, for he spends the nights in ‘conversations’ and instruction with those, both old and young, who do not have the opportunity to meet him during the day. He begins and ends his school each day with a religious service that includes singing, reading and warnings for the people.”⁵⁸ As a result of Raattamaa’s work, in less than a year the revival was as strong in Jukkasjärvi as in Karesuando.

Transfer to Pajala

In August 1848, Laestadius won the election for pastor of Pajala, which, from a financial and material standpoint, was preferable to serving in Karesuando. The results of the election were contested, however, by one of the other two candidates. Laestadius had clearly received more votes than the others, but the winner was not determined by a simple majority. The election was based on a system of property ownership weighted in favor of the large Swedish landowners, who consistently opposed revival. In reply to a letter, dated October 23, 1848, from friends in Pajala Parish who were concerned over the election, Laestadius said that he would not have applied for the position if he did not have so many children, so little time to teach them and insufficient income to hire a teacher. He wrote: “If Sjöding, as is likely, now wins the position of pastor of Pajala by taking legal action, I will have to be content. I must not follow the custom of impenitent pastors, who, through craftiness and litigation, gain larger parishes. If God has determined that I am to be a teacher in Pajala, I will have to come when appointed. If, however, God has not so provided, both you and I must remain content. I think that the pastor who has now begun to take legal steps will eventually regret it when he finds himself among ants. For we know that a snake is

⁵⁷ Autobiography, p. 99.

⁵⁸ Reinhold Vormbaum, *Evangelisk missionshistoria uti lefnadsteckningar*, trans. from German (Stockholm: 1862); cited in Finnish in A. Zidbäck, *Pohjolan suurin maallikkosaarnaaja* (Helsinki: 1941), p. 17.

nowhere in such distress as on an anthill. I do not doubt that Christianity will spread regardless of how strongly it is opposed by an impenitent pastor, and we may well suppose that Sjöding has not raised his complaint for the sake of Christianity but for worldly gain.”⁵⁹ The church authorities in Hernösand rejected the complaint because the documentation was incomplete, and so Laestadius acquired the new position in March 1849.

The election victory did not mean that the revival had already spread to Pajala to any significant degree. Pajala, located south of Karesuando, on the Tornio river, was outside the prohibition area, and the liquor traders were thriving there. The influential Swedes were not at all well disposed toward Laestadius and his work. In fact, the main enemy of the revival was Carl Sohlberg, the Swedish owner of the ironworks in Kengis, where the church was also located at that time. However, in spite of opposition, the revival gained ground daily and spread as it had in Karesuando. The outward effects were the same: people confessed their sins, did restitution and reformed their lives.

Signs of persecution began to appear even before Laestadius’ arrival. In the letter that Laestadius received from his friends in Pajala Parish, they wrote: “The Heavenly Parent, out of his grace, poured great joy on this village, which happened on the eighteenth Sunday after Trinity, during prayer, and it made the children of the world so angry that they are beginning to complain to the government and to take legal action.”⁶⁰ Soon after his arrival, false stories began to circulate about Laestadius. It was said that he was a greedy hypocrite, that he pocketed all the valuables donated to the school (which was now in the village of Kangos), that the parsonage was in a filthy condition and that he had a whore in every village.⁶¹

The tone of District Magistrate Hackzell’s reports now changed. In a report published in the press in May 1851, he complained that the level of debt had increased and that people were neglecting their work, spending weeks on end at school. According to Hackzell, those who had previously wasted their money on liquor were now spending even more on coffee. He also complained about the *liikutuksia* in Pajala, saying that the “devotion” of the listeners was disturbed by such outbursts. As for the situation in Karesuando, Hackzell said that he could not make any statement because during his visit the pastor there was “indisposed” and unable to conduct services. In his rebuttal, published in the same newspaper, Laestadius pointed out that the reason the pastor of his former parish could not conduct services was that he was lying drunk in the vestry, which Hackzell should have reported instead of complaining about the involuntary outbursts.⁶²

Those who warned their neighbors of the danger of dying unrepentant were threatened and even assaulted. In the spring of 1850, for example, a man by the name of Juho Aaronpoika became enraged while hearing a visitor discuss Christianity. He led the visitor out of the house by the collar, beating him repeatedly with an axe handle and breaking the arm with which the victim tried to shield his head. Though fined heavily for this, again in the fall of 1851, enraged at hearing the Bible being read in the house after waking up one morning, he beat up a visitor and threw a shovel after him as he ran off through the yard. Once, when Laestadius was at the door, preparing to leave

⁵⁹ October 31, 1848 letter to Isak Poromaa and Lars Mukka in *Kristillisyytemme alkuheräyksen ajoilta* (Oulu: 1926), p. 4.

⁶⁰ Letter of Poromaa and Mukka from Junossuvanto in *Kristillisyytemme alkuheräyksen ajoilta*, p. 3.

⁶¹ Autobiography, pp. 110, 111.

⁶² Hackzell’s report and Laestadius’ letter (published in *Norrbottnens-Posten*) are cited in Finnish in *Kruununvouti Hackzell lestadiolaisen heräysliikkeen kuvaajana ja arvostelijana*, pp. 247-249.

the house after visiting Juho Aaronpoika's sick mother, Juho suddenly jumped out of bed and gave such a hard blow to the Pastor's ear that his pipe flew out of his mouth.⁶³

Those who preached repentance were even summoned to court. In February 1850, for example, one Antti Lahti was accused of having told an unconverted man that many of his kind were in hell. In his statement to the court, Lahti wondered where unconverted persons could be if not in hell. Although he denied that he had meant to say that the plaintiff would go to hell, he was found guilty and fined. Another example of the charges raised at this time is the case of Erkki Raattamaa, a brother of Juhani and Pekka, who was summoned together with one Olli Kitkijoki to answer the charge of blasphemy for allegedly having said that "Bugge's postil is a passport to hell." Erkki denied having made the statement but expressed his view that the author of the postil did not have living faith and that this book, and even the Bible itself, could serve as a passport to hell for unconverted persons. The defendants were found not guilty.⁶⁴

Complaints were raised against Laestadius within a year of his arrival in Pajala. In an article in the periodical *Ens Ropandes Röst i Öknen*, which he began publishing in 1852, he reviews some of the charges. He says that one complaint was prepared by a former constable by the name of Lars Johan Bucht, whom he accuses of having recently fled from Luleå to Finland to escape prosecution for financial misconduct. According to Laestadius, Bucht intended to eventually continue his flight to Norway. The complaint was written in the name of a certain Adam Muodoslompolo, whom Laestadius refers to as "Old Adam." It charged that the *readers* had disturbed the peace of this man's home, that Laestadius was responsible for this because of his "fire and brimstone sermons," and that the Pastor had misappropriated silver and gold and items of value that had been donated to the school. The complaint, which had been sent to the governor, was forwarded to the Consistory, and an explanation was demanded from Laestadius.⁶⁵

Another complaint, described in the same article, was raised by Juho Vänkkö, the church sexton, who charged that Laestadius had refused to church his stepdaughter after the girl had given birth to an illegitimate child. The complaint, written on behalf of the parents by "a certain liquor trader," was sent to the provincial pastor, who forwarded it to the Consistory. In this case too, an explanation was demanded. Laestadius writes, in his article, that he had asked to have a talk with the girl before accepting her confession, and in view of the insolent attitude that she displayed during the meeting, the ritual was postponed. Laestadius points out that church rules require that persons to be church ed manifest true penitence. Laestadius was strongly opposed to the leniency of other pastors, who paid no heed to the spiritual condition of those to whom they proclaimed absolution. He writes: "The pastor rushes forward instead, as though playing blindman's buff, and absolves a sinner without taking his spiritual condition into consideration. Thus he uses the keys of the kingdom of heaven in somewhat the same manner in which the prince of the bottomless pit uses his keys to the gate of hell. He indeed lets all the goats and scorpions into his kingdom without examining whether they are repentant or not."⁶⁶

Laestadius maintained that he was not legally obligated to reply to the charges made against him because the complaints had not been signed by the persons who had actually written them. However, in flagrant violation of the law, the Consistory again demanded that Laestadius explain his actions. In a letter dated January 4, 1850, Laestadius repeated his position, commenting that Muodoslompolo had subsequently declared in the presence of witnesses that he had neither

⁶³ *Lestadiolainen heräysliike I*, pp. 131, 132.

⁶⁴ These and similar cases are reviewed in *Lestadiolainen heräysliike I*, pp. 97-137.

⁶⁵ *Ens Ropandes Röst i Öknen*, pp. 398, 399.

⁶⁶ *Ens Ropandes Röst i Öknen*, pp. 399-401.

requested nor signed the complaint made in his name. Most likely, Muodoslompolo had reconsidered the matter in the light of the travel expenses involved in pursuing the case. At any rate, Laestadius felt he should not have to reply to anonymous complaints. He said that he suspected that the complaint had been written “under the influence of an infernal passion, which revealed itself in the form of spiritual hatred, the real cause of all religious persecutions,” and that the author, “though a fugitive from justice, felt compelled, as a genuine Lutheran and with a brain stimulated by orthodox gall, to defend the purity of Lutheran doctrine, which he imagined to be in danger of being eradicated by the repentance sermons of the *readers*.” As for the case of the unchurched girl, Laestadius wrote: “Forasmuch as it can be proven that the guardian, Vänkkö, did not, of his own free will, give his consent to the writing of the complaint but that other individuals had coaxed and inveigled him into it and had even made threats, which they intended to carry out unless he yielded to the wishes of those whose tender consciences were highly troubled by my temperance sermons, as being the worst heresy, whereby the common people are beguiled away from pure and genuine Lutheranism, clarified in a liquor still and in alcoholic beverages, I have prepared this appeal for the purpose of forcing slippery and elusive snakes, who would rather lurk in darkness, to creep out into the daylight. The fact is that all members of the leech family are greatly troubled by the bitter salt of truth. ‘But if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted’ [Matthew 5:13]? If the salt in the Lutheran Church had not lost its savour, not a single bloodsucker would exist. It is also clear that all bloodsuckers must bear a deadly hatred toward all who sprinkle the sharp salt of truth on them. And since I have every reason to assume that the Highly Venerable Consistory will not take the side of liquor traders, my request is that, if these members of the leech family want to continue their occupation, they appear openly, not secretly under fabricated names, but as true Lutherans, denouncing supposed disorders and abuses, which they themselves have caused.”⁶⁷

The Consistory insisted on receiving explanations and decided to formally reprimand Laestadius for his disobedience and the “indecent and improper expressions” in his letter.⁶⁸ He was given only thirty days to appeal the decision despite the fact that the mail was collected only twice monthly from Pajala. His legal representative in Stockholm made the mistake of sending the appeal to Pajala rather than directly to Hernösand. Thus the time for appeal elapsed, and Laestadius had to bear the expense of a trip to Haparanda to receive a reprimand in the form of a letter, dated February 8, 1851, which was read to him by one pastor with two others as witnesses.

Laestadius now sent the explanations to the Consistory, and they were accepted. As for the unchurched girl, she was churching by another pastor and soon gave birth to another illegitimate child. In the account given in his periodical, Laestadius mentions this, adding that it “is no longer any secret” that “she has even committed incest.”⁶⁹ Laestadius later retracted this statement, but it was to no avail, for he was eventually fined the rather hefty sum of 300 rix-dollars for making it. Although the girl had made the statement in the presence of witnesses, it could not be proven in court. It should be pointed out, in order to make the size of the fine better understood, that it is known that the Pastor’s basic annual salary in Karesuando had been about 300 rix-dollars. However, this figure does not include other benefits or income. In Pajala, where his salary was higher, he reported an income of 1,046 rix-dollars in 1856 and 2,667 rix-dollars in 1858.⁷⁰ This fine may be one reason why Laestadius ceased publication of his periodical in 1854, for in a letter

⁶⁷ *Ens Ropandes Röst i Öknen*, pp. 419-423.

⁶⁸ *Ens Ropandes Röst i Öknen*, p. 426.

⁶⁹ *Ens Ropandes Röst i Öknen*, pp. 410, 411

⁷⁰ K. Castren, *Kiveliön suuri herättäjä Lars Levi Laestadius. Elämäkerta* (Helsinki:1934), p. 111.

written in 1860 he complained that he was still suffering financially from the case and was unable to finance publication of *Dårhushjonet*.⁷¹

At about the same time, the Finnish authorities began to take action against those who experienced *liikutuksia* in church. In an 1857 letter, Laestadius tells how two women of Ylitornio were imprisoned in Oulu, where they were given only bread and water. There, with threats and promises, they were urged to confess that their experiences were from the devil, but they were unmoved in their conviction that they were caused by the Holy Spirit. Three women of Kittilä Parish were also summoned to court for having caused disturbances on August 25, 1850 and on other occasions. When the judge asked if the defendants had acted from malevolence, the “awakened witnesses” testified that the actions were involuntary, and the “impenitent witnesses” said that they did not know whether they were voluntary or not. The judge decided in favor of the women because it had not been proven that they had acted out of malevolence and their actions might have been caused by illness. However, the prosecutor appealed the decision to the Court of Appeals in Vaasa, where the women were fined heavily and given eight days of imprisonment with bread and water, after which they were to undergo public penance. The judge who had originally acquitted the women now appealed the case to the Senate, where the decision of the higher court was upheld. The women were also deprived of the possibility of petitioning the Tsar for a pardon. Thus they had to serve their sentence in Oulu, after which they appeared in their local church for public penance. They were then asked, “Do you confess that through the inspiration and evil guile of the devil you have, by your cries, not only offended God but also caused an offense in God’s congregation?” They answered in the negative, and so they were sent back to Oulu. After undergoing more punishment they were asked the same question, and they gave the same answer. In the letter in which he discussed the case, Laestadius wrote that it had not yet been resolved but that he expected the women to be excommunicated.⁷²

The Kautokeino Tragedy

Certain dramatic events now occurred in Kautokeino, Norway, which gave the authorities a pretext to intensify their persecution. An account of the origin of the revival there is given in Baer’s memoirs: “From 1846 to 1848 the Kautokeino congregation had tried to acquire true Christianity by outward conversion, and they comforted themselves with that outward conversion, thinking that now they were pleasing to God for Christ’s sake. In 1848, however, some in the congregation began to be awakened and reborn, for they had been greatly terrified by the words of the awakened persons in Karesuando and the sermons of Laestadius.”⁷³ According to an article written by F. W. Hvoslev, the pastor of Kautokeino at the time of the tragedy, the main impetus of the revival was given by six missionaries -- three Lapps and three Finns -- who arrived in the winter of 1847-48, reading sermons and trying to alarm consciences by describing the pains of the damned in hell. The

⁷¹ September 7, 1860 letter to P. Wieselgren in *Lars Levi Laestadius’ brev till Peter Wieselgren*, p. 300.

⁷² September 30, 1857 letter in *Lars Levi Laestadius’ brev till Peter Wieselgren*, pp. 282-285. A later source, an article signed only “Sanankuulija” (Listener), mentions two women of Ylitornio and one of Kittilä who were excommunicated after experiencing *liikutuksia*. He adds that “the women in Ylitornio were under the ban a long time” but that it was finally “revoked” after their pastor wrote to the Bishop of Kuopio. See “Kristillisydestä Lapissa ja Peräpohjolassa,” *Siionin Lähetyslehti*, Jan. 1923, p. 4.

⁷³ *Erindringer 1825-1849*, p. 67.

missionaries demanded enumeration of sins, and if someone made a confession and declared that he was reborn, he had to recount the moment and manner in which the rebirth had occurred and whether he had felt or seen himself, body and soul, in the flames of hell, felt himself removed from there by Christ or an angel from heaven and had received in the Spirit an assurance that his sins were forgiven and that he was now a reborn child of God who had experienced grace. The missionaries came again the following winter, according to Hvoslev, declaring that previously they had been “under the law” but that now they were “clothed in Christ’s righteousness.” *Liikutuksia* occurred, according to Hvoslev, though they were not as prominent as elsewhere. The parishioners also began to diligently read their Lappish New Testaments, which had recently been made available by missionary and Bible translator Nils Stockfleth, and the number of those who became temperate and stopped stealing reindeer increased. Hvoslev adds that before they left, however, “a controversy erupted between them and some of their disciples over visions and dreams, as a result of which they condemned each other to hell.”

Hvoslev then tells how, in the winter of 1849-50, some of the Lapps began to declare themselves “holy and righteous.” From this time on, he says, traits such as pride and hypocrisy became increasingly apparent. The inclination to consult God’s Word ended and “the Spirit, the Spirit” became the slogan. The following winter a real rivalry emerged among them as to who was the greatest -- who had the greater revelations and experiences of grace. Pride drove them to assert finally that they were resurrected, without flesh, and even that they were Christ. From this time on, according Hvoslev, “unrest and confusion began to spread in the congregation.”⁷⁴

Laestadius met some of the Kautokeino converts in Karesuando, during a visit that he made to his former parish in the winter of 1851-52, before the notorious events had occurred, but they were so “confused and deranged” that he couldn’t exchange a reasonable word with them.⁷⁵ He noted that “their complexion was dark, as was their countenance; they had a white froth in their mouths and they spit often.”⁷⁶ In an article written after the Kautokeino events, he describes their doctrine: “These words of Luther, ‘I am Christ,’⁷⁷ could easily give the ignorant Kautokeino Lapps a basis for self-deification, and I believe I found this arrogance in those few with whom I spoke in Karesuando last winter, 1852, though they were not leaders of the sect. They asserted not only that they were equal with Christ but even that they were pure spirits and hence sinless. They said that they had experienced the ten stages of Christ’s humiliation and exaltation. And since they were now gods, they considered themselves above the Bible, which they called the Bible of the impenitent. The result was that the reasonable *readers* were unable to oppose the fanatical ones, for when Bible passages were quoted to refute these heretical notions, the fanatical ones would reply, ‘We are above the Bible; we can now write a better Bible ourselves.’”⁷⁸ Laestadius mentions that in a letter sent to Bishop D. B. Juell -- who later became his accuser -- he had rejected this “fanaticism” even before the Kautokeino tragedy.⁷⁹

Stockfleth’s journal also contains statements made by the fanatics, based on notes taken at their insistence during conversations he had held with them: “We are come to bring strife. Where we are there can be no peace. To fear God one must sin, for only one who sins can fear; but we do not fear

⁷⁴ F. W. Hvoslev, “Noget om den religiøse Bevægelse i Kautokeino,” *Theologisk Tidsskrift for den norske Kirke*, 1857, pp. 8-15.

⁷⁵ *Ens Ropandes Röst i Öknen*, p. 444.

⁷⁶ Letter to King cited in Castren, pp. 123, 124, and M. Edquist, *Lars Levi Laestadius. En kulturbild från den stora väckelsen i Tornedalen* (Stockholm: 1922), p. 186.

⁷⁷ See *Luther’s Church Postil*, New Year’s Day sermon on Luke 2:21.

⁷⁸ *Ens Ropandes Röst i Öknen*, p. 451

⁷⁹ *Ens Ropandes Röst i Öknen*, p. 444.

God, for those who have the Spirit cannot sin. We are God's limbs, and God cannot punish or judge his own limbs; hence, God cannot judge us. We are dead and so we cannot die. There are spiritual bodies and fleshly bodies; we do not have fleshly or physical bodies but spiritual bodies. We are on the new earth. We are spiritual, holy and righteous. We are the Bible, the New Testament, Sinai. Our body is the law; consequently, we have the right to judge. We are God the Father, Son and Spirit. The Son has lost his power, which is now with us. The Spirit in us has the power to kill. The pastor that does not deny that he has flesh is consequently mortal and belongs to the devil. We do not have flesh; the flesh has been killed; we will no longer die, for we have already died once. We can see inside all men and determine whether they are spiritual or fleshly. Christ said, 'Get thee behind me, Satan.' Hence, the spiritual ones have the right to call you devils and Satan and to treat you as such. When you say, 'Our Father which art in heaven,' you are lying. You should say, 'Our Father which art in hell,' for as long as you have not been converted to us spiritual ones, the devil is the father to whom you pray. Children should curse their parents so that the curse would return from generation to generation right back to our first parents. Those who do not become free of sin in this world will not enter the kingdom of heaven. We have not received the Spirit through reading the Bible but through conversion and prayer. We spiritual ones in Kautokeino can say of ourselves, 'By virtue of the Spirit we are true God and by virtue of our human nature we are true man.' It is not fitting to be obedient or to pay taxes to unspiritual and unconverted authorities. 'If you, who are supposed to be our teacher, were really filled with the Spirit, as we are,' they told me at the general conference, 'you would not allow anyone who did not have the spirit, as you do, to be in peace and remain alive. This is what we do, and this is what we will do in the future.' They wanted to disturb the complacency of the sinner, and no one was supposed to hinder them. 'When the power to curse comes over me, I curse, etc.'⁸⁰

Kautokeino did not have a permanent pastor until Hvoslev, who was appointed to the position in November 1851, arrived there in 1852. The congregation had been served from time to time by Pastor Zetlitz, who observed the revival in Kautokeino when he arrived there in February 1849, after an absence of nearly a year due to illness. During the three weeks that he spent there, he made a note in the church records that a "religious fanaticism had spread among the common people with surprising speed." It was characterized by anguish over individual sins and *liikutuksia*, of which he did not approve. He classified the entire movement as one in which "self-justification outside of Christ was preached."⁸¹

On March 18, 1850, Bishop Juell arrived to carry out an inspection. He presented his impression of the revival in a letter, dated April 17, 1850, to the Department of Ecclesiastical Affairs, in which he says that it started at the beginning of 1848 as the result of a visit by missionaries and that it was legalistic. He says that the preachers stressed the need for penitence and repentance and felt that people could "reform, refrain from sin, fulfill God's law and become perfect children of God through man's own efforts and that some had already succeeded and were, therefore, already viewed as holy, pure, etc."⁸²

In a letter, dated May 8, 1850, to the same authorities, Juell mentions the moral improvement in the lives of the Lapps and expresses the hope that the revival, in spite of its shortcomings, would become a blessing. He regrets that Zetlitz had adopted a negative attitude from the beginning and conveys the request of the people that a pastor with a knowledge of Lappish remain with them the whole winter. He adds, however, that despite the fact that all those with whom he spoke "did not

⁸⁰ N. V. Stockfleth, *Dagbog over mine Missionsreiser i Finmarken* (Christiania: 1860), pp. 195, 196.

⁸¹ P. L. Smith, *Kautokeino og Kautokeino-lappene. En historisk og ergologisk regionalstudie* (Oslo: 1938), p. 211.

⁸² Cited in Stockfleth, p. 185.

want to know anything other than Jesus Christ and him crucified” and said that “all their comfort was God’s unmerited grace through him,” they were “too inclined to lay undue emphasis on their works and, therefore, to place an old patch on a new garment,” and “rely on and wait for the emotional efforts of grace in their hearts instead of the grace that the Lord has promised through his means of grace.” He then adds, “I tried to open their eyes to this error, which they were not unwilling to recognize. There were many who combined a simple faith with a clear Evangelical Lutheran understanding of saving truth.”⁸³

On September 16, 1851, the Bishop sent a request to Stockfleth, who knew Lappish, to visit Kautokeino, and the latter arrived on the night of October 21 after a long and difficult journey by land and water. In his diary, he says that even before landing he heard the Lapps engaging in a noisy uproar in front of the house of the merchant Ruth, with whom they were upset because of his refusal to end his liquor trade. Stockfleth says that he heard them uttering “wild cries about conversion, accompanied by curses and threats,” but by the time he actually arrived the demonstrators had left. He says that their violence had increased recently, that people who refused to repent had been whipped and that the fanatics had broken into homes, including that of Ruth, where a woman had torn the merchant’s wife’s dress to shreds. Stockfleth spent the night with Ruth, and the next morning he went to meet the Lapps alone in the sexton’s house, where they were gathered. He entered and greeted them but did not receive a response. Two men and a woman were hopping about, condemning all the unconverted to hell, and the others were lying on the floor. According to Stockfleth, when he was finally recognized, the jumpers redoubled their movements, becoming even louder, and he kept them from pressing against him by striking them a couple of times with his walking stick. The other Lapps now became agitated and, with frenzied expressions, started hopping about, flinging their arms up and down and cursing the unconverted. Stockfleth approached the sexton, Mathis Hetta, who was lying fully clothed on a bed and acting as excited as the others, but did not receive a response. After observing the scene awhile, he went out but turned again to watch them jumping and shouting hoarsely in the yard. Finally, shaking his head, he left.⁸⁴

Laestadius also gives an account of Stockfleth’s arrival, which he had heard from someone who had spoken with the sexton. According to Laestadius, Stockfleth, arriving unannounced “one fine morning,” entered the house and uttered a greeting. The sexton, half awake, recognized Stockfleth, but since he had heard that he was in Christiania (the former name of Oslo), he believed it was the devil appearing in Stockfleth’s form. He began, therefore, to bless himself, but the hotheaded Stockfleth began to beat him, thinking presumably that he was engaging in sorcery or sacrilege. Thus Stockfleth, according to Laestadius, lost an opportunity to gain the confidence of the Lapps, for though they had liked him previously, they could not believe that a true teacher would physically abuse them.⁸⁵

Stockfleth, assuming pastoral duties, began to take drastic measures. On the Sunday after his arrival, he announced that he would not admit anyone to confession or Communion without an examination. When the Lapps tried to force their way into his house on October 29, after he had kicked them out during a conversation in which one of their leaders, Rasmus Spein, demanded to be recognized “not as Christ but higher than Christ,” Stockfleth summoned the police from Alta. On November 1, the fanatics called for a “general conference” with Stockfleth. Six of the leaders and four men and two women then met with him in a large room. Opening the meeting solemnly and politely, they explained their doctrine at length. One of them told of two visions or revelations,

⁸³ Cited in Stockfleth, pp. 186-188.

⁸⁴ Stockfleth, pp. 189-191.

⁸⁵ *Ens Ropandes Röst i Öknen*, p. 446.

which he had experienced after three days of prayer in the woods. Christ had appeared to him in a shining form and had delivered to him the authority to act as a judge. After a discussion that lasted one and a half hours, they left with their usual “cries and threats,” not having succeeded in convincing Stockfleth of the truth of their doctrine.⁸⁶

On November 9, the police, having arrived from Alta, arrested Spein during an uproar in church in which he had gone to the pulpit to condemn the Pastor. The local constable, who did not make any move to assist the police, was later removed from his position, which was given to the infamous Bucht, the fugitive constable and enemy of the revival, who was now living with the merchant Ruth. Other arrests were made on various occasions until as many as 22 Lapps were arrested. On February 9, Bishop Juell arrived in Kautokeino at Stockfleth’s request, followed by other officials. A church inspection and legal proceedings were held. The Lapps were found guilty; some confessed and were forgiven, but others received prison sentences. As for Spein, he was sent to Christiania Penitentiary, where efforts were made to teach and correct him. He resisted for a whole year but then fell ill, and on his deathbed he finally asked for forgiveness from Stockfleth, who happened to be present. Stockfleth reviewed the articles of the Creed with him, prayed with and for him, pronounced absolution, and gave him the Lord’s Supper and the benediction. A few hours later the prisoner was dead.⁸⁷

After leaving Kautokeino, Bishop Juell sent a letter, dated March 5, 1852, to the Department of Ecclesiastical Affairs, in which he said that the movement among the Kautokeino Lapps was the result of “concern over the salvation of souls” and that “thus it was effected by God’s Spirit.” He mentioned the unfortunate course of events, saying that the more the Lapps had to be without guidance and enlightenment of the Word of God from teachers who knew their language, the more they accepted every movement of their imagination and mind as the direct effect of the Spirit. He blamed this state of affairs, at least in part, on the “influence exercised by the terroristic and crudely worded law sermons printed in the Finnish language,” in which both spiritual and secular authorities were attacked.⁸⁸

On April 7, 1852, Hvoslev arrived in Kautokeino as pastor, and Stockfleth left on April 20. The situation remained calm during the entire summer. However, the authorities continued to provoke the Lapps in various ways. Some of them were still denied the Lord’s Supper because of inadequate confession of sin. Bucht, who is said to have physically abused them, made several attempts to arrest a Lapp woman who had not yet served her sentence, but since her village moved from place to place and she adamantly refused to surrender, his efforts failed. As for the Lapps who had already served their sentences, they returned home to find the authorities planning to seize all their possessions to recover court costs. On one occasion, according to Laestadius, the vivid imaginations of the sensitive Lapps became inflamed when someone placed chains and shackles in front of the church during services. One of them cried out, “Now Stephen’s faith will be tried!”⁸⁹

On October 30, Hvoslev heard that the “spiritual ones” were traveling to other villages to convert people, particularly women, and that they had begun to live in an unrestrained and wild manner. Although he did not expect violence, he planned to speak with Bucht on November 7 about sending to Alta for help in dealing with the situation. However, when that day dawned, the final drama began to unfold. Aslak Hetta, the leader, had dreamed that in a struggle with an

⁸⁶ Stockfleth, p. 195.

⁸⁷ Stockfleth, pp. 197-206.

⁸⁸ Stockfleth, pp. 206, 207.

⁸⁹ *Ens Ropandes Röst i Öknén*, p. 308. Hvoslev claims the incident never occurred. See “Noget om den religiøse Bevægelse i Kautokeino,” pp. 24, 25.

opponent he had overcome him and bit off his nose. In another dream he had cast an opponent with whom he had been struggling into a well. Only one stage of Christ's exaltation remained -- that of judging the quick and the dead. At Aslak's word, the Lapps in his village, 30 adults and 19 children, began moving toward Kautokeino in a long line of sleds, one loaded with birch switches. Along the way, during the night, they whipped the unrepentant and forced them to join the procession. On the morning of November 8, they arrived at Ruth's house, where Ruth and Bucht were approached in the yard. Aslak shouted, "Repent, you devil of a constable!" and knocked Bucht down with a club. Aslak then cast himself on top of him, bit off his nose and, taking the constable's knife, stabbed him under the left arm. The Lapps then beat both Bucht and Ruth unconscious, but Bucht, regaining consciousness, tried to escape. Aslak overtook him, however, and stabbed him again. Though half dead, he made it to the attic, where he lived, but there Lars Hetta, a brother of Aslak, finished him off.⁹⁰

Alerted by Ruth's wife, Pastor Hvoslev rushed from the parsonage to find Ruth apparently dead already from knife wounds, his body still being abused by raving women. Aslak initially intended to cast the body into a well but changed his mind and ordered that it be left where it was as a "terror to Israel." The fanatics attacked and beat the pastor, forcing him to lie on the ground next to Ruth's body, where one of them stood over him and shouted, "Do penance, you child of the devil, you soul murderer!" The Lapps then went to the parsonage where they broke in and found the wives of Ruth and Hvoslev with one of the maids. The women were abused and whipped together with others who were brought in from the village. The Lapps took Hvoslev inside, where they bound him and began "whipping the devil out of him." Between whippings, he was forced to kneel and call on the name of Jesus. Seeing the wall illuminated, he realized that Ruth's house -- which contained Bucht's body -- was on fire. He was taken to a spot to view the scene and was told, "There, Pastor, you can see how the impenitent burn in hell."

In the late afternoon, help finally arrived from the village of Autsi, where it was feared, after word of the events reached them, that the fanatics might show up next. A group of 16 men and 3 women, traveling about six miles, arrived in Kautokeino with clubs and three firearms. They discharged their firearms but missed their targets, and a hand-to-hand struggle ensued. The fanatics, though superior in numbers, were finally subdued. One of them, a woman, was mortally injured. The prisoners were locked up in a shed, where they raged and beat the walls with bloody hands. Two days later, on November 10, they were taken out individually with boat hooks and transported to Alta. On the way, a Lapp who freed himself from his bonds was clubbed so hard that he died two days later. In Alta, the Lapps were sentenced to various forms of punishment. Five of them were sentenced to death, but three of the sentences were commuted, including that of Lars Hetta, who later participated, while in prison, in the work of translating the Bible from Norwegian into Lappish. Eight of them received life imprisonment at hard labor, and the rest received prison terms of various lengths. Pastor Hvoslev tried to convert the two men facing death, Aslak Hetta and Mons Somby, but to no avail. Aslak said that no pastor, not even one from the depths of hell, could get him to repent. Hvoslev witnessed their execution on October 14, 1854.

⁹⁰ This account of the murders and their aftermath is based on Hvoslev's account in "Noget om den religiøse Bevægelse i Kautokeino," his letters to Juell regarding the events, published in *Christianiaposten* in 1852 (as cited in Smith, pp. 218-224, and Edquist, pp. 189-193) and on court documents as published in M. Mikkelsen & K. Pålrsrud, *Kautokeino-dokumentene* (Veidnesklubben: 1997), pp. 121-388.

Growing Persecution

Laestadius now faced a storm of criticism, for the events in Kautokeino caused a sensation throughout Scandinavia, and his name is inextricably connected with the tragedy to this day. Not only have enemies of the revival been critical but even some who claim to be “Laestadians” seem to think that Laestadius is somehow at least partially responsible for the events. For example, K. Hulkko and A. Zidbäck see a link between Laestadius’ doctrine and the Kautokeino tragedy. Hulkko writes: “Zidbäck also admits that Laestadius does not have any legal or moral guilt for the Kautokeino tragedy. However, Zidbäck is of the opinion that there is a connection between the Kautokeino events and Laestadius’ concept of Christianity, which fosters visions and ecstatic phenomena. Laestadius is theologically responsible for the Kautokeino ecstaticism. Every honest researcher has to agree with this position.”⁹¹ Even before the murders had occurred, in the spring of 1852, a report was published in the Swedish press in which District Magistrate Hackzell writes that Juell had told him that the fanatics had said that their doctrine was that of Laestadius. Juell had then written to Laestadius, inquiring whether this report was true. Hackzell recommended that steps be taken to put an end to the emotional outbursts before they lead to situations such as in Kautokeino.⁹² As a result, the Consistory demanded explanatory statements from Laestadius and certain other pastors.

After the murders, Juell sent a complaint to the Norwegian Department of Ecclesiastical Affairs in which he laid responsibility for the events on Laestadius, as the originator of the movement, and recommended that he be placed under “supervision.”⁹³ At that time, Norway and Sweden were united under a common king, to whom Laestadius was now required to present a written explanation. He would have also defended himself publicly, but the Swedish press refused to publish his letters. In an article in his own periodical, however, he published a defense, in which his line of reasoning was quite similar to that presented in his letter to the King. In the article, Laestadius writes sarcastically: “It is perfectly clear that Pastor Laestadius is to be blamed for all this evil since he is the originator of the revival in the Torneå district of Lapland, and so he is responsible for everything, not only for the souls of those murdered in Kautokeino but also for the souls of those killed in the struggle and finally also for those who are now to be executed for their acts of murder. If this conclusion is correct, then the Saviour must be responsible for Judas, whom he couldn’t protect from suicide even though he was almighty. Likewise, Luther must bear responsibility for the violent deeds of the Anabaptists, the peasant wars and all the misery that befell Germany in the wars of religion.”⁹⁴

In the midst of the turmoil, Carl Sohlberg, Constable Israel Stenudd, F. V. Forsström (a merchant whose liquor trade had been ruined by the revival) and four peasants submitted a complaint to the Consistory against Laestadius, in which they requested a bishop’s inspection. It was charged, among other things, that Laestadius had collected illegal fees, that he used indecent

⁹¹ “Koutokeinon hurmos,” *Jouko, Pohjois-pohjalaisen osakunnan kotiseutujulkaisu*, IV, 1947, p. 143. This is one of several unreliable studies of ecstatic movements made by Pastor Hulkko, who says on pp. 140, 142, for example, that the low level of education in Lapland in the early 1800s is evidenced by the New Testament not being available in Lappish until Lars Hetta translated it after his release from prison. It is known, however, that Stockfleth had already published the New Testament in Lappish as early as 1840, long before Hetta began his own work of Bible translation in prison. See Stockfleth, p. 186.

⁹² Hackzell’s 1852 report is cited in Finnish in *Kruununvouti Hackzell lestadiolaisen heräysliikkeen kuvaajana ja arvostelijana*, pp. 252-254.

⁹³ The complaint is summarized in Edquist, pp. 221, 222.

⁹⁴ *Ens Ropandes Röst i Öknen*, p. 456.

expressions in his sermons and that the animalistic shrieking and shouting in church disturbed the solemnity of the service and prevented people from hearing the sermon. Bishop Israel Bergman came to conduct the inspection in July 1853. After finding that financial matters were in order, the issue of indecent language was taken up. The Bishop asked that the offensive words be repeated in front of the congregation. However, no one dared repeat them in the presence of the Bishop until Sohlberg finally uttered them: “Chaste whores want to be church-ed while the filthiness of their whoredom is still dripping from their rear ends onto the church floor.” However, this statement, which was typical of the Pastor’s preaching style, could not be used against him, mainly because the accusers could not tell on which Sunday it had been made. As for the disturbances in church, the accusers said that these incidents disturbed their devotion. As a result, the Bishop ordered that two sermons be given, the first one for those who are offended by the *liikutuksia* and the second one for those who are likely to experience them. Laestadius asked, “But if someone gets pangs of conscience during the first sermon, though he has not had them previously, what is to be done with such a person?” The Bishop answered, “Such a person may be removed from the church.” During the inspection, the Constable noted that in Laestadius’ doctrine there is much that is in conflict with Lutheran doctrine, such as public confession of sin. “Public confession of sin?” asked the Bishop, “is that in conflict with Lutheran doctrine?” The Constable could not explain his statement, and the accusation was dismissed. The outcome of the inspection was a great relief to those who were awakened. Laestadius says that some of them felt great love for the Bishop and even embraced him before he left.⁹⁵

Later the same year, Bishop Bergman also submitted a statement to the King in response to Juell’s complaint, which had been forwarded to him. He took the position that Laestadius, though the originator of the revival in both Swedish Lapland and Kautokeino, could not be viewed as legally or morally responsible for the Kautokeino events. In a letter to Archbishop Henrik Reuterdahl, the Bishop also expressed a fear that Laestadius might lend his support to the separatist movement: “Careful thought should be given to any action that is taken before making any direct or indirect charges against Laestadius for that which has taken place. Otherwise, he can easily become a new and influential voice crying out for dissolution of the Church.”⁹⁶ The King, having received Bergman’s statement, decided that there was no reason to take any action against Laestadius or his doctrine. However, Bergman was asked to “keep a close watch in the future on the manner in which Laestadius carried out his duties so that no cause would be given for anyone to disturb the peace and order that should prevail in Christian society.”⁹⁷

Not long afterward, the Consistory demanded an explanation from Laestadius for language used in pamphlets containing two visions and three sermons. The King had received these pamphlets from Norway and had forwarded them to Hernösand for whatever action the Consistory deemed appropriate. In his explanation, which was sent in June 1854, Laestadius pointed out that there are similar expressions in the Bible and in Luther’s works. Pointing out the low level of education of his listeners, he wrote that a pastor should have the right to present sin in its true light and that his sermons were aimed at awakening complacent sinners to a knowledge of sin and repentance. He noted that the change for the better that had occurred in Pajala, which Bergman had witnessed and reported, proved that the awakening was caused not by his merit but by the “finger of the Lord.”

⁹⁵ Autobiography, pp. 86-91.

⁹⁶ Cited in P. Boreman, *Lars Levi Laestadius. En levnadsteckning* (Stockholm: 1965), pp. 210, 211.

⁹⁷ Cited in Castren, pp. 126, 127.

He added that history and posterity have vindicated many a righteous teacher who has been hated and persecuted.⁹⁸

After receiving this explanation, the Consistory prepared a written warning, which was formally presented to Laestadius in the presence of other pastors. In this warning, dated October 11, 1854, the Consistory expressed its disapproval of the manner in which divine truth had been treated and presented in the printed sermons and of the efforts of Laestadius to use the Bible and Luther to support the use of expressions that any unerring critic should consider violations of the sanctity of the Word of God and the temple sanctified for his service. The Consistory did not consider it proper for a teacher of religion and a Lutheran pastor to disseminate visions whose divine origin was uncertain and appeared instead to be the product of a grossly sensuous view of Christianity and an overactive imagination.⁹⁹

More trouble emerged when a new governor, after visiting Pajala, asked the constable to submit a report on the situation existing there. In his report, the constable discussed the noisy meetings, which lasted for weeks, claiming that people gave all their gold and silver to the school, that some were leading an idle life and that the parishioners were becoming impoverished. The governor submitted it to the Consistory, together with other documents, containing allegations regarding the illegal removal of timber from public lands for use in the construction of a school in Muonio. According to Laestadius, the timber consisted of one scrub pine.¹⁰⁰ However, an investigation was conducted in the form of a meeting held on January 17, 1858, at which Sohlberg, Forsström and the enemies of the revival presented their case and the other side defended itself. The pastor who conducted the investigation submitted a report in which he reviewed the arguments, adding that uneducated missionaries had been sent by Laestadius to run schools in Övertorneå.¹⁰¹ Without giving Laestadius an opportunity to respond, the Consistory, in a letter, dated March 24, 1858, warned him about sending unqualified individuals to conduct meetings in other parishes.¹⁰² In his reply, dated April 23, 1858, Laestadius denied that he had sent any missionaries to Övertorneå, saying that the residents there had appointed instructors to teach their children because the official teacher did not visit the more distant villages of the parish. He also asked to be allowed in the future to avail himself of his right as a member of a constitutional society to express himself in regard to unjustified accusations.¹⁰³ Later in the year, the governor tried to have the separate service for the awakened abolished. An explanation was requested of Laestadius, which he submitted in September. Bishop Bergman saw no reason to make any changes to the system he had set up. The Consistory agreed, and no further action was taken.¹⁰⁴

At about the same time, some who experienced *liikutuksia* in church were brought before Swedish courts. In September 1858, for example, the case of three women who had caused disturbances in church after receiving communion was taken up in Haparanda. Witnesses were called to state their opinion as to whether the actions were voluntary or not. When the awakened witnesses testified that they were the work of the Holy Spirit, the judge said, "They could just as well be of the devil." The statement of a doctor who was clearly prejudiced against the revival was

⁹⁸ This letter, which the Consistory received on July 3, 1854, is in the Hernösand provincial archives. It is cited in Boreman, pp. 213, 214, and there is a Finnish translation of the whole letter in L. L. Laestadius, *Rovasti Lars Levi Laestadiusen saarnat puhtaina* (Pieksämäki: 1984), pp. 1-8.

⁹⁹ Cited in Castren, pp. 127, 128.

¹⁰⁰ September 1, 1859 letter in *Lars Levi Laestadius' brev till Peter Wieselgren*, p. 292.

¹⁰¹ Boreman, p. 212.

¹⁰² Castren, pp. 129, 130.

¹⁰³ Boreman, p. 212.

¹⁰⁴ Boreman, p. 213.

obtained, and though it presented the view that the actions were voluntary, the judge did not find the women guilty but transferred the case to another court.¹⁰⁵ In another case, a young woman of Övertorneå who was working in Nederkalix, where *liikutuksia* had not been witnessed previously, was charged with having danced and uttered loud noises after Holy Communion. When her case came to court in May 1859, the judge found her guilty without even requesting a medical statement, but she was acquitted in a higher court.¹⁰⁶ In some cases, individuals who appeared in court for having disrupted services could no more easily control their emotions in court than in church and had to be removed from the courtroom.¹⁰⁷

Declining Health and Death

At least as early as 1857, Laestadius began experiencing chest pains, shortness of breath and memory lapses. His eyesight also grew so weak that he could hardly read. In the fall of 1858, while receiving treatment for his eyes in Stockholm, he fell ill and wrote a brief letter to be sent to his wife in the event of his death. The letter reads: “My dearly beloved wife, as I have loved you in life, I love you until death. I may now be writing you my final farewell. I have come down with a disease resembling cholera. If I cannot meet you here in the time of grace, I hope that we will, nevertheless, meet each other on Mount Zion in the presence of the Thorn-Crowned King, that we can behold him together and rejoice in the New Jerusalem. Tears of joy have just fallen on this letter. I cannot give you any advice other than this: ‘The Lord will provide an offering’ [Genesis 22:8]. The Lord be with you, my beloved friend. He will comfort you and refresh your heart and help you bear the cross. Farewell. Greet all the Christians on behalf of their dying teacher. Farewell.”¹⁰⁸

Laestadius recovered and returned to Pajala. The following summer, in a letter to his Gothenburg colleague Wieselgren, he expressed the fear that the Russians would acquire northern Sweden and that Gothenburg might become an English colony, adding: “But for someone who is nearly 60 years of age, politics holds no interest. Neither should botany nor other sciences fetter us since it is rather uncertain that chemistry and botany are studied after death. It would perhaps be best if only one science held us captive or if no science interested us other than only this one: *To gnoti seauton To gnoti Christon* (To know oneself, to know Christ). In this letter he mentioned that he had not yet found a publisher for *Dårhushjonet*, his “favorite work,” and hoped that it would not fall into oblivion.¹⁰⁹ Perhaps it should be added here that in a previous letter Laestadius had indeed mentioned some doubts regarding this work: “For I fear that in *Dårhushjonet* I have used reason excessively, examining the nature of life, about which it can only be said, *existit*, it is. Therefore, I must now also say regarding reconciliation with the Apostle: ‘Not as though I had already apprehended, but I follow after, that I may apprehend’ [Philippians 3:12]. The simple person is able

¹⁰⁵ September 1, 1859 letter in *Lars Levi Laestadius' brev till Peter Wieselgren*, p. 289.

¹⁰⁶ Castren, pp. 131, 132. Interestingly, a description of *liikutuksia* given by a writer decades later is based on events that he witnessed during Holy Communion in Nederkalix, where the church was filled with the sounds of communicants who sobbed, shouted, embraced, hopped, cited scriptural passages, and preached the forgiveness of sins. See C. Edquist, *Ropande röster i ödemarken* (Stockholm: 1916), pp. 19-21.

¹⁰⁷ *Lestadiolainen heräysliike I*, p. 165.

¹⁰⁸ September 13, 1858 letter in Finnish translation in Castren, p. 138.

¹⁰⁹ June 18, 1859 letter in *Lars Levi Laestadius' brev till Peter Wieselgren*, pp. 288, 289.

to understand the work of reconciliation much more clearly with his heart than we can with our reason.”¹¹⁰

In a letter of December 16, 1860, Laestadius complained of an ailment in his chest or trachea, which he felt might lead to his death.¹¹¹ He could not retain food and grew thinner and weaker, suffering from what some assume to have been stomach cancer. On February 4, 1861, he wrote in his final letter to Wieselgren: “Here I lie in a bed of suffering, waiting for the angel of death to soon deliver me, and you, my highly esteemed brother, who will survive me, should not neglect to say a prayer for me, for my faith is weak and hope is often far. However, I believe that the great Redeemer and Thorn-Crowned King will not forsake me.”¹¹²

The final days of Lars Levi Laestadius are described in a letter written by his daughter Sofia: “During reading examinations, he affirmed that the doctrine that he proclaimed was in agreement with the Word of God and correct, saying that for it he would live and die, and that his listeners can blame themselves if they forsake it. On the first Sunday in Advent, he preached in church for the last time. Many of those sitting in the pews were overcome by great sorrow and loud weeping, thinking this might be the last time they would hear him speak from the pulpit. Immediately afterward, his physical condition deteriorated daily, and his general weakness also increased noticeably, so that he no longer had the strength to hold prayers in the evenings, as he had done when well. He himself assumed: ‘God has now seen it good to relieve me of my duties as pastor because of my weak physical condition. God will soon take me away from here.’ At that time his thoughts and words dwelled only in matters of eternity. I did not hear worldly speech from his mouth during his three months of illness. He left all his listeners in God’s care, saying, ‘My conscience does not accuse me that I have not endeavored to declare the whole counsel of God for their salvation, and I have not spared the strength of my body and soul. May God himself work in them so that after my death they would take better heed of my words and would lay them up in their hearts.’ He lay on his sickbed in joy and contentment. He told the truth to all impenitent people firmly and sternly, but he spoke to the awakened and believing with love. Although his illness was severe and painful, he was never impatient. Nevertheless, a few days before his death, he asked forgiveness of Mamma, confessing that he had at times felt impatience toward her. A few days before his death, while still able to speak, he first said farewell to Mamma and thanked God, who had given them happiness in the world and had blessed their marriage with mutual love and joy. I also said my final farewell to him. To me, he could not say anything because he was very moved when we took leave of each other. Moreover, during his illness he was often emotionally moved and wanted to have his sermons for ill Christians read to him. He often read the Bible and sang hymns of Zion, especially those that tell of the reward of those who strive and are victorious. He was as one who had already conquered. His eyes reflected one who beheld and enjoyed the bliss of the future life.”¹¹³

According to a much later account, the dying pastor told Juhani Raattamaa, who was visiting him: “I have tried here, in the light of God’s Word, to examine myself and my teachings as to whether they will endure the Lord’s judgment. I have not found anything against the Bible in my teachings. I cannot change them, but I do indeed feel myself to be a great sinner even though I am

¹¹⁰ September 30, 1857 letter in *Lars Levi Laestadius’ brev till Peter Wieselgren*, p. 283.

¹¹¹ *Lars Levi Laestadius’ brev till Peter Wieselgren*, p. 301.

¹¹² *Lars Levi Laestadius’ brev till Peter Wieselgren*, pp. 302, 303.

¹¹³ August 31, 1861 letter to Mathilda Fogman in Oulu provincial archives. A. Hellman, the editor of the 1926 edition of Laitinen’s *Muistosanoja Lapin Kristillisyydestä*, which includes a copy of the letter (pp. 24-27), erroneously assumes that it was sent to Charlotta Jokela, Sofia Niva’s sister in America -- before the emigration of believers to America had even begun.

in faith.”¹¹⁴ Raattamaa himself gives only a brief account of his visit: “He also journeyed righteously during the whole time of Christianity and life and often spoke with a moved heart in conversations, and when he was in his mortal illness, I went to see him. Then too, he said that what we believe is correct, and his heart was moved when I said that I and the congregation believe him to be a Christian.”¹¹⁵ Another account of the Pastor’s death is given in a sketch of his life that was presented by his son-in-law, Pastor P. L. Stenborg, at his funeral -- where the service could hardly be heard because of the loud weeping and *liikutuksia*. This account adds that his only concern was over his children, to whom he wrote warnings. On February 19, according to Stenborg, he woke up, as from a dream, asking, “What doctor has come to this village?” His wife answered, “There is no doctor here.” He then said with a smile: “A beautiful woman was here. The Saviour is coming to fetch me with open arms. Guests from heaven are now coming to get me!” According to this account, after he had said farewell to his wife and children and the others present, he thanked God for happiness in the world and a blessed marriage, after which he could no longer speak coherently but lay content, with joy and love radiating from his eyes, gazing toward heaven.

Lars Levi Laestadius drew his last breath on February 21, 1861. The smile on his lips before he died indicated that he already saw the heavenly mansions. According to Stenborg, he tried to lift his hand in praise. One hand was already stiff, but, joining hands with his wife, he raised the other one in praise to his Redeemer.¹¹⁶ In her letter, Sofia describes his last moment: “I can’t really describe the expression of joy and peace that radiated from his face. Whenever I had an opportunity, it was my agreeable task to sit at his bedside and watch a believer leave this world. Death was not horrible for him to await, and for him it was not sad to leave this world, for even when alive he journeyed as a stranger in this world. Three days before his death, he lost the ability to speak. He lay there content the whole time, looking with joy and happiness and a smile on his lips at those standing about him. He wanted to speak audibly with those present but lacked the strength. His last moment was easy. He drew just a few deep breaths, and then his immortal portion left this mortal realm through the portal of death.”

¹¹⁴ Laitinen, p. 23.

¹¹⁵ *Kirjeet ja kirjoitukset*, p. 362.

¹¹⁶ *Pajalan seurakunnan Kirkkoherran, Provasti Lars Levi Laestadiusen elämäkerta*, in L. L. Laestadius, *Kirkko-Postilla* (Luulaja: 1876), p. 7.

APPENDIX 1

An 1854 Reading-Examination Sermon of L. L. Laestadius¹¹⁷

And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. (I John 3:19-21)

Here Apostle John describes a Christian's trials, which are quite extraordinary, for matters of the heart are obscure to many. First he says, "if our heart condemn us, God is greater," and by these words he reveals that a Christian's heart may at times condemn him. When a vigilant Christian has dreadful temptations, which the devil effects in his flesh, and the devil shoots fiery darts from the flesh into the heart, evil thoughts occur in the mind and wicked lusts and desires are felt in the will, and, finally, self-righteousness rises as a stern and just accuser of the children of God, condemning them in this way: "How can you be a Christian with so much sin? A Christian should be holy and sinless, but you are like the devil himself." When self-righteousness preaches thus in the reason, it appears to a Christian that his heart is condemning him, although the heart itself cannot condemn, but it is the devil of self-righteousness who condemns the children of God. And this cunning devil, who comes under the guise of truth, transforms himself into an angel of light [II Corinthians 11:14], and thus many of the penitent are deceived because they cannot understand that the one condemning the penitent is the devil. However, now Apostle John says, "If our heart condemn us, God is greater," and by these words he shows that not a single Christian should believe his own heart, even if it does condemn him, but that instead he must believe God's gracious promises, which show that Christ has come to save not the righteous but sinners [Matthew 9:13].

As a sinner, the Christian must always flee, with all his sins, to the great Crossbearer and believe that he is saved by grace and not by merit. If a Christian were to be judged by his merit, he would be entirely lost, but he is saved by grace if he believes firmly on the one who is greater than self-righteousness, which preaches condemnation through the heart. This is why Luther also says that he fears his own heart more than the Sultan of Turkey, for every Christian whose conscience is awake feels indeed that his heart is evil, despicable and filthy, that is, the carnal heart, which is in the old man and which Paul calls the outward man, but the soul or the spiritual heart, which Paul calls the inward man, is cleansed by Christ's blood. Everything depends on how well the Christian distinguishes between them, so that Satan would not succeed in confusing the effects of the outward man and inward man, or old man and new man, in his conscience. May that great Searcher of Hearts grant us the light of his Holy Spirit so that we could explain this matter. Hear us, our Father which art in heaven, etc.

Paul says, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin

¹¹⁷ There are three printed versions of this Finnish sermon of L. L. Laestadius in collections of his sermons. Though differing slightly, the versions are substantially identical in meaning. The first is in *Huone-Postilla* (New York Mills: 1894), pp. 81-87, where a subhead states that it is "for Christians." The second is in *Uusi Postilla*, pp. 310-314. The third, in *Rovasti Lars Levi Laestadiuksen saarnat puhtaina*, pp. 759-761, is based on a manuscript in Olga Paltto's collection in the Oulu provincial archives. This translation is based on a comparison of all the printed versions.

which is in my members” [Romans 7:22-23]. Here he must be a sinner because of the flesh but holy in spirit. Reason cannot grasp how the sinner can be holy, how the filthy can be pure and how the perverse can be just, but since we believe that sins are forgiven, we must also believe that the sinner is holy, the filthy is pure, and the unjust is just. In his flesh, a Christian is indeed sinful, filthy and perverse and like the devil himself, but by grace he is holy and righteous, although the devil of self-righteousness preaches in the intellect: “You are not holy and righteous but sinful, perverse, filthy, wicked and despicable.” Now when self-righteousness comes accusing and condemning, and judgment is pronounced by the intellect (although it appears that this condemnation rages in the conscience and heart, as though it came from the heart), John says that if our heart condemn us, God is greater than self-righteousness, and if self-righteousness condemns, God frees from that condemnation. God has forgiven the sins of the penitent. The Son of God has paid for their iniquity, which he bore from the garden to the hill of Golgotha and cast down into the grave by himself, and thereby he has made them holy and righteous. Believe now, penitent ones, that you are holy and righteous through God’s grace even if self-righteousness condemns you, for God is greater than our heart.

It is more difficult, however, to understand what John means when he says, “If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.” This statement is true in itself as long as we understand it correctly, but grace thieves can gain a defense for themselves through a false understanding of it. That is, when a grace thief’s heart never condemns him, he may think he has confidence toward God, but his confidence is a false reliance on God’s grace. Self-righteousness will by no means accuse him as it does penitent and believing souls. For if self-righteousness were to start accusing the grace thief that he is wicked and filthy, he would indeed become so afraid that he would have to fall into despair and go to hell.

Since, however, his heart doesn’t condemn him, the grace thief is confident that God doesn’t condemn him either. Therefore, he often says, “God won’t condemn me for this or that sin.” How does the grace thief know what his mortal and ruling sins are? How could a blind man know them? The grace thief has such a poor memory that in the evening he no longer recalls the sins that he has committed during the day. The grace thief doesn’t even recall willful sins, let alone sinful thoughts. John’s testimony is appropriate for Christians, however, because their heart does not always condemn them, for they have peace with God and a pure conscience. Now they indeed have confidence toward God. And this is how we have understood John’s testimony of how the heart condemns. Namely, that the one who condemns penitent ones and believers is the devil of self-righteousness, for he is that stern accuser of the children of God, who accuses them day and night. But God is greater than self-righteousness.

The Apostle also testifies that we have an Advocate with the Father [I John 2:1]. When that cunning accuser starts accusing the children of God day and night, they have to flee to that great Advocate who has assumed responsibility for the affairs of all penitent, sorrowing and oppressed souls and has promised to answer on their behalf in that great court. The accuser of the children of God is indeed dreadful in demanding justice from the Christians. He says to the Judge, “These hypocrites, who consider themselves Christians, are whores and thieves; they are murderers. How can Your Honor protect such persons?” But then the Advocate of penitent sinners steps before the Judge, who is the true Father of believing and penitent souls, and says, “I have already paid the fine for these wretches. I have given my life for them. I have sweat blood for them. I have paid the full price of redemption for them. What more do you demand on behalf of the state, you toll-hound of hell?” And the Advocate exposes his chest and shows his wounds to the Father and says, “Look, dear Father, I have received these wounds on account of my love for these wretches, and that

accuser of the children of God is the one who has inflicted them on me.” Then the heart of the Father is moved, and he tells the Advocate, “Thou art my Son. This day have I begotten thee. I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance. Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron” [Psalms 2:7-9]. And then he tells the accuser, “Get thee behind me, Satan! [Matthew 16:23] You have provoked me to oppress Job without cause [Job 2:3]. You have tormented the innocent Son of God and caused his death.” He has now redeemed the prisoners of death, who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death until the dayspring from on high begins to give light to this dark world. On behalf of these, Jesus, the great Advocate of penitent ones and believers, has paid the perfect ransom. Satan has no authority to condemn those who believe that Jesus fulfilled the law on their behalf when, hanging from iron nails on the day of victory, he cried out, “Now all is finished!”

So be of good cheer, highly ransomed souls, for the accuser of the children of God has been cast out of heaven onto the earth. He no longer has any authority in heaven. He has no authority over those who have taken the great Crossbearer and Thorn-Crowned King as their Advocate before the Father. The great Michael has prevailed. And John heard a loud voice in heaven saying, “Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ, for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore, rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time” [Revelation 12:10-12].

Rejoice, therefore, and be exceedingly glad, highly ransomed souls, for your reward is great in heaven! Rejoice, elect souls, for your accuser has been cast out of heaven. He no longer has authority to accuse you, for you have an Advocate with the Father, who intercedes on your behalf. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, children of God, and cry with a loud voice that you have prevailed by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of his testimony. If you struggle in your most precious faith until death, soon you too can sing a hymn of victory with the angels and all redeemed souls. Soon you can sing a new song on Mount Zion and say, “Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ, for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony.” Amen.

APPENDIX 2

A Sermon of L. L. Laestadius Given on the Fourth Sunday after Easter in 1851¹¹⁸

Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts. (Jeremiah 2:19)

Here in Jeremiah 2:19, hardened and disobedient children hear why they are chastised. Hardened children feel, of course, that they are punished without cause, but now we hear in these words of the Prophet Jeremiah that your wickedness is the reason that you are rebuked and your disobedience is the reason that you are chastised. God complains in many places that the children of Israel had become disobedient and did not accept punishment. Have the children of men become better today than they were in the Old Testament, when the Heavenly Parent had to chastise the children of Israel with real severity, that is, with war, hunger and disease, and still they were so hardened that they did not accept punishment? They did not believe that God chastised them thus for wickedness but thought that he punished them without cause. They often said, “The Lord is not dealing fairly with us.” God, in their opinion, was too severe in meting out punishment and an unjust judge, who did not appreciate their good works but punished virtuous people for no reason.

Thus the children of Israel did not repent, though they were severely punished, but only grew hardened. They finally ceased practicing open idolatry when God had smitten them so severely that they were too weak to be recalcitrant, but hypocrisy and wickedness of heart waxed only greater as a result of God’s chastisement. They did not humble themselves under the mighty hand of God even though some confessed their sins and promised to repent when, after the Babylonian captivity, they desisted from open idolatry. They then went into hypocrisy and became self-righteous, like the Pharisees, who prayed occasionally in the marketplace so that they would be seen of men. But have people now really become better than then, when God had to chastise them with severity for their disobedience? I think people today are growing worse, not better, as a result of God’s punishment. For God has indeed at all times chastised hardened souls with pestilence, famine and deprivation, but this punishment has not caused any repentance, not even in outward conduct. One or two bad years has not reduced the sins of drunkenness, ostentation, arrogance and fornication. Regardless of how scanty food may have been in the land, arrogance has not decreased, nor have ostentation and drunkenness diminished. Even in a bad year, people have been able to drink and fight, commit adultery and steal. No one thinks this punishment comes from God because of our disobedience and wickedness, but the more God punishes people with hunger and deprivation, the worse they become. If a plague has afflicted the congregation and some have succumbed to it, arrogance and ostentation have not thereby diminished, but the others have waxed all the worse and even cursed because God has punished them. They have drunk the devil’s shit over the graves of the dead, and children have quarreled and fought over the property of the parents. No one has come to his senses, realizing that this disease may be an admonition from above to reflect on where people’s souls will end up with such ungodly lives.

¹¹⁸ Translated from *Kirkko-Postilla*, pp. 223-230.

I have seen some hardened children scorn the tears of their parents, saying, "Go ahead, I dare you to hit me!" Thus the old Adam's children have also scorned the tears of the Heavenly Parent, saying, "Go ahead, I dare you to hit me!" When the Parent has chastised them with hunger and deprivation, they have answered as did that peasant who went to church on Rogation Day, saying, "Him we're supposed to worship, and this kind of year has come!" His meaning was undoubtedly that it is fitting to serve God when we are given a bountiful crop but there is no need to serve him when we are given a bad one. Nevertheless, that man believed that God is the one who gives the year, but not all hardened souls believe that God gives and God takes away but think that man himself earns it with his work. Thus we have seen that man does not obey the rod at all. A horse and ox go in the direction they are driven with a whip, but man has such a hardened hide that regardless of how heavily God punishes him with pestilence, famine and bloodshed, he will not flee in the direction God desires to guide him but wants to live entirely after his own mind in spite of how wrong his life might be. Therefore, the Lord complains through the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 1, verse 3: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."

Thus people have despised the merciful chastisement of God. Earthly punishment has not caused any repentance in them, for the more they are beaten, the more they are hardened. However, in the hand of the Heavenly Parent there is another rod, namely, spiritual chastisement, whereby he has caused some, though rare, souls to fear, but not many accept this punishment either. For when God, by his Spirit, wanted to chastise the children of Adam, like Cain, for example, at first they were beset by a great fear of death. When the Lord rebuked Cain severely, he was frightened and said, "My punishment is greater than I can bear" [Genesis 4:13]. This means: My sin is greater than can be forgiven. But Cain did not long remember this reproof of God's Spirit, though he was at first beset by such a fear of death that he thought that everyone would kill him, and then such great doubt assailed him that he believed his sins could not be forgiven. But this fear did not long remain in him, for Cain himself, and also his children, became increasingly worse, so that God had to say, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh" [Genesis 6:3]. And how can God's Spirit any longer rebuke man when man is hardened by such reproof?

It happened then, and it happens yet today, that God's Spirit stops rebuking because man does not accept chastisement. God's Spirit rebuked hardened souls by the mouth of the righteous Noah, but the ungodly people of that era did not accept his warnings. Afterward, God's Spirit rebuked people by Moses, but the men of that era were only angered at Moses and said, "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses" [Numbers 12:2]? And some said to Moses, "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy" [Numbers 16:3]. In their opinion, the whole people was holy, even though they were arrogant, licentious and stiffnecked and danced around the golden calf. "As it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play" [I Corinthians 10:7].

God's Spirit rebuked the world by the mouth of the prophets, but people were angered by this reproof and persecuted them. Then God's Spirit rebuked the world by John the Baptist, but the world's elite said, "He has a devil." Virtuous whores were especially angry at John for his criticism, and one royal whore could find no peace for her conscience until John's neck was severed. Finally, God's Spirit rebuked the world by the Saviour, but then the men of the vineyard said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours" (Mark 12:7). And thus they also did; they killed the Lord of Glory. Finally, when God's Spirit rebuked the world by the mouths of the apostles and Christians, the impenitent of the world really became hardened and began to suck the blood of the Christians.

However, may those rare souls who, by the reproof of the Holy Spirit, have come to notice that their former ungodly life is unacceptable, accept the merciful chastisement of the Heavenly Parent with humility and gratitude, so that he could raise them properly. If they would so humble themselves as to kiss the Father's rod, the Parent would take them up into his lap again, embrace them, kiss them, wipe away their tears, set them at his table and give them butter and honey in reconciliation. Bend your knees, you chastised children, whom the Parent has taught by his rod to obey, and pray to him that he would forgive you all your sins and transgressions, by which you have grieved him and wounded his heart. Hear, beloved Parent, the groan of penitent, sorrowful and oppressed souls. Our Father which art in heaven, etc.

Gospel text: John 16:5-13

But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. 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.

In our Holy Gospel, the Saviour tells his disciples that when the Holy Spirit is come, "he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." We will, therefore, by the grace of God, consider: *How the Holy Spirit rebukes the world for sin, righteousness and judgment.*

We hear in today's Gospel text that the Holy Spirit does not rebuke the disciples of Jesus, but the Holy Spirit is their comforter and guides them into all truth. The hearts of the disciples are filled with sorrow when Jesus departs and leaves them weeping and wailing, longing for his gracious presence. If the Holy Spirit did not come to them as a comforter when Jesus is away, they would succumb to sorrow and loneliness. But the Holy Spirit, comforting them and assuring them that they are the children of God, though the world and the devil often try to rob them of their faith and make them sink into doubt, gives them the courage to speak of the crucified Saviour, and, because of this boldness, the disciples of Jesus are hated and persecuted by the world.

First consideration: The Holy Spirit rebukes the world for sin. What then is the sin for which the Holy Spirit rebukes the world? The Saviour himself has said that the Holy Spirit will reprove the world "of sin, because they believe not on me." So we hear that the Holy Spirit rebukes the world for unbelief. And Luther has also testified that unbelief is the greatest sin against the Saviour. But grace thieves, who, without penitence, have claimed God's promises of grace for themselves, think they believe on Jesus and say, "We lie every day at the foot of his cross. The Holy Spirit does not rebuke us for unbelief, but these awakened ones, who never speak of faith and love but just accost people with judgment and cursing, must not have much faith of their own, and so they also try to rob others of the spark of faith that is in them." Thus grace thieves think that these are the people whom the Holy Spirit rebukes for the sin of not believing in Jesus and that this must be why they whine in church. But just wait, grace thief. Even if you now have a strong faith, who knows how strong your faith will be if it comes under trial? If a grace thief's conscience were to awaken, he

would be deprived of the dead faith now in his skull, and he would have the same experience as Peter, who was a similar hero of faith before his faith came under trial but in time of temptation had nothing.

The Holy Spirit now rebukes the world, and particularly grace thieves, for sin, because they do not believe in Jesus, even though they think they believe, but they are sucking their own breasts when they think they are sucking the breasts of Jesus. They lie at the foot of the devil's cross when they think they are at the foot of Jesus' cross. The devil has cast a spell on their eyes, turning things around, so that they view the effects of the Holy Spirit as the effects of an unclean spirit, and Christians turn into fanatics in the eyes of the devil's servants. The Jews also had a strong faith in God, but, in spite of this, they hated and persecuted the Christians. Thus even today there is still a spiritual hatred in the heart of the grace thief. The grace thief hates Christians particularly because the Holy Spirit, by the mouths of Christians, rebukes grace thieves for sin. By the mouths of Christians, the Holy Spirit rebukes them for drunkenness, cursing, greediness, arrogance, hate, whoredom and ostentation, all of which come from unbelief, but impenitent souls and grace thieves are now angered by this reproof of the Holy Spirit and say, "You are being arrogant. You are a fanatic because you do not give people peace of conscience." However, as the saying goes, the crow calls out his own name. He himself is being arrogant and thinks others are arrogant. The grace thief himself is angry and thinks others are angry. The grace thief is a fanatic and thinks others are fanatics.

Second consideration: The Holy Spirit rebukes the world for righteousness because God's righteousness is now revealed by the death of Jesus. By not sparing his only begotten Son but letting him suffer the punishment of sin that we would have had to suffer, God revealed his strict righteousness. However, the impenitent and grace thieves do not care about God's justice but speak only of grace and think there is no wrath at all, but only love, in the Parent's heart. But the fact that in the Parent's heart there is a dreadful hate for sin was revealed by the Heavenly Parent himself when he sweat blood in the garden and even shed his blood to the last drop. How else could God's strict justice have been satisfied? When the Parent, because of sin, is angry with disobedient and hardened children, who scorn his tears and say, "Go ahead, I dare you to hit me!" but does not consequently have the heart to drive such accursed whores, thieves and murderers out of his house, grace thieves say, "There is no wrath in the Parent's heart after all. He would have surely cast us into hell long ago if he were angry with us, but he is not at all angry with us, though we are whores and thieves." Oh, really? Is the Parent not angry after all? But if he were not angry with you, he himself would not have had to suffer the pain and agony of hell for you. But he was so dreadfully angry with ungodly and hardened children that if love had not intervened, he would have just let them go by themselves to hell. If there had been no wrath in the Parent's heart, but only love, he could have easily forgiven them their iniquity, but because of wrath, that is, his strict justice, he himself had to go to hell, where the ungodly and hardened children had cast him. And now, on top of all this, go ahead and laugh when you have cast your Parent into hell.

When the children do mischief in another house, the Parent has to pay for the damage. However, the Holy Spirit now rebukes the world for this righteousness. Although the damage has been paid and God's strict justice has been satisfied by the death of the Saviour, the impenitent and hardened still do not care about it but even laugh on his grave and say, "Let the Parent now come to whip us if he is angry with us." The murderers piss and shit on his grave and say, "Rise up now and eat if you are hungry." I think the devil himself would have to rebuke such persons if the Holy Spirit did not do so. But what do hardened spirits such as these care about reproof? They only grow harder and say, as did the chief priests to Judas, "What is that to us? See thou to that" [Matthew 27:4].

Third consideration: The Holy Spirit rebukes the world for judgment because the prince of this world is judged. That is, by the suffering and death of the Saviour, the prince of the world is now condemned, even though he is such a great lord that he does not accept the judgment of God. He has such a great ego and spiritual arrogance that he cannot confess himself guilty. He will not acknowledge any iniquity in himself but keeps asserting that he is the same angel of light as in the beginning. And since he does not admit any sin, he thinks God is being arrogant, who would cast such a virtuous and just person into hell. Despite this, he is now condemned, and because of this judgment he is dreadfully angry with the Heavenly Parent, not only because the Heavenly Parent has driven him out of his house but also because the Parent does not cast penitent souls out of his house, even though they are whores and thieves. Thus the devil, the accuser of the children of God night and day, accuses God of being unfair, saying, "I am the eldest child and have not done any wrong against you, though you have cried out to the world that I am a murderer and the father of lies, but you have cast me out of your house and ordered me into hell while this prodigal son, who has squandered all on harlots and returns, looking like a shabby devil, is received with joy by you. This is not right!" God then answers the devil: "I myself have descended into hell; I have suffered the agony and pain of hell on behalf of this prodigal son. I have thus, at a great and heavy price, redeemed him from the power of the devil. What do you yet require of me? You are undoubtedly an honest and honorable person, though you are a great scoundrel. You will surely now be satisfied with the price that you have received." However, the devil is still not satisfied but demands that all the children are to be driven out of the Parent's house, though the Parent has paid the devil the full price of their redemption. And because of this redemption, the devil no longer has any power over these children of God, who now no longer deliberately turn themselves over to the devil. But the children of the world do not want to return from the kingdom of the devil, though the Heavenly Parent has paid, on their behalf, the full price for the redemption of their souls. They are so estranged from the Parent's house that they consider as their true father that robber who, when they were young, took them from the true Parent's house. They have so forgotten the Parent's goodness and love that they no longer know him. If the Parent now comes with a rod and tries to take them home from the enemy's house, they become angry with the Parent and say, "You are not our true father because you have come to whip us. See, this is a better father, who never whips us." Thus the children of the world, when they see someone suffering pangs of conscience, say, "God does not torture his children in this way. It is the devil who causes such pain." Although the Bible says in many places, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" [Hebrews 12:6], the children of the world do not believe that God chastens in such a way, saying it is the devil who does such things.

Now the Holy Spirit rebukes the world because people do not want to return to the Heavenly Parent, even though he has redeemed them by his precious blood and has given them birth through great travail and the shedding of his blood. They want to keep living in the devil's house, though the prince of the world has been condemned, so that he would not have any power over a single soul if they would all begin, by true penitence and repentance, to return to the Parent's house. But the children of the world have become so accustomed to serving the devil that they do not want to return to the Parent, whom they have forgotten long ago. Only the rare souls who accept chastisement, when the Holy Spirit rebukes them by pangs of conscience, come, as poor, naked and shabby devils, into the Parent's house, just as the prodigal son, who had squandered his father's property and all he owned on harlots, had to finally come to his father, saying, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you and am no longer worthy to be called your son. Just let me be one of your worst servants" [Luke 15:18-19]. Observe now, you rare souls who have felt the Father's chastisement when the Holy Spirit reproved you of sin and of righteousness and of

judgment. Observe how the prodigal son is received with joy by the Parent when he comes humbly and penitently to the Father's house. Pray, you rare souls who have returned in this condition to the Father's house, that he would protect you from the devil's temptations, so that the devil would not, by his guile, convince you to go a second time to the enemy's house. Remain at home now, children. Remain at home now, prodigal son, and do not depart a second time from the Father's house, so that the Parent would not suffer even greater grief over you. Amen.

APPENDIX 3

A Sermon of L. L. Laestadius Given on the Fourth Sunday after Trinity in 1851¹¹⁹

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:18)

Here, first of all, those who believe on the name of the only begotten Son of God hear that they are not condemned, but unbelievers also hear from these words of the Saviour written in the Gospel of John, chapter 3, verse 18, that they are already condemned, although they do not want to accept this judgment of the Saviour, for thieves of grace think they believe, even though they cannot say when they received true, living and saving faith. From this it is readily concluded that they do not have true, living and saving faith but only an assumption that they have received from the devil, a dead faith that they themselves have fabricated, and therefore they fear judgment, even though they were condemned long ago. They become angry with those who declare this stern judgment to them. Just as the Jews became angry with John the Baptist and the Saviour because of the criticism that they declared to unbelievers, thieves of grace still become angry today with the Christians who declare judgment to them, but they do not become angry with those who declare grace to impenitent pagans. The Jews also believed that God was their father when they said to the Saviour, "We have one father, even God," but the Saviour said, "You are of your father, the devil" [John 8:41, 44]. The Jews of today also believe that God is their father, although they are of their father, the devil. The impenitent do not believe their father is the devil, but they believe that God is their father. And where have they received this belief that God is their father? The same father that gave this belief to the Jews has undoubtedly given impenitent souls the belief that God is their father. The same father, the devil, has given them this false assumption, just as he gave to the Jews the belief that God is their father, although they were of their father, the devil.

Now we must consider why all unbelievers become angry with those who declare to them God's severe justice and judgment. The Saviour has said, "He that believeth not is condemned already," but unbelievers do not believe they are already condemned. If someone tells them that they, in their state of unbelief, are condemned, they become angry and say, "You are being arrogant. You judge us, although we are redeemed by the same precious blood." You are indeed redeemed by the same precious blood, but this precious blood has flowed in vain for you because you trample his blood under your feet and mock the tears of the Heavenly Parent with your ungodly lives. The blood of the Heavenly Parent has, therefore, flowed in vain for you. His tears have flowed in vain over you, Jerusalem, for you hate the Christians and shed the blood of those who come to counsel you so that you too would recognize the time of your visitation and would consider the things that belong unto your peace before the door of grace is closed [Luke 19:42]. Behold! This judgment is now spoken to those persecutors of the prophets and Christians who say, "God is our father" and yet kill his Son. They say, "The door of grace is open for us" and yet they hate the Christians. They beat and kill the disciples of Jesus and think they thereby do God service, but yet they say, "Surely God is gracious. He will not cast us into hell." Such persons tell their neighbors in anger and rancor, "Go

¹¹⁹ Translated from *Kirkko-Postilla*, pp. 321-326.

to hell!" although the Saviour has forbidden such terrible judgment, saying, "Judge not, that ye be not judged" [Matthew 7:1]. But when the Christians urge and counsel the impenitent to become penitent and to repent, trying thus to tell those in bondage to the world, "Do not go to hell," the slaves of the world become angry and say that the Christians are judging them. Who is now judging? He who says, "Go to hell!" or the one who says, "Do not go to hell"? When the Christians tell a slave of the world who is going to hell, "Do not go to hell," the slave of the world thinks the Christian is ordering him to go to hell. And again, when a slave of the world says, "Go to hell!" other impenitent persons think he is not judging them. If one impenitent person tells another, "Go to hell!" the other one does not become very angry, but if a Christian tells an impenitent person, "Do not go to hell," the impenitent person becomes angry and asks, "Are you judging me? Are you God?" He becomes angry because a Christian wants to warn him not to go headlong into hell. This angers him dreadfully, that he is not allowed to go to hell in peace. An impenitent person is so drunken with the wine of whoredom that he lies down and sleeps at the foot of a fiery waterfall, and if some kind person wakes him, he becomes angry with him and says, "Won't you let me sleep in peace! You are a real enemy, who won't let people sleep in peace." And yet afterward he will rail against the Christians, saying, "Why did you let me sleep in peace and go to hell? Why didn't you cry out to me so that I would have awakened from the sleep of sin?"

Since now, according to the words of the Saviour, all are condemned who do not believe on him, those rare souls who believe and even those who feel that they are such fools and so slow to believe should pray to that great Hero of Faith, who is the author and finisher of faith, that he would help their unbelief and lend them his grace to believe, first, that all unbelievers are condemned, and, second, that all believers are redeemed from condemnation by that great redemption that has occurred in Jesus Christ. Hear, thou great Bearer of the Cross and Hero of Faith, the prayer of doubting and weak believers! Our Father which art in heaven, etc.

Gospel text: Luke 6:37-42

Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven. Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again. And he spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch? The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.

Since all impenitent souls and grace thieves think they receive defense for themselves from today's Gospel and turn all these words against awakened souls, we will, by the grace of God, examine at this time to whom these words of the Saviour are directed: *First consideration*: Has the Saviour forbidden his disciples to judge? *Second consideration*: Has the Saviour forbidden pagans to judge? May the Supreme Judge grant his grace that all false judges would be cast out of the court and that all true judges would be exalted before the great Supreme Judge.

1. Has the Saviour forbidden his disciples to judge? He has indeed. He has forbidden them to judge in the manner that pagans judge Christians. For the pagans indeed wish that all Christians would go to hell. They even dare say when angered, "Go to hell!" and "Go to the devil!" And when pagans are especially well inclined toward their neighbor, they say, "The devil take and roast you!" The pagans have always condemned Christians to death and banishment. They have condemned Christians to be burned, to be beaten with rods, to be torn by beasts, and to be cast into the bottom of the sea, and when the pagans have condemned Christians to be killed, they think they do God service [John 16:2]. Now the Saviour forbids his disciples to condemn in the manner of pagans, that is, to threaten in anger and from a bad heart to do evil to others or to declare a false judgment. For when pagans condemn Christians as false prophets and fanatics, they pronounce a false judgment, saying, "He has blasphemed God!" Who has seen more faults in the life of a Christian than have the pagans? Who has hated and persecuted Christians more than have the pagans? And who sees more motes in the eyes of Christians than do the pagans? In the eyes of pagans, Christians are false prophets, fanatics and an accursed group that will not grant peace of conscience to respectable people. But the devil has cast such a spell on the eyes of pagans that they think Christians are condemning when they are warning them about judgment. For when a Christian tells a pagan, "Do not go to hell." the pagan's ears hear only the last words: "Go to hell." The pagan does not hear the first words, which forbid going there. And since the devil has driven a nail into the pagan's ear, the Christian's warning sounds as though he had ordered the pagan to go to hell, although he has forbidden it, saying, "Do not go to hell."

Not a single Christian has yet condemned pagans in anger and rancor, but pagans have always condemned Christians. The Jews were so angry against Stephen that they gnashed their teeth and blocked their ears [Acts 7:57]. And yet today, some pagans get so dreadfully angry against Christians that they tremble and their faces get as dark as those of gypsies, and the eyes of some resemble a goat's eyes when someone starts to speak about Christianity. But these wretches do not realize that the devil is driving them as though they were draft oxen. And just when they are in the process of making sausages out of the blood of Christians, they tell the Christians, "Judge not!" although the Christians are only warning the impenitent about death, judgment and eternity, saying, "Do not go to hell." Nevertheless, these blind wretches think the Christians are condemning them.

Although the disciples of Jesus now have the right to judge, in accordance with the words of the Saviour: "Ye shall sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" [Luke 22:30], they do not condemn anyone to hell, as do pagans, who say in anger and from an evil heart, "Go to hell!" And even if, according to Paul's words also, "he that is spiritual judgeth all things" [I Corinthians 2:15], Christians have the right to judge, they do not condemn anyone to hell, but instead they warn and urge impenitent souls not to go to hell. Nevertheless, an impenitent wretch thinks the Christians are ordering him to go to hell. Pagans do condemn thus, for they wish indeed that all Christians would go to hell, but the Christians have not yet wished that anyone go to hell, but they have always cried out to pagans the severe justice and judgment of God that awaits them if they do not become penitent and repent in the time of grace. They have cried out in the manner of John the Baptist: "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come" [Matthew 3:7]? And they have cried out even more sternly, as did Paul, who said to an enemy of Christianity, "O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord" [Acts 13:10]? Behold! This is how a Christian judges pagans, but did Paul order that pagan to go to hell, or did Paul wish that he go to hell, even if he rebuked him so sternly? By no means. But when pagans have a chance to judge Christians, they first lie about them that they are false prophets and fanatics. Then they start hating and persecuting

Christians with fists, sticks, clubs and staves, and if such a method proves inadequate to destroy the Christians, they complain to the governor, Pontius Pilate, and hale them to court in order to suck their blood in this way. Pagans, you see, have the nature of a bloodhound, for when a bloodhound gets to lap up blood he calms down. And when pagans get to lap up the blood of Christians, their conscience ceases barking, just as that royal whore in Herod's palace who could get no peace of conscience until John's head was carried to her in a charger.

If pagans had the power to do so, they would shove the Christians into hell. They would indeed gladly do so, but, God be thanked, they have no power over the soul, and so they endeavor to torture the bodies of Christians in order to thus acquire peace of conscience. Now the Saviour has forbidden his disciples to judge as do the pagans, who condemn Christians to death, fines and banishment, but the judgment of the disciples is a spiritual judgment when they judge the 12 tribes of Israel. They judge, as Paul says, spiritual matters spiritually, and their judgment is true. It is not a false judgment, as is the judgment of the pagans, which has always been a false judgment. Just as the Jews and Pilate pronounced a false judgment against the Saviour, the pagans have always judged Christians falsely. Since the devil has cast a spell on their eyes, they also view all things backwards. They pervert justice. They view the duties of Christians, such as confession of sin, reconciliation with one's neighbor, evaluating spiritual books, and talking about Christianity, as faults in their lives. All these things are an abominable sin in the opinion of pagans. Also, when liquor is called the devil's shit, which is, in the opinion of pagans, the greatest blessing on earth, or if someone pours the devil's shit onto the ground it is, in the opinion of pagans, an abominable sin. Thus the optometrist of this world has prepared eyeglasses for the slaves of the world that make them see a mote, even dust, in the Christian's eyes, but as for the mote in their own eye, the pagans do not see it.

2. Has the Saviour said, "Judge not" to pagans? In today's Gospel text the Saviour has not said anything about judgment to pagans. This at least is the opinion of the pagans, that the Saviour has not forbidden them, but only the Christians, to judge. Thus pagans have the right to judge Christians, but Christians do not have the right to judge pagans. Pagans are undoubtedly satisfied when they hear that they have the right to judge Christians. Thus Pilate had authority to judge Jesus, but Jesus had no authority to judge Pilate. Undoubtedly, pagans are now satisfied with this. The Saviour also told that pagan Pilate, "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above" [John 19:11]. Have other pagans been given power from above to judge Christians to hell? Pagans indeed think they have been given power from above to judge Christians. But have Christians been given power to judge pagans? The pagans answer, "No!" So the pagans are undoubtedly satisfied now that they can judge Christians. And now Christians have to be silent when pagans condemn them, for the Saviour has told Christians, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." But he has not said, "Judge not" to pagans but has given them permission to judge, and this power the pagans have received from above. So now judge the Christians since you have power. What kind of judgment will you now render us? Your judgment will now surely be that all Christians are to go to hell, but the Christians will not go to hell in accordance with the judgment of the pagans. However, if the Christians judge the pagans to hell, they will have to go to hell if the devil does not protect them from pangs of conscience. And even if the god of this world is strong enough to protect some pagans from pangs of conscience, he has not been able to protect them all. This we now see and know firmly, that the god of the world has not been able to protect everyone from pangs of conscience.

Now the pagans can judge the Christians, but if you do not want to judge alone, ask the Jews to do so, for that pagan Pilate told the Jews, "Take ye him, and judge him according to your law"

[John 18:31]. And surely the Jews gladly judge the Christians, but their law is a domestic law that is no longer of any avail as a guideline in spiritual matters. Therefore, Pilate will have to render judgment against the Christians after all. Soon he will have to render a judgment against his conscience because the Jews pressure him. As for the Jews, they have the kind of law in their spleen that prevents them from feeling the law of the conscience at all. And so the life of that righteous man must be delivered to the law of the pagans. Christ first, and then his disciples, have to go to death for their faith. And this is how the pagans have received power from above to judge Christians. And since they cannot condemn the souls of Christians to hell, they have to condemn the bodies of Christians to death, fines or banishment.

Behold! This is how Jews, pagans and papists have condemned Christians. And they all thought they were doing God service when they killed the disciples of Jesus. All persecutors of Christians have believed they have permission from above to condemn Christians. And the Christians have had to accept this condemnation. But who gave pagans the power to condemn Christians to death, to pay fines or to sit in prison with bread and water? Has God given pagans the right to judge Christians in this way? I think the god of the world has given them such a right. Pilate was given power from above to render a just judgment, but the devil gave him the power to falsely condemn an innocent man against his conscience. And the same god of the world has given Jews, pagans and papists the power to kill Christians. But Christians have been given power from above to judge spiritually, and God confirms their judgment, and then the wrath of all the pagans has to fall on them. And just as the Jews cried out, "His blood be on us, and on our children" [Matthew 27:25], thus the blood of Christ has also started to dreadfully burn their consciences, and thus also the blood of the Christians has begun to burn upon all Jews, pagans and papists, and the enemies of Christianity will always feel this dreadful burning. For God has wreaked dreadful vengeance on Jews, pagans and papists for shedding the blood of Christians and will continue to do so. But the Christians will shine as the sun when that great day of the Lord dawns, and then all persecutors of Christians will see whom they have pierced! Amen.

APPENDIX 4

A Sermon of L. L. Laestadius Given on the Sixth Sunday after Trinity in 1859¹²⁰

Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:20)

These words of the Saviour are found in the Gospel text for today. They are harsh and quite strange and are spoken to the disciples of Jesus, and so they belong to Christians. And I think that Christians should feel the effect of these words, but since Christians feel so much iniquity in themselves, they have to claim the righteousness of Christ as their own and believe that their iniquity is reckoned as righteousness because Christ has paid for their iniquity. And since Christians do not have self-righteousness but only Christ's righteousness, which they must claim as their own, that is, we should say, since Christians feel that their own righteousness is nothing other than an absence of righteousness, how can their righteousness be much greater than that of the scribes and Pharisees? For from these words of the Saviour we hear that the disciples' own righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees.

The papists say that love is to be the foundation of living faith and that a Christian must, on his own part, be holy and righteous. Thus, if a Christian lacks love, the papists say he does not have living faith: "If a Christian feels wickedness in his heart, he does not have saving faith, and if impatience is felt in a Christian's heart, the devils have not been driven out of it and he is still under the power of the devil." Thus say the papists. "If evil lusts and desires are felt in a Christian's will, such as fleshly lusts, greedy inclinations and other such impulses, then holy impulses and desires are not in the will and such a person has not yet been sanctified or made holy by grace." Thus say the papists. "If bad thoughts are in a Christian's mind, good and godly thoughts are not in the mind of such a person and he is not yet truly righteous and sinless, as a Christian should be." Thus say the papists, and thus say the confessors of dead faith, who confess the faith of Luther with the mouth and act as though they were convinced that they have the true faith of Luther. They say thus: "A Christian should have holy desires and impulses, and he must become like an angel before he can enter the kingdom of heaven. What will now become of the Christians? Will they get into the kingdom of heaven with the righteousness they now have, namely, the righteousness of Christ claimed by faith, as Luther has taught? The intellect says thus: "Christ's righteousness is not yours, but you must have so much of your own righteousness that God cannot condemn you. You must become righteous and holy on your own part and not by the righteousness of another, namely, that of Christ, which is not yours. You must come to Judgment with your own righteousness. You must become holy and righteous in your own right before you can be acceptable to God." And this is what the papists and confessors of dead faith in Luther's kingdom also demand.

These grace thieves say thus: "A person should become like an angel before he can get into the kingdom of heaven." And they find support for this doctrine in the Gospel text for today, in which Jesus tells his disciples, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." They say, "Do you hear this now, you false prophets and fanatics, who are always boasting of the righteousness of Christ while

¹²⁰ Translated from *Kirkko-Postilla*, pp. 337-341.

you yourselves are as ugly and black as the devil himself? Do you now hear what Christ says here?" Thus say the Pharisees, who have so much of their own righteousness that they can say, "I thank thee, God, that I am not as this publican" [Luke 18:11] or as the pharisees of our day say, "I have done more good than bad. I have not done wrong to anyone, but I have done right to every man, and my conscience does not convict me of sin."

Such persons can say to the Christians, "You are as ugly and black as gypsies, though you say you are made pure by the blood of Christ." And the Christians cannot escape that accusation, but they must confess that they are whores and thieves and guilty of all sins, but they trust on the fact that Christ has paid it all. They own the righteousness of Christ and believe that it is acceptable before God the Father. They clothe themselves in the bloody garment of Christ when they approach God. They follow the bloody footsteps of Jesus from the garden to the hill of Golgotha. They stand with sorrowing and broken hearts at the foot of the cross and view the wounds of the crucified and thorn-crowned Saviour. They gather into one room, and there they weep and wail because Jesus is dead. And if the world's priests see it, that Jesus's sorrowing disciples weep and wail, they say, "What a howling this is!" The disciples go a second time to Golgotha and weep at the grave of Jesus. Here now is the righteousness of the sorrowing disciples. And when Jesus revives, they find joy. Here is their righteousness. And when they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, they begin to criticize and judge the world. Here is their righteousness. What do you think, sorrowing disciples? Do you dare approach God with this righteousness? Do you, penitent sinners, dare to come before God's throne of grace when you in your inner being are as black as gypsies and as ugly as the devil himself? I think that you are unlikely to find refuge anywhere else, but you will have to come in the righteousness that Jesus has merited for you, crying out and groaning: Our Father, etc.

Gospel text: Matthew 5:20

In today's Gospel text our Saviour has uttered words that will make the disciples and Christians in general ashamed if their righteousness is not greater than that of the scribes and Pharisees. For the edification of sorrowing and doubting souls, we will now explain these words of the Saviour as we understand them. And how should we properly understand these words of Jesus: "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven"? *First consideration*: What is the nature of the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees? *Second consideration*: What is the nature of the righteousness of the disciples?

First consideration: The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees is resplendent before the world. It consists primarily of outward virtue, ostentation, elegance and outward humility, but not of change of heart or true repentance and confession of sins even if, in other respects, they are separated from people by outward virtue. They are not like crude impenitent people, who have no honor to move them to cover their evil deeds before the eyes of the world. Nor are the scribes and Pharisees like the bigwigs of our time, who drink and play cards even while church services are being conducted. True Pharisees are instead quite godly. They attend church to pray, and their prayers are more elegant than the groans of the publican. They build the sepulchres of the prophets [Luke 11:47], help the poor, show respect to one another, bow and apologize if their homes are not in order when guests arrive. But if the disciples of Jesus rub a few ears of corn with their hands on the Sabbath, the Pharisees rebuke them for violating the Sabbath [Luke 6:1]. They have a sharp eye for seeing the faults of Christians. And when living Christianity appears somewhere, the Pharisees

say, "This is nothing but fanaticism," and then they begin to persecute the Christians. And although they want to do what is right to all in other respects, they teach children to say, "Corban," that is, the share of the parents is given to God, so that under the shadow of law or godliness the church would receive income.

The Saviour also criticizes them for swallowing a camel and straining at a gnat and for devouring widows' houses, and he asks them to cast the first stone at the whore if they are free of her. Such is the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. It is quite resplendent before the world, and, therefore, they can say, "I have done more good than bad. I have done what is right to all men, and I thank thee, God, that I am not like other people, unjust, a thief, an adulterer, or as this publican" [Luke 18:11]. And when the Pharisees or scribes expound the Bible, they say in their explanation of the fifth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever killeth shall be in danger of the judgment," but as for hate or killing in the heart, the scribes say nothing. Or if someone says to his neighbor in hate and anger, "Raca," that is, vain fellow, the scribes say nothing [Matthew 5:21-22].

In a word, when it is a question of gross outward sins, the scribes and Pharisees judge them, but they know nothing about the wickedness of the heart, nor do they know the heart at all, for it is hidden from them. Neither does Nicodemus know the wickedness of the heart. Therefore, he does not view change of heart and new birth as necessary. The doctrine of justification of the scribes is directly opposed to the Word of God and the order of grace because they try to explain how people should live outwardly but will not delve into internal corruption or the wickedness of the heart. And as for themselves, some sins are permissible, as, for example, cursing, ostentation, worldly-mindedness, hate and the old Adam. In a word, the virtuous life of the scribes and Pharisees is not stretched to impossibilities, and their doctrine is totally reversed because in their explanation of the commandments they omit the weightier matters of the law, such as righteousness and judgment [Matthew 23:23].

Second consideration: What should the righteousness of the disciples be like so as to be much greater than that of the scribes and Pharisees? The first aspect of this righteousness is simply part of the explanation of the fifth commandment, by which the disciples come to know man's inner corruption and wickedness of heart and by which even small sins become sins. The scribes and Pharisees leave this aspect unexplained. The Pharisees do not believe that even a small sin deserves hell. The Saviour shows that criticizing one's neighbor in hate and anger deserves as great a punishment and judgment as outright murder.

This is the first aspect of the righteousness of the disciples, namely, that they should understand and explain the law of God in such a way that even a minor sin becomes as grievous and heavy as a major sin. Hate of the heart is as great a sin before God as actual murder. Even if the disciples cannot avoid this inner corruption, the righteousness of the law should so oppress them that sin would be recognized as sin, so that no sin would become permissible and be committed under the shadow of legitimacy. This is the weightiest part of the law, which the scribes and Pharisees have omitted, and some disciples have not yet grasped the importance of this matter. Some do not understand that a minor sin brings condemnation. For example, not all disciples yet understand that when a little ostentation becomes permissible, it brings condemnation, not only because of the bad example but also because of the legitimacy under which this minor sin is committed. When sin loses its power, the conscience has also lost its power, and a sin that does not affect the conscience brings condemnation because a person feels no remorse over a sin that he neither recognizes nor feels as sin.

The righteousness of the disciples is also marked by reconciliation with a brother with whom one has been at variance. This is another weighty aspect of the law, which the scribes and Pharisees fail to explain and do. If the house is not in order when guests arrive, they say, "Forgive me. This house is not in order." But if, in hate and anger, they say to a neighbor, "Raca," they do not view this as a sin, nor do they ask for forgiveness. Even if they box someone on the ear, they do not consider it a sin, nor do they ask for forgiveness. This reconciliation of a brother at variance has, to some extent, become a matter of conscience for awakened souls and Christians, but this weighty aspect of the law has not yet become so great a matter of conscience that it doesn't have to become even weightier.

These are the weightier matters of the law, which the scribes and Pharisees fail to explain and do. But the righteousness of the disciples must be much greater than that of the scribes and Pharisees if they want to enter the kingdom of heaven. First, they must understand and explain the law of God in such a way that even small sins become sin and bring condemnation. Then there is also reconciliation with one's neighbor. As for other aspects of the righteousness of the disciples, they are included among the matters of which our Saviour has spoken in the Holy Gospel. That is, when God's commandments are properly understood and explained, the disciples become great sinners. All their own righteousness and own goodness are excluded. All thoughts, lusts and desires that have not been effected by God's Spirit become sin, by which they come to a true consciousness of sin. They become remorseful and have to beg for grace.

The righteousness of the disciples, which greatly surpasses the righteousness and holiness owned by the scribes and Pharisees, consists of the fact that their own righteousness must end so completely that they come to know with a living conscience that they will sink into hell and end up under eternal condemnation unless Christ gives them his righteousness and makes them so righteous that God can no longer condemn them. How do things stand now, disciples of Jesus? Does your righteousness exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees? Have you now stripped yourselves of the rags of self-righteousness and put on Christ's righteousness, by which you can boast on Judgment Day and say, "Our righteousness is much greater than the self-righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, for we have the righteousness of Christ." Can you now say, "Christ's righteousness is ours"? Can you now boast of Christ's righteousness when the devil of self-righteousness, who is the accuser of the children of God, comes to accuse you of being whores and thieves? Can you boast of your righteousness and say, "We have a greater and more noble righteousness than that of the scribes and Pharisees. We have the righteousness of Christ, which is our own righteousness, which the Father views as true righteousness, because of which the Father cannot condemn us"? I believe that justified souls can boast of their righteousness and say to the accuser, "We are justified by the righteousness of Christ." Amen.

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