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Pastors on the new continent in socialist caricatures

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Founding of the independent Finnish church, the Suomi Synod followed the historically proven fact that whenever two Finns meet, the result will not only be a unison of some kind, but also a bitter fight. However, this had already taken place before the foundation of the evangelical-Lutheran church with e.g. personal insults being published in newspapers and magazines, going so far as to court dealings. Constitutive meeting of the Suomi Synod was held in Calumet on March 25, 1890. The individuals who either resigned or were forced to retire from the Suomi Synod, went ahead to create a "nation's church" to replace the "clergy congregation". This new congregation came to be known as "National Church". Despite the fact that the Suomi Synod experienced a lot of resistance, it gained more members. The majority of churchgoers specifically wished for a similar church that they had gotten used to while in Finland.

Negative attitudes toward emigrants prevailed within the Church of Finland. Already bishop Gustaf Johansson had claimed that people from Ostrobothnia bring great shame upon themselves by leaving their fatherland in great numbers. Bishop J.R. Forsman (later Koskimies) condemned moving to America in the bishops' examination of 1901, calling this 'a mark of flightiness'. "The greatest misfortune is to leave for foreign countries. A believer does not leave for America, but remains at home, for he knows that if God had wanted him to live in America, he would've been born there. The entire movement is against God's will."



Suomi Synod and National Church.
- Lapatossu, May 15th, 1916, cover.

Many other churchmen also gave public warnings against becoming an emigrant. This attitude, common among the church and the pastors, was not only based on the great ethical problems caused by nationalism or migration, but it was a result of a profound theological background, centering around Luther's concept of the two regimes and the related three-part understanding of society. The Church was to be teaching the word of God, giving guidance to people's conscience. It was not acceptable for man to start crossing the boundaries set by God, but he had best to settle for what he had and not go elsewhere following his greedy nature. The youngsters in the countryside were warned against leaving for cities because of the myriad temptations, let alone leaving to go abroad! Primarily in theological discussions, immigration was considered to be destroying family life and causing decay of people's moral values. Since migration was seen as a sign of these inappropriate attitudes toward life, the church leaders did not feel responsible for the immigrants' souls. The relationship between the Church of Finland and the Suomi Synod was drastically improved only in 1921 after the bishop of Kuopio, J.R. Koskimies, had visited various congregations of the Suomi Synod all over the USA, officially representing the Church of Finland for a period of three months. Nevertheless, for a long time the words of Ilmari Kianto had a hold of Finland. The poem, which was later made into a song ("The Song of the Hungry" with Oskar Merikanto as the composer) in 1911, said: "We are to renew our land! You cowards go beyond the oceans!"



A greedy pastor charges \$20 for burying a dead child.
- Punikki, November 1st, 1931, p. 8.

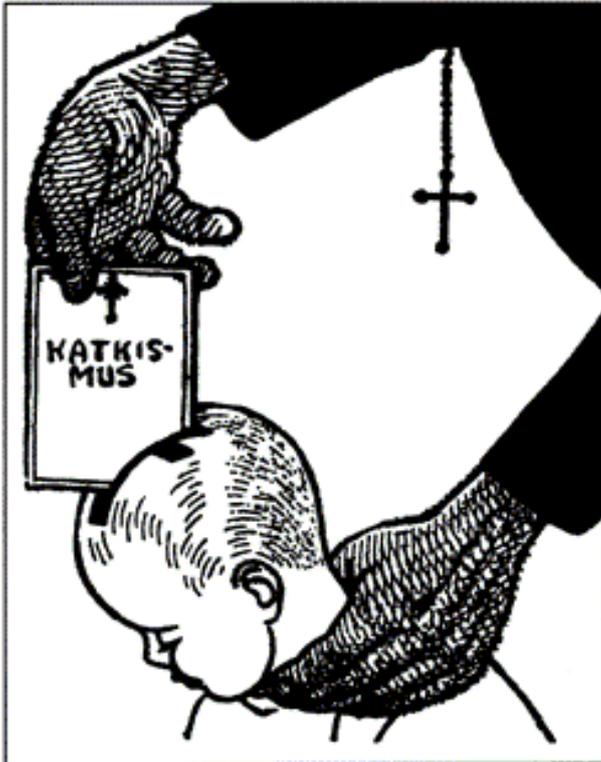
The greedy and devilish churchmen of the socialists

The class hatred portrayed toward pastors in the socialist caricatures in the USA was further spiced up by international pictorial loans. The applied symbols and the general nature of the drawings were considerably more radical compared to those published in Finland before and after the I World War. However, before the Civil War the socialists required even in Finland that their caricatures correspond closely to the ideas prevalent within their social class. The illustrations in conservative and church publications were primarily biblical and the same images depicting biblical stories were circulated in various papers. As for the socialist comic papers published in America, i.e. the Punikki and the Lapatossu, their illustrations concerning pastors were either geared mainly against the church and the clergy, or they additionally opposed to the Bible and religion itself. It was common for the drawings to be blasphemous and anarchist by nature. The radical features in the illustrations with pastors were further emphasized by the poor quality of the drawings, which underlined the grotesque side of the clerical characters. On the other hand, the fact that the socialists' drawings lacked in quality, was also deliberate - they wanted to break away from the artistic snobbism of the conservatives by using heavily simplified illustrations as special effects.



A pastor robs his food from the mouths of the poor and the infants.
- Lapatossu, June 24, 1913, p. 11.

Furthermore, the comic papers also published drawings sent by their readers and, as a consequence, their quality understandably suffered. Among the professional illustrators, K.A. Suvanto had the greatest impact on the caricatures on the new continent.



Religious tuition. - Punikki,
Nr. 1, 1934, p. 11.

Pastors were depicted as overly greedy and obscene as well as utterly alcoholised. Many illustrations were based on a true incident, which was exaggerated for pictorial effect. Moreover, with varying success, the pastors were drawn to resemble a real-life churchman. Finnish caricatures parodied primarily Finnish clerical characters only, but in a few exceptions the irony was extended to cover the clergy as a whole, without national boundaries. Yet even these illustrations failed to create a clerical character that would repeatedly appear in the illustrations as a reflector of the class hatred and propaganda shared by all. It was interesting to note, however, that the class hatred against pastors very often surpassed that toward conservatives and factory patrons. The socialists felt that pastors were restricting their freedom on the new continent, which added to and strengthened further the negative stereotypes associated with pastors. The pastors, who charged you for burying your dead baby, remained as hated as the bar-owners who charged a high interest after selling liquor on credit.

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