

Lars Levi Laestadius and the new revival

During his time as parish priest in Karesuando, severe illness and grief in the family led to a major life decision when it came to Lars Levi Laestadius' Christian life. Laestadius himself wrote about this in his newspaper *Ens Ropandes Röst i öknen* (published 1852–1854):

"Now first there was a serious and deep fear of death, and the concern for the salvation of the soul was now greater than the concern for the rescue of the survivors". Laestadius in retrospect counted this as a positive sign of spiritual insight and self-knowledge.

Another decisive event for his spiritual life and Christian work took place during a visitation trip in Åsele Lapland. Here Laestadius met the young sami woman Milla Andersson-Clementsdotter. Laestadius described it this way in *Ens Ropandes Röst i öknen* (he calls Milla here Maria): "In the winter of 1844 I came to Åsele Lapland and here I met some readers who were of the gentler kind. Among them was a Lapland girl named Maria, who opened her whole heart to me, after she heard the altar talk. This simple girl had experiences in the order of grace, such as I had never heard before ... Her simple story of her wanderings and experience made such a deep impression on my heart that it brightened even mine. This evening that I spent in the company of Mary I felt a foretaste of the joy of heaven."

Back in Karesuando, Lars Levi Laestadius began to preach in a new way: against sin in all its forms, but he also emphasized the joy and freedom of the Christian person.

After 23 years in Karesuando, in 1849 Laestadius applied for the position of vicar in the newly established parish in Pajala. Pajala became a hard and heavy field of work. Here the resistance to the revival was stronger and the judicial chapter also received complaints against Laestadius. In 1853, the complaints led to the bishop making a visitation trip to Pajala. The Laestadians were accused of disturbing the services by their ecstatic behavior and of Laestadius' use of coarse and scruffy language. However, the bishop found nothing that led to any punishment.

Lars Levi Laestadius was parish priest in Pajala until his death in 1861.

