

WILL THE FEDERATION CONTINUE?

A look at the Federation- What it is, Where it came from, its future

(Finnish Church History)

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of the requirements for Senior Church History

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FOREWORD

A note of thanks is in order to Pastor Elmer Yliniemi of Frazee, Minnesota, for his giving of time, energy and materials. Without the information he has generously shared this paper would never have been possible. Many of the resources were found only in Finnish, and most who had an understanding of them or had English material were not willing to share it with someone outside their group. Pastor Yliniemi's own research paved the way for this topic and provided an ample amount of objective material to work with.

I would also like to thank Mrs. Koskiniemi, my mother-in-law, for helping me to translate the Small Catechism from the Finnish, as well as various portions of material from other Finnish sources.

There are many church bodies that are brought to our attention by the media today, most often Catholic, Anglican or such. Lutheran bodies receive some press, especially the impending merger of the LCA, ALC, and AELC churches. But there are some Lutheran bodies about which we know precious little. One of these is the Apostolic Lutheran Church of America. It is listed in the 1984 statistical report of the WELS, but besides this, we haven't got much information on them. Since they developed apart from the bodies that constituted the General Synod, General Council, or Synodical Conference, we have no point of contact with them in direct historical line.

Being in a situation which has brought me into contact with a few of this church's pastors and members, I have developed a personal interest in understanding more about them. It is to satisfy my interest and hopefully, to enlarge our pool of knowledge in this area of church history that I write on this group of Christians. I will have to trace the development in the homeland somewhat as we go along because the home church and the endeavors here continued to influence and affect one another for quite some time after the Finns came to America.

I.

When speaking of the history of Christianity in Finland we must make some adjustments, for it is a rather young nation. It was not until about 800 A.D. that the Finnish people migrated to the land they call home. Christianity did not become soundly established until around 1150, when Sweden's crusading spirit and aggressive eastern policies caused them to conquer Finland. Under Swedish rule the Finns became Christian and began to develop some of their land for farming, while most of the area was still forested in the south. They also began to form their own local self-governments, and began to form as a culture in the following years.

A good many changes took place in Finland during the mid-1500's. Gustavus Vasa, the first king of Sweden-Finland introduced some political-social reforms. During

this same period the Reformation was guided in Finland by Mikael Agricola. It was at this time that the written Finnish language was developed, as a tool to change the people from Catholics to Lutherans through education. Agricola published a Finnish primer in 1542, then a Catechism in 1543, a prayer book the next year, and finally a translation of the New Testament in 1548. "Thus he succeeded in creating a unified Finnish language, understood in all the various dialect areas. Agricola's motives were primarily religious, but possibly colored in part with an awareness of a unified Finnish nation. Among the people themselves, any national spirit there may have been was still dormant."¹

One possible reason for a lack of national spirit was the lack of their own central government. During the bulk of Swedish rule the Finns received no promotion of national language or culture. They were taxed heavily, and not represented fairly. Their lot did not improve. With the reign of Gustavus II Adolphus(1611-1632), Sweden became a major power and began to overtake weaker neighbors. Finland became important as an outpost to stabilize the eastern frontiers and act as a buffer zone in case of attack. At this time more than 16,000 Finnish men were summoned to serve in the Swedish Army.

The nation's economy was strengthened at this time, but not all profited from it. There was a strong class division in the land: the nobles; the burgesses, who were increasing in status by this time; and the poor farmers. This third class had a real struggle to even retain land and not end up as mere tenants.

Three years of famine(1694-97) and a war during which all Finland was occupied by Russians put an end to Sweden-Finland as a major power. Settlement gave Finland back to Sweden, but Russian territory was larger and stronger, standing as a constant threat now. From this time on to 1804, Finland grew in size to about 900,000 people, and vacillated between pro-Swedish and pro-Russian sentiment as their homeland faced

¹"History of the Finns in Minnesota", Hans R. Wasastjerna.

a growing Russia and the threat of invasion. Napoleon threatened Sweden from the South, joining Czar Alexander I in league against England. When Sweden failed to comply with their demands, Russia attacked Finland and in 1809 peace negotiations, Sweden gave Finland over to the enemy. This was not as bad as it could seem. The Czar ruled as Grand Duke with officials under him having Finnish citizenship. The citizens were granted personal freedom, the protection of the law, and a limited freedom of speech-press. Finland had the beginning of an autonomous status, and for the first time all the taxes collected in Finland were applied to Finland itself. So for a time Finland lived under Russian domination, not given voice but tolerably treated.

For the balance of Finnish history that pertains to the topic at hand we note several points that influence the path of religion there and followed over to America. From 1809 to 1848 several men who are included among the great men of Finland- Runeberg, a poet and newspaperman; Lönnrot, a writer and poet; and Snellman, a philosopher- came to the foreground and sparked a strong national interest. Finnish language and arts were nurtured. Widespread reading of novels and philosophy turned the people from idealist into realists who dealt with the concrete problems in life. From 1848 on, they were strongly influenced by socialist thought, which was anti-Christian and practical in earthly terms, and by Hegelian philosophy. Both of these affected Finland as a nation socially and religiously as well.

The physical condition of the country was uneven; there were years of adequacy and a few famine years, but there was never a real, thriving period of plenty. Many Finns by this time had moved up to the Arctic circle region known as Lapland as the nation's population had increased. There they worked hard in the harsh climate with but little reward. Many turned to fishing for a livelihood, not by choice but because they had no other means of survival. The people became tough as the conditions under which they lived. This toughening affected both their attitudes and practices.

Toughening might be a good description of how the church's relationship with it's people changed over the years as well. When Sweden as a nation switched from

Catholicism to Lutheranism, Finland became Lutheran also. But because of the lack of a written language and widespread education, for most people it meant no more than a change of title. Lutheranism as a state religion was highly ineffective regarding the preaching of the gospel, it's clergy oftentimes being more avid officials than pastors. It showed in the lifestyle of the people, who took advantage of each other according to social class and in general led what could be considered a secular life. Some within the church yearned for more than just a scholarly discussion of doctrinal intricacies from the pulpit. The yearning of some of the members to have a more sanctified life was combined with Moravian influence to bring about a pietistic revival in the 1750's. This revival was most felt in Southwestern Finland, stressing prayer, godly living, abstinence from liquor in general. This revival's influence was never widespread, and for the most part the areas they did influence slowly reverted to old ways.

A remnant from this revival did remain, one division being called "Prayers", due to their stress on prayer and the importance of the kneeling position. They faded somewhat but made a comeback in 1840. The other division of this remnant was known as the "Readers", marked as a group as placing great value on the reading of Luther's writings, along with other subjective and pietistic tendencies.

The pietistic revival breathed new life into many members of the state church in the South, although that breath was gradually lost. But the revival had not even touched the northern-most regions of Sweden-Finland, known as Lapland. It was into this setting that the founder of the Laestadian movement, Lars Levi Laestadius, came in 1800. Lars was born in the village of Jakkvik in the western part of Swedish Lapland. His father's family had long been a ministerial family, although his father managed a silver mine and was now a pioneer farmer. Lars' mother was related to the same family, and had been deeply influenced by that Pietistic-Moravian awakening called Lasare, or Readers. Her beautiful Christian example and humble godliness made a deep impression on her children that influenced Lars when tempted to sin.

Lars and his younger brother left home when he was eight to live with his older step-brother, Carl Erik Laestadius who was rector of the parish in Kvikkjokk. Carl had been a gifted student, but rather than taking up a university career, he chose to become a pastor in Lapland to help his poor relatives.

Lars graduated from the gymnasium at Harnosand and attended the University at Uppsala, where he became intensely interested in botany. He entertained the pursuit of this field to gain prestige, but for economic reasons he also became a minister in the rugged North. Laestadius served his first year as superintendent of elementary schools in Lapland, then he became the rector of the Kaaresuvanto parish, the farthest to the north in Swedish Lapland, near the Finnish border. There were two hundred Finnish settlers and six hundred Lapps in this area, and although they had been baptized, they were not living christian lives. None were believers in more than their name, and they were unconcerned about the spiritual aspect of life. At this point in Laestadius' life the situation in his parish did not shock him or particularly alarm him, as he focused most of his attention on botanical studies and the collecting of flowers.

Laestadius did carry out his ministry, teaching the children, giving Sunday services. He preached against the prevalent sins of the area, which were drunkenness, adultery, theft and smuggling; but it had no effect. Looking back afterwards Lars said he was more of a moralist and not really christian, and was rationalistic in teaching, rather than using Law and Gospel.

In the ten years from 1832 to 1842, Lars Levi Laestadius gradually lost his fondness of worldly things as he suffered a serious illness and in 1839 the death of a son. When in 1842 he became very sick again, and expected death, he felt struck to the marrow as he suddenly became aware of the sins of his life and the dire consequences. He realized he stood a sinner deserving hell. This thought troubled him so that after his health was recovered, he walked around a hill as he thought, so much that he began to form a track.

Laestadius became intensely concerned for the salvation not only of himself, but also for the souls of those to whom he was shepherd. He tried harder to arouse the people and call them to repentance, but he still lacked effectiveness. When he went to Harnosand in 1843 for his pastoral examination, his thesis was entitled Intoxication of the World, calling sternly in it for repentance. He also preached in the city, preaching law strongly against the worldliness of the times, and rebuking the clergy for allowing their members to take part without rebuke.

Before returning to Kaaresuvanto, Laestadius had to inspect the parishes in Lappland. He preached in Asele in January of 1844, and a very special person was among the listeners; a Lapp girl named Maria. She thought the man she heard preach sounded like he was convicted of his sins but had not yet gained the peace that salvation by grace through faith affords. She spoke with Laestadius after the service, telling how she had once felt as he did, then through the help of a pastor (who was a Reader) from southwestern Sweden, she had come to know Christ as her Savior and found the assurance of salvation. As this Reader girl, whom the records simply refer to as Lapp Maria witnessed to Laestadius, he too was led to a saving knowledge of Christ. He "received power from on high, not only to believe in the forgiveness of his own sins, but also to lead lost souls to their Savior."² Laestadius felt very indebted to this girl, for he said it was her testimony which had given him a "foretaste of heaven."

Laestadius returned to Kaaresuvanto a changed man, and his parishoners noticed a difference. It seemed his words calling to repent had power they did not have before. He preached strong law yet, but now he included strong gospel as well, speaking of Christ as the friend of sinners and of atonement in His blood. He had gone from mere head knowledge of doctrines to a living faith, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

² Prophet of Lappland: Lars Levi Laestadius, E. Yliniemi.

This "new believer" saw the situation of himself in the midst of his unbelieving parishoners as being quite similar to John the Baptist's; and he too wanted to be "a voice crying in the wilderness."

Laestadius desired to lead these people to a knowledge of their sin which they could not deny or rationalize away, so that they might be led to their Savior. He knew these people were comfortable in their sins, thinking of themselves as "decent" thieves, "temperate" drunkards, etc. So he began to strip off all their defenses, calling sins by name and painting a glaring picture of the ungodly. He especially sought to pry security out of the hands of the self-righteous and those who claimed salvation by membership in the church. His sermons were severe, but given with concern for the eternal welfare of his listeners in mind. He used parables extensively and many illustrations from the lives of the Lapps and settlers to deeply impress the truths upon them.

First reaction to Laestadius' new preaching was largely negative. Some were frightened or offended, and stayed away for a time, the liquor vendors claiming he would empty the church. But soon the people wanted to hear more, and the church became more filled than ever before.

About a year after Lars' conversion, people began, some people began to complain of a restlessness of heart, and for the first time in his ministry, he had people coming to the parsonage for pastoral counsel. The people came and told Laestadius of their guilt, and he was unsure as to how he should respond. None of his pastoral training had equipped him to deal with this, and he felt wary, not wanting to spoil the work of the Holy Spirit. At first he didn't dare to tell people that their sins were forgiven because of Christ's atoning work. Rather, he pointed them to Bible passages which seemed appropriate and told them to search their hearts and pray that God would be merciful with them; then he prayed that the Holy Spirit would reveal the forgiveness to that person. He explained the way to grace as nearly as he could in his sermons.

Laestadius did not wish the people to see grace as "cheap". For this reason he tended to withhold absolution of sins until he was certain the person was genuinely repentant. He distinguished between "law-repentance"- a mere knowledge of a sinful deed and its consequence of judgement, and "evangelical repentance"- which adds the awareness of unbelief as the source of all sins. He said the former gave civic righteousness, but only the latter caused true contrition and repentance. He gradually came to the conviction that he and all believers should practice confession and absolution with one another (maintaining a cautious view of penitence) and began to absolve sins in the name and blood of Christ. Laestadius followed Luther's teaching on confession in the Small Catechism. At first he exhorted members to confess before the congregation. This was effective against human pride, but caused problems with the unawakened. Therefore, private confession became the rule. Absolution was conditional, given either if or after signs of repentance were seen in the confessor's life.

A note about this phrase, "the name and blood of Christ," is in order here. Laestadius chose not to forgive in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost because he saw this as taking the focus off the central figure in atonement, Christ Jesus. Nor did he choose to use Christ's name alone: it seems he understood that reference to Christ's name implies all that he is and did and does as well, but he did not want what Christ did to escape his members. So he decided to use the phrase "in the name and blood of Christ". This became a distinguishing mark of the movement and is seen confessionally as full and valid absolution, without this "name and blood" formula, absolution's validity is questioned.

In December of 1845 things really began to happen. On December 5th, a woman in the congregation experienced the first immediate or enthusiastic act of the Holy Spirit. She heard the Holy Spirit personally absolve her of her sins, and felt a great burden lift from her. She jumped and shouted for joy, praising God in a loud voice. At the same time, people felt an earthquake, which was taken to be a heavenly sign. Laestadius

also claimed to see a heavenly sign slightly before this time. He was doubting his ability to lead these people and wondering if he was doing God's will. The sign should him he was to be God's instrument. Other experiences followed; in the early years of the revival quite a few were noted, along with congregational reaction to sermons and hymns, etc. in the form of leaping, shouting, crying and loud praises by individuals.

Within a few years Pastor Laestadius desired to become rector in Pajala, further south; and in 1849, after giving trial sermons, received the majority vote although a group strongly opposed his coming. Soon his influence spread. He preached in Pajala and wrote sermons for qualified men to read in the surrounding villages. The sermons had effect, and soon these "lay readers" began to preach themselves. Many were awakened, and the number of lay pastors and followers of Laestadius' teaching steadily increased. So did opposition. People who were offended at his straightforward preaching and general tenor of services and practices made fun of the members' active responses and tried to get the church authorities to stop Laestadius. They investigated, but did not find anything wrong. They did present problems, however, causing him great sorrow.

In the north area known as Lapland, Sweden had so-called mission schools which traveled with the people to give rudimentary education. Laestadius was appointed superintendant of these schools, and began to use this office to further his teaching. In the period from 1848 to 1859, approximately twenty men were appointed by him to teach in these schools. These men had all been converted in the revival and trained by him. They taught the people to read, do math, preached to them and taught them to study the word of God. Many children were led to faith under this system, as well as adults who attended classes in the evening.

Besides this form of mission work, Laestadius was active in one other field; temperance. Before his conversion, he spoke out against drunkenness and advocated moderation. Now he saw how easily liquor caused the converted to fall back into old habits. So he set up a temperance society which was to a large extent evangelistic to purge the land of liquor consumption. (He saw that Christian conversion was the only way to

release drunks from their vice). His results in the Tornio district in Lapland were amazing. Within an eight year period, consumption dropped from 6 to 8,000 units of liquor annually to only three persons drinking. In the Jukkasjarvi parish, the last liquor dealer dumped his wares in 1850, leaving the parish dry. Laestadius' claim for success in the endeavor was that the "infernal passion" of drunkenness could not remain in souls where the "heavenly passion" of living faith was kindled.

By the late 1850's, Laestadius was old and not too active, most of the work being carried out by his disciples of whom Raattamaa, the leader, will be discussed later. Laestadius contracted a serious stomach ailment in 1860, and, in 1861 having received absolution one last time and praising God, he died. He left behind a revival movement which gave people more than a head knowledge of teachings or simple membership in a state church; it gave them faith. Because of the movement's being a revival, it would be subject to ebb and resurgence. Because of the lay leadership, structure and position as to unified doctrine, it was destined to be led one way or another, even split, by men of strong characteristics.

The second leader of this revival was Juhani Raattamaa (1811-1899), a native of Kaaresuvanto. He was born to God-fearing parents; the father tried to live the law of God, but realized the futility and came to the conclusion only those who died in infancy could have eternal life. His mother spoke of God, and of death, judgement and heaven in a warmer, more positive way. Such teachings affected him, but he said he was not led by them to true repentance and salvation.

When Juhani was fifteen, he became gravely ill and at that time became alarmed over his sin, similar to Laestadius' experience in this matter. He realized he was not penitent enough, he thought, and became very depressed. A student of Laestadius' in confirmation class, he made confession of his sins; but at that time, 1829, Laestadius himself was troubled, so Raattamaa received no absolution or peace.

When Juhani was under Laestadius' instruction, however he saw that the boy was quite talented, and later trained him to be a teacher in the traveling school system

in Lapland. He was an excellent teacher; better, Laestadius said, than he himself. But he had a tendency to get drunk. He was rebuked by his superior several times, but without change in behavior or attitude. He was kept on as a teacher despite his vice, because he was so able.

Raattamaa's cavalier attitude toward his sinfulness was stripped in 1842 and following, mostly due to Laestadius' awakened style of preaching. He was aroused and for the next four years struggled over his dilemma. By 1846 he felt firmly convicted of his sin and convinced of God's grace in Christ, but at that time neither he nor Laestadius did more than to encourage a person to read certain portions of Scripture and gain peace from reflecting on them.

In 1853, Raattamaa made a discovery which strongly influenced the revival. While teaching in the Gellivaara parish, he saw a woman who was moaning because of her troubled conscience. Raattamaa and others tried to console her, but with no effect. Frustrated, Juhani was about to leave, when he turned back to her and said "Do you believe that we are God's people?" "I believe with my whole heart that you are God's people," was her answer. "Since you believe that we are God's people," Raattamaa continued, "then you must also believe what we say to you about God." The woman answered again, "I do believe." With that, he laid his hand on her and pronounced the forgiveness of sins, or absolution, as described in the Small Catechism. The effect was great, the woman felt freed and began to praise God with uplifted hands.

When he went home that day and opened his New Testament, he saw John 20:22,23, where Jesus gave the ministry of the keys to the disciples. Now he knew he had done the right thing for the woman. After studying Luther's Church Postil and putting things together, he realized that personal absolution to penitent sinners was fully scriptural and Lutheran. He also saw how effective unconditional absolution (rather than the conditional absolution of Laestadius) was for believing believers.

In 1854, Raattamaa gave an explanation of the power of the keys, in which he used that phrase, forgiven in the name and blood of Jesus that we mentioned earlier.

After he found the doctrine of the ministry of the keys, his preaching became more evangelical, and he was seen as gifted in leading people to repentance and then to freedom in peace and faith. Juhani shared his view on unconditional absolution with Laestadius, each respecting the other's opinions and appreciating the other's talents, and they had a very cooperative spirit toward each other.

Raattamaa became leader of the movement in 1861 when Laestadius died, and held that position for thirty-eight years. He spoke with great authority and confidence, and was highly respected. He was the final human authority on doctrinal matters in the movement, and to be fully regarded as fit to preach and minister, lay or trained preachers had to travel to his home at Saivonmuotka in Kaaresuvanto to confer with him and receive his blessing.

Within a couple years of assuming leadership, Raattamaa stopped teaching to devote his whole time to the awakening. He received many for council and help, and under him the movement continued to spread. Seeing as the movement was within the state church, they did not have a separate synod convention as such, but used the annual meetings which were held at the Lannavaara Mission School to this purpose, making many important decisions there. Raattamaa was as highly regarded in his preaching as Laestadius was, but had a totally different style. Laestadius' sermons were topical in nature; but Raattamaa used an extended expository form. He would read a long section of scripture and then gave verse by verse explanation and practical application. Most other lay preachers followed the same method.

Raattamaa remained in the state church and led the revival as a father leads his children, watching it grow, develop, divide and even more across the sea. He was the man to whom almost all involved in the awakening movement looked, even those in America, up to his death in March of 1899.

The influence that this man had on the movement was unconditional absolution in what had now become an official formula in all practical respects; in the name and blood of Jesus Christ. It was also his style of expository preaching after which

many of the lay ministers patterned their own sermons, and his more evangelical tone. He also often gave group absolution in his services, many times concluding his sermon with, "Be free, you free-bought flock! Be sprinkled with the blood of Jesus! Your sins, faults, and weaknesses are forgiven you through the name and blood of Jesus."

The second successor of Laestadius we shall mention did not have direct contact with Laestadius himself, for he was only eight when the father of the movement died. Nor was he a layman whom Raattamaa chose and trained because he recognized exceptional ability. The man's name was Aatu Laitinen, his years were 1853-1923, and he is known as the first and most notable of the trained and ordained pastors who were claimed by the revival and promoted it's spread.

Aatu was born in central Finland in 1853, the same year Raattamaa had used personal absolution for the first time. It is said his family had raised him in faith, but because of unrepented sin, he lost his faith at the age of seven and became worldly. Although his conscience never died, he did not repent and receive forgiveness, nor was he converted.

From 1874 to 1877, Laitinen studied theology at the University of Helsinki, after which he was ordained into the state church. He said at that time he was concerned about salvation but hadn't yet found the way. He held the belief that the Bible is God's Word strongly, but he felt he lacked a living scriptural faith.

Aatu's first parish was in eastern Finland at Eno; then, after a short time he moved to Enontekio in Finnish Lapland, just across the Swedish border from Kaaresuvanto. People in his parish were affected by the Laestadian movement, which he denounced as wild doctrine and worked against it. His hot temper and prejudice brought clashes between him and awakened members often.

One Sunday when he was conducting morning services, a woman began to praise God loudly, and in his frustration he had the janitor remove her. Later, a member of the congregation who was a Laestadian lay-preacher admonished Laitinen for putting out

the Virgin Mary and leaving in the impenitent whores! Aatu felt convicted by the lay-preacher, and at length attended services led by his accuser, repented and was absolved. At that point he said divine peace entered his soul, and he was born again, into the Laestadian movement. He felt forgiven, but not until a later experience did he feel the filling of the Holy Spirit.

As for Laitinen's ministry after awakening and influence on the movement, there is much to be said for his accomplishments. He was a bold and persuasive preacher, who spoke out against sin and those secure in their sins even more vehemently than Laestadius. Aatu preached and taught regularly, and wrote prolifically, issuing collections of sermons, books, topical pamphlets and from 1888 on, a monthly newsletter, "Tidings from Zion". His book "Gospel Sermons" is still printed and distributed today.

Aatu was also involved with many struggles. All those who sided with him when he was anti-Laestadian turned on him in anger when he was converted, and he had to contend with their attacks on his ministry and reputation. He even had to defend himself in court on morality charges. Much of his writing was a defense of the movement's use of personal absolution, which the state church was against, despite its treatment in the Small Catechism. He defended their use of specific language in uncovering sin, which language non-members called "indecent". He preached his last sermon on Christmas Day in 1923 and died shortly after on the last day of the year, mourned by multitudes and acknowledged by many as a powerful instrument of God.

During this whole period from Laestadius' awakening to Laitinen's death and beyond, the movement was an awakening within the existing church rather than a splitting off from the state church they considered dead. The structure of the movement, then, was of necessity a complex one. All the members of the movement were members of state church congregations; yet not all members of any one congregation had to be part of the movement. Some state church pastors were awakened as Lars Laestadius was, most state pastors were not. Although there were some trained, ordained pastors in the revival, the majority of teachers and preachers leading the

movement were lay-preachers. They served the awakened and preached to awaken those yet dead in knowledge without faith or just having the name of christian. These lay preachers did not receive any thorough, formal training in doctrine, or in pastoral theology, etc. The education they received consisted of the scriptural portion of their basic education, private studies, and guidance under another lay preacher who is already established. The mark of qualification was not a diploma; many if not most within the movement claimed trained clergy could not be converted or at least were not to be considered fit to lead the congregation without careful supervision and tutelage. These lay pastors served as did those pastors who were state clergy as well. This duality in type of shepherds and membership of the awakened members led to divisions within the congregations, one faction favoring this pastor another that.

This tangled structure allowed for division. Without a uniform training of pastors, many of whom began to serve a group as soon as they felt they were called by the Spirit to do so, the truths of Scripture were never thoroughly studied and inter-related. The result was many divergent opinions on doctrines. Not the core teachings of sin and grace, it seems; but often the various views were stands taken on how to treat adiaphora. Since each pastor shepherded his own group without the benefit of a synod structure to ensure adherence to sound doctrine, the members of the movement began to follow whichever pastor whose stand they favored. It was an "I am of Cephas", "I am of Paul" situation. In reading about Laestadius and Raattamaa, it is clear that neither wanted divisions within the movement. Both expressed the hope that all the groups would work to reconcile and form one body in Christ. But it appears that much of the friction was caused by the differing of these two themselves on what constitutes true repentance, at what point absolution should be made, whether it should be contingent upon fruits of repentance or not, and which one's style and approach, stern or more evangelical, was to be followed.

Before we trace the development of issues which rocked the revival, it would be good to note the movement's earmarks at the beginning: "The identifying characteristics of the movement in the 1840's were conversion, the new life, the assembly of the believers, and rejoicing audibly."³ Laestadius and Raattamaa both stressed a deep spiritual awakening, revealing the bloody suffering of Christ, the breaking of hearts which view that suffering, open confession of sin and a personal experience of reconciliation by each individual. Laestadius was very slow to assure forgiveness of sins, to be sure the penitent was not being only a surface christian. He was also sympathetic of other movements. To him, the main point was that a person would experience God's order of grace.

Raattamaa, on the other hand, was quite ready to announce absolution, holding that justification occurred in the congregation by the oral gospel through faith (this idea developed into a formula for coming to faith, having the gospel read or spoken to you by a believer and you accepting by faith being the only way you could come to faith; this presents a problem for them, because one of the respected figures in the movement wrote in his personal notes that he was awakened to a living faith while reading devotional literature at home alone). Early in Raattamaa's ministry he seems to agree with his mentor on the main point being the experience of God's order of grace: later, however, after 1880, he came to the notion that God gives men periods of grace, or times of visitation, the Laestadian revival a case in point. The result of each visitation is a renewal, a "church of the first-born". This means that they are a pure congregation, and that followers must be obedient to that church, otherwise they are separatists or schismatics, and possibly heretics.

These two men seem to differ somewhat in one more area, the third use of the law. Laestadius taught this use of the law as it was explained in the Small Catechism while Raattamaa, though not totally antinomian, placed much less value on the law as being useful for the Christian.

³ Geert Sentzke, Finland: It's Church And It's People.

A third basic group within the movement was ushered in by the first pastor to join the movement in its early phase, Pastor Kirkkaherra Liljeblod from Muonia. He seemed to have been somewhat legalistic and pietistic in teaching, and Raattamaa wrote that he was dangerous because he promoted believers having a secret elevated opinion of themselves and their goodness.

While there were indeed divisions of thought in Finland, the actual splitting of the body into factions was accomplished in America, as we shall see.

II.

In speaking of Finland's background it was noted that here was a harsh place to live, even the hardest labor bringing scanty reward. It was also a country that was not even and fair with opportunities and burdens by class. Add to that the appeal of a better land, and you have the three-pronged motive for immigration to America: survival, justice and betterment.

In the 1830's to 1840's, many Finns were brought over to help settle Alaska because the Russian-American firm thought they would be able to handle the climate. Many stayed in and near Sitka. Some Finnish sailors became citizens when they worked their way over on ship or had to choose between selling their ship in America and settling or having it seized by the British in the 1850's when they sought to hurt Russia and her vassal state. These people sent word home about the plentiful land, food and freedom of this new land. These words sounded sweet to a people whose standard diet consisted of turnips, bread, potatoes, saltwater and buttermilk.

Social changes in Finland were leaving a whole segment of citizens without jobs or hope. The migrant farm workers were put out when famines struck. For seven years famine conditions prevailed, 1867 being the worst year. People ate birchbark or straw mixed with flour, or reindeer-moss with milk to ward off starvation. The roads were crowded with beggars and strewn with bodies, and the small landowners were right there with the rural homeless. Heavy taxes on the lower classes caused most to lose their land. The areas hit hardest by these famines were the rural areas of the Tornio,

Munio and Kemi rivers, and in 1867 tens of thousands of people died of starvation and typhoid.

During this hard time, many were converted, but found no sympathy for their religious teachings from fellow countrymen. Some sought better conditions in Norway, others moved north and tried to make a living doing deep sea fishing. Fishing there was hard rugged work which involved the whole family in the unpleasant task of catching and processing. This was heart-sickening work for people whose love was farming. Worse, the industry was controlled by merchant houses. They limited hours and method of operation, and with their easy credit they made sure the Finns turned no profit for all their work. Then came word of free land in America! Plots of fertile, easily cleared land, 160 acres in size! There was also active recruiting for workers in the upper midwest mines, forests, factories and railroads, along with a climate and landscape that seemed very homelike. They started to come in large numbers compared to their total population. In 1882 alone, one twelfth of the Finns in one area of Lapland came to America. They wrote back and encouraged others to come and this mass exodus from the ailing country brought tens of thousands of Finns to our shores, many of whom were non-christian, socialists. Many others were professing christians, however, and the majority of these were Laestadians.

Some of the earliest immigrants settled in Maine, New York and Virginia. The majority, however, settled in the upper midwest: Hancock and Ironwood in Michigan's western upper peninsula, Detroit Lakes, Menahga and the whole north-central area of Minnesota, and pockets in North Dakota. Later on large groups of these midwest Finns moved west to Washington, many settling near Astoria.

The Laestadians were a little lost religiously in this new land, because of the fact that they had always existed within the confines of the state church. Here they had no established church to attach themselves to, and the idea of starting their own was completely foreign to them. So in 1867 the Swedes, Norwegians and Finns together established a church in Hancock, Michigan. They called themselves the Scandinavian

Evangelical Lutheran Congregation and were served first by a Norwegian pastor who preached to the Finns through a translator, and later by Pastor H. Roeruaes (1871-76), who spoke Finnish rather poorly.

This situation did not last long. The Finns were dissatisfied with the quality of his sermons and some talked to him about the matter. For his part, Roeruaes felt the Finns held a false doctrine in their absolution in the name and blood of Christ as a formula, and in their insistence on a witness giving the oral gospel when one came to faith. Nor could he tolerate their practice of rejoicing. This conflict peaked in 1872 with Roeruaes' denial of all church functions and the sacraments to the Laestadians. Being accustomed to a state church, they in turn tried to use legal means to regain full membership. But instead of giving aid, the attorney they contacted told them they lived in a free country with free churches.

When they realized that by law they had the right to have their own church and choose their own minister, whether a layman or educated, they quickly did so. Roeruaes' excommunication, then, resulted in the establishment of the first Finnish Apostolic or Laestadian Church in America in December 1872, being legalized Jan. 11, 1873.

At first services were held in homes. Antti Witikka came from Hammerfest to serve as speaker. His preaching caused the congregation to grow, but he felt inadequate and encouraged Solomon Korteniemi to come from Hammerfest to help him. These two had had disagreements in Norway, but they had asked forgiveness of each other before parting, and Antti thought the matter was settled. Korteniemi musn't have thought so, for soon after coming he made accusations against Antti and strife followed.

Korteniemi and others soon began to build the first all Finnish church in America on Pine street in Calumet, Michigan in 1873. The next two years saw the building of another in Cokato Minnesota and then on Quincy Hill in Hancock Michigan. These were the only Finnish churches built in the 1870's.

Despite strife, Antti wished to have Korteniemi elected as minister for the Calumet congregation, which took on the name, "Solomon Korteniemi Lutheran Society."

Soon Korteniemi elected himself

Soon Korteniemi showed himself as proud, demanding all to obey him and to be baptized by him; he wished to be the sole leader of the awakening in America and proceeded to slander Antti in an attempt to drive him off.

Solomon used the Church of Finland handbook and order of service; he prepared his sermons and read them from the pulpit. He kept himself as chairman and elder, which didn't set well with many who thought he was departing from Raattamaa and the Lapp elders in Europe. Many wrote to these men back in Europe asking for a "proper" minister. Several men were sent, but the only one who stayed to become pastor in Calumet (1877) was John Takkinen. He displeased Korteniemi (who would, with his strong pietistic following fight back for control) and began to make changes. The church under Takkinen wished to stay with the Lutheran Confessions, and changed their name to the Apostolic Lutheran Congregation. A simple order of worship consisting of hymns, prayer and sermon displaced the state church form. Raattamaa was behind Takkinen in this change.

In the years following 1877, Takkinen made several mission trips to Minnesota, the Dakotas, and even to Washington and Oregon, at which places he helped those who had moved there to start new congregations. He also preached and held catechetical meetings at these places. For instructing children, he published and used the "Aapinen" or ABC book, which contained the main part of Luther's Small Catechism. Of note was an alteration he made in the Creed, inserting "in Gethsemane" into the text, so that it read "Christ descended into hell in Gethsamane", rendering it as a figure of mental anguish. This met with some criticism, especially in Finland. This seems to have been a basis or at least supportive of the practice of pastors driving members to feel the anguish and torment of hell before absolving them. An interesting sidenote is that several pastors were so affected by this practice that they drove themselves to despair and committed suicide!

In 1878, the pietist group reconciled with Takkinen and his followers and all were together in the church, but not for long. Soon after, the pietists got support

from the homeland and began holding separate meetings in rented halls, and thus became known as the Hall group. They took an antinomian position on third use of the law, and after 1885 many thought that the flesh of a Christian becomes holy.

At the annual election in Calumet in 1888, John Roanpaa, who called Takkinen's rule harsh, was elected by those present, but Takkinen and his supporters refused to submit to this, and he continued to preach until Roanpaa siezed the church property. Unable to get back in, Takkinen built a small church accross the street, becoming known as the "Small Church Group".

A successor to Roanpaa was called in 1890, and A.L. Heideman came from Finland to fill the position. He was recommended by Laitinen, but Raattamaa did not give him permission to come- he was ordained (looked down upon by lay movement, especially in America), and he had been called by the schismatic group who opposed Takkinen. A reconciliation between the two factions of the Calumet Church, but was short-lived. After Raattamaa's death the Laestadians in Finland split into the Firstborn, who were against any new thing (e.g.-ties, phones, pictures) as vanity, and the Old Laestadians who were not so concerned with these things, but more critical about ordained ministers. American Finns also split, Takkinen's group siding with the First born and Heideman with the Old Laestadians.

Another split took place soon after within the Takkinen group. Takkinen had chosen J.H. Lumijarvi as his successor, but O. Matoniemi was ambitious for the position. Matoniemi went to the Poinsett Dakota congregation where Lumijarvi was to visit, and spoke against him and Poinsett's pastor until he persuaded a large segment of the congregation to follow him. Matoniemi's group stressed strict obedience to the elders of Gellivaara Finland, and complete separation from the devices and clothing trends of the sinful world, while Lumijarvi alligned itself with Heideman's group.

A powerful movement from 1897 on was a pietistic group called "New Awakenists".

They broke away from Raattamaa group at the same time that the Firstborn and Old Laestadians split. The reasons for this was their strong focus on deep sorrow and contrition, profound broken-ness of heart, the experience of new birth and strict moral life; and their opinion that the Laestadians were losing steam and becoming morally lax. They said a new awakening was needed.

There were two other groups which rose in the period from 1890 to 1908. One of these was Extreme Evangelicalism, which held no third use of the Law. They were against confessing sins to brothers and called all who urged christians to walk properly and repent of sins legalists. The other was the Polarite Group, named after John Polari, a lay pastor at Maple, Wisconsin. He taught redemption of Christ, full and free salvation, said nothing about confession, restitution for wrongs, conduct of Christians or sanctification. Polari held that the Gospel of Grace will unfailingly bring fruits without their being talked about. Heideman and his followers became very close to the Extreme Evangelicals at this time.

III.

Attempts were made by the groups to clarify positions on the major doctrines, to find basis for agreement, and much was accomplished at Calumet in 1908, in the first Big Meeting. Thirty pastors and three hundred representatives from all over the U.S. came to discuss doctrines and reconcile the factions. The three main doctrinal subjects covered were: the Fear of God, the cleansing of conscience, and The Law of Moses and the Law of Christ as they pertain to unbeliever and believer. The most important outcome of the meeting was that the Lannavaara Firstborn pastors (of which J.H. Lumijarvi was member) publically confessed their error and asked for pardon. In this way they rejoined the Gellivaara Firstborn (otherwise known as Old Laestadian) whom they had separated from over the issue of which body of elders in Finland should have authority.

Heideman was in Finland at the time of this meeting, and he returned to an unpleasant surprise! He didn't approve of the reconciliation the Lannavaara Firstborn

with his group, nor did he believe Lumijarvi and his group were one in faith with him. His reason was not understood until 1916-17, when it became evident that he had swung toward the extreme evangelical trend. Heideman's followers called themselves the "Evangelicals" and accused the Old Laestadians and related groups of being legalists in the areas of confession of sins and "the New Testament commandments, teachings and reproofs."⁴ From the time of the Big Meeting of 1908 on Heideman and his followers pulled away, and began to work against the Old Laestadians, with preachers of both types preaching in congregations. The Evangelicals were powerful in the copper country in Michigan and in Minnesota, and whichever congregations they controlled, they had it decided that only Evangelical preachers could preach there. The formal breach followed in 1917.

The Evangelicals became very severe in their practices in many cases. Many would practice "liikutukset" or emotional outbursts during the service, consisting of yelling, crying, jumping even breaking windows and furniture! It seems that this was a purposeful attempt by some to be carried away in emotional ecstasy. Many did it to show others they too had "living faith". The Old Laestadians referred to this in a derogatory fashion, calling them "cold jumps". They also preached lop-sided gospel without rebuke-- the results were that the people were made to feel holy in their sinful deeds. For example, one pastor said, "Go on sinning; it is only a debt for which payment has been made"⁵

This movement did not go unchecked. A.L. Heideman's son Paul saw the error in Extreme Evangelicism while on preaching tour with John Polari, and returned to Old Laestadianism. He then by powerful preaching won many back from evangelicalism, including his father later on.

With the return of the Heidemanians to Old Laestadianism, 1920-21, their relation to the Big Meeting Group improved for a time.

⁴Uuras Saarnivaara, The History of the Laestadian or Apostolic-Lutheran Movement in America, pg.41.

⁵Ibid, pg.49.

Trouble surfaced again in 1923 when Pastor Evert Maattala, a former Suomi Synod pastor who had recently joined the Apostolic Lutherans and worked with the Big Meeting Group, wrote a book entitled, "Into the Footsteps of Jesus". He quoted the Formula of Concord's Article VI, "Of the Third Use of the Law". He didn't know he was waving a red cape in front of the Heidemanians' noses; as mentioned before, they tended toward the idea of no rules for christians. Partly the trouble came because the Old Laestadians didn't agree with the Formula either, claiming only the N.T. commands of Jesus applied to believers. Only the New Awakenists held to what was written. Maattala had to explain and apologize, and the Formula's stand was rejected, as the Big Meeting adherents claimed, because it was unknown to them until the book came out.

This spark of controversy was enough to make Heideman fight the BMG again. Heideman published a paper from 1922 on in which he attacked the BMG with slander, calling them Sons of Hagar, spiritual adulterers, and the like. The BMG also had a paper, but did not stoop to like responses in print. A third paper, Waljova, the common paper for Apostolic Lutherans did carry the controversy against the Heidemanians.

All the congregations were divided internally on the issue, and split was unavoidable, the first occurring in Berkeley, California. From this inward division stems a shibboleth that is still used today. The Old Laestadians or BMG christians used the greeting and parting phrases "God's greetings!" and "God's peace!" to confess their faith and acknowledge brothers and sisters in the faith. The Heidemanians would neither greet in this way nor return such a greeting.

This situation continued, and the movement as a whole was in dire straits. Up to now, each congregation was totally independent. In 1928, the need was seen to have a national church. In the Big Meeting of Calumet that year, the constitution and by-laws were approved. The Apostolic Lutheran Church of America was then organized, in the same year that A.L. Heideman died. The form this new church was to have would be loose; each congregation free to join or decline, to call its own pastors. The individual

congregation had complete freedom in finances and internal affairs. Common affairs would be decided at annual conventions, which were a continuation of the Big Meetings. The national church was to have a central board of eight members plus the president. The power of both the central board and the annual convention in decisions would be of an advisory nature only. Churches would be free to send delegates if they would pay for their presence.

Reception of the national church was generally good, although some congregations split over the question of joining. Other congregations remained independent but requested service from the organization. The Federation of Apostolic Lutheran Churches of America has functioned in this form up to the present time, dealing with squabbles between congregations and between pastors as far as it was enabled by its constitution. No major splits occurred, although there seems to be a distinct polarization of members around those pastors whose preaching is most favorable to a large number of ears. Members tend to say they belong to Reverend Wilson's church or Reverend Clemetti's church, instead of saying, "I belong to St. Peter's", for example. There still are some power plays among the clergy, although they are contained and solved as far as is possible.

IV.

The Federation today is still a loosely joined collection of fifty-six congregations which is headed up by a nine-man central board. It is served by a body of pastors, eleven out of the sixty being trained, the balance being lay pastors. Those trained generally go to the Inter-Lutheran Theological Seminary in Minneapolis. All the pastors have to be approved, this being done by the church board and central board, observing the pastoral candidate for a period of time until they are satisfied that he has the abilities and understanding of Scripture needed to serve. Because this body is a strong lay movement, those who train formally for the ministry are viewed with suspicion by many, and are often required

to work under observation for a longer period of time, to make sure that schooling hasn't tainted them. All those pastors that have been approved are included in a list that each of the congregations has and is free to call any pastor on that list for regular service or temporary. The congregations are also free to refuse the trained pastors or any others as choices, or to call someone not on the list to minister to them.

A curious characteristic of the Federation is that although the pastors are in effect interchangeable, they each have the ability to lean toward the pietistic, evangelical or other bents in the movement. The congregations also show a marked variance in doctrinal stands, especially with regard to sanctification. Many views are held about the third use of the Law, and many adiaphora are made into laws. One congregation on the South side of a small town in northern Minnesota holds that believers do sin; these members have television, the ladies use a moderate amount of makeup, and some smoke. On the North side of town, a church in fellowship with the one just mentioned exists, and this second church holds that a real Christian does not sin; that watching television, smoking and wearing makeup, etc. are sinful acts. This is a strong example of what differences can exist within the framework. This difficulty showed itself when the Federation was calling pastors from Finland. One Finnish pastor let it slip that he owned a television, much to the dismay of certain congregations. As a reaction, surveys were sent to all the Finnish pastors who might be called over to preach to determine which were saved and fit to be called.

The nine man board is made up completely of lay pastors. No trained pastors are allowed. They come to conclusions on matters of faith and practice, and on functional matters. Then they can make recommendations to the Federation, which may or may not be accepted by every congregation.

The Federation meets annually at a church designated the previous year. Congregations which wish to be heard on the floor must pay dues. Doctrine is discussed as well as information given on current affairs and activities.

Some of the weaknesses of the Federation lie in the areas which would be expected with the lack of training and disunity of doctrine without repercussions. Due to the fact that most of the pastors have no training in the original languages, they devalue them. Nothing is allowed to be quoted in the annual meetings as Scripture except the KJV, which is regarded by most of the lay pastors and members as the only inspired word of God. Using the original languages for text study is frowned upon. Baptism is also devaluated, and has been throughout the movement, because laymen were not allowed to practice it in the state church.

This incident shows the second weakness in the practice by the body. Before 1966, the Finnish translation of Luther's Small Catechism was used in confirmation class. It was prepared by Sweden's Archbishop Olaus Swebelius and was an accurate translation. In 1966, the Apostolic Lutheran Church prepared their own translation and made adjustments that demoted the Sacrament of Baptism from an effective means of grace to a practice one "should do".

Under part four- Holy Baptism, they changed "Does Baptism work forgiveness...?" by adding "and faith", as they added to the question, "Does baptism (and faith) deliver us from these deaths?" In answering whether baptism delivers us from the power of the devil, they say it is faith that saves, rather than the affirmation of the original.

When Pastor Yliniemi asked one member of the board who had been part of the committee that made the changes why they had been made, he was simply told "You're too young to understand.", and never did receive any satisfaction on the matter.

The pastors are defensive against any historical study (lay pastors mostly) and are reluctant to release any information or documents they have which might expose negligent lack of ability in handling affairs, of which might point out conflicts, etc., which would show them in a bad light. It seems that today the majority of conflicts are of a personality or power nature rather than doctrinal, one pastor trying to promote personal views on adiaphora or practice versus another pastor's.

This church today sees itself as a revival movement, as it started out to be. In line with this, often a new idea or position is placed against an old or current one and is claimed ~~as~~ having come from a renewal of the Holy Spirit's indwelling. The experience of being converted is highly viewed. People are divided into the dead unbelievers, those who know the law and gospel truths but aren't spiritually empowered (the sleeping) and those who are spiritually awakened.

Conclusion

The Federation appears to have been a necessary bonding of a crumbling movement to keep it from fragmenting into oblivion as each pastor takes his little band of followers this way and that. The thing that held the movement together in Finland was the exclusion of any church's possibility of existence outside the state Lutheran church. The movement began to fragment in America as soon as they realized they had the freedom to do so. After a few decades of breakups they knew some structure was needed to insure the continuation of the Laestadian movement, although they had to allow great diversity within the ranks in order to accomplish the joining of the Federation. I see the Federation, then, not so much as a single synod or fellowship of like-minded believers as a loosely joined band of divergent congregations and ~~pa~~ pastors who joined in order to maintain an identity as a group and guard their existence as a movement. Some congregations and ~~pa~~ pastors within the Federation are totally or at least to a great extent in agreement with one another; but not all are, or even the vast majority. This union then seems to be based mostly on national lineage or on the heritage of the movement.

With all the characteristics, the past track record and tendencies of this group, it seems that the Federation will last only so long as it's members prefer union with differences in the body to division over those differences, resulting in fragmentation, loss of numbers and eventual absorption into other church bodies or disappearance. As for the pastoral situation, it is fairly clear that they caused many of the tragedies in the movement's history. However, there is hope. It does not lie with the lay pastors, though. Despite the fact that the trained clergy are looked down upon

by the laymen and the lay pastors, they have a better grasp of the biblical doctrines and are less defensive about personal items in comparison to the lay pastors. At this point, the trained few are the preserving force in the Federation.

Will the Federation continue? I think so, but it will continue along one of two courses: either remaining in its present form, struggling as individual congregations with the lay pastors trying to protect their image of superiority to the trained pastors and maintain control, which would be a sad path to plot; or, eventually the trained pastors will steer the members out of a profundity of misconceptions and adaphora made laws, and strengthen their doctrinal positions, so they can truly become unified in true faith and proper practice.

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A Century of Division

New Apostolic
Apostolic
Lutheran

1900

Subjective Pietism

1888
TAKKINEN
Legalistic
Trend

1908

Federation

Association of
American Leetadians
American Congregations
(Alajoki, etc.)

Raattamaa
Evangelicalism

Beginning of
Separation - 1908

Evangelicalism

1928-34
(Outward
Separation)

(Heidemanism)

1972

American Mission
(Torola)

1920-
1921

Extreme
Evangelicalism
(Polarites)

1963

MATT REED

1940

Koskela

Reed

1978

Hankela

Salmela