

### **Concept and Emergence of National Consciousness.**

This paper deals with the emerging national cultural consciousness in Finland during the second half of the nineteenth century and its influence on congregational song in Lutheran worship and the development of hymn tunes. In Finland the emergence of a national cultural identity refers to the growing awareness of one's own history, language, and culture, and the growing research and development in those fields with the goal of establishing the Finnish people as a culturally sovereign nation among nations.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century an atmosphere of stagnation in church and state pervaded the Grand Duchy of Finland. The people were content to obey the authorities; explanations were neither needed nor expected. A change occurred only toward the middle of the century. Gradually the consequences of an emerging national cultural identity became evident in all areas of society. A bona fide Finnish press came into being, the provincial parliament actively pursued the establishment of a Finnish society, church laws were revised, local secular and ecclesiastical administrations were separated, etc. Attempts were made on many levels to achieve a better education of the people. A high point of this development was the founding of a public school system.

### **The Need for Singing.**

The emergence of a national cultural identity made itself felt in all areas of life including congregational singing in worship. During the first half of the nineteenth century, public worship was still an inseparable part of the various duties which regulated the relationship of the individual to the authorities. The singing of hymns was part of public worship and thus a duty as so many others. How the singing was done and what it was like aesthetically in practice was of little concern, and no conscious efforts at improvements were made. When, however, in mid-century the societal atmosphere had become freer, when the Finnish-language press had been growing rapidly and church reforms had been resumed, music in public worship in general and the singing of hymns in particular had become topics of discussion. The increasing level of education among the population on the one hand and the increasingly reserved attitude of the intellectuals toward any kind of public worship on the other, required that reasons be given for the existence of and the need for the singing of hymns.

Three ways of argumentation evolved around this issue. The first held to an authoritative way of thinking which was based above all on the pronouncements of biblical figures, the Church Fathers, and Luther regarding the need for and the meaning of singing. The main thrust of this rationale was that, just as those authorities had sung, so it behooved every Christian to do likewise; and every believer had the right to do so. Linking musical practices with important names from church history imbued music with authority and proved the significance it had held for the most important personages of church history. This historical view explained to the worshippers that the hymns of the Finnish people were a legacy of all of Christendom and part of their own history.

The second argumentation had to do with the theological significance of hymns both as it related to the theology of worship as well as to the personal religious experience of the individual. Hymn singing was seen as an inherently necessary part of public worship. It represented the sacrificial aspect of worship over against the sacramental one: in a sacramental act God comes to the worshippers; when the people's response to God is a sacrificial act on their part. The best form of this sacrificial act was the corporate singing of hymns, because in doing so the people brought their sacrifices, prayers, and thanksgiving before God with one voice. But also the personal spiritual life came into focus in a new way through two phenomena that were very important for the national awakening. These were the growing revival movements and the movement of Romanticism. Under the influence of the former religiosity and religious experience of the individual gained in significance, which was reflected also in the attitude toward hymn singing. The latter became evident in the ideas about the relationship between aesthetic and religious feelings, and in the emphasis on the importance of music for the spiritual life of the individual. Hymn singing was no longer a purely collective act but it strengthened the individualistic way of thinking and required a critical attitude toward events. New criteria were applied to a hymn: it had to touch the soul of the individual and it had to edify. A good hymn was thought to be capable of opening the heart of human beings, remove them from the realm of the worldly, edify their spirits, and transport them before the altar of God.

The third argumentation was used by those who felt that it was essential to raise the level of

education among the people if the Finnish nation was to attain a cultural level equalling that of other nations. The Finnish people had to be capable of showing that they were a nation who had something to offer, who had its own language and culture. For raising the cultural level of the people music was considered a good starting point as it was more easily accessible than the theater and other art forms. It was thought that even untrained folk could become interested in music. Indeed, singing was put on the same level as literacy as an indispensable indicator of a civilized nation. As a rule the leisure activities of the people were rather coarse, drinking was widespread, and cultural standards were low. Although singing was customary even among the lower classes, their songs were considered inappropriate and vulgar by the educated citizens. It was felt that learning to sing hymns would improve both education and morality. The people would be exposed to good music and could replace their coarse songs with better ones. Songs about the home country and patriotic songs were held to be equally suitable for the people as hymns. Together, these songs would set the Finnish people on the right path and were considered best suited for elevating Finnish culture to a comparable level with those of other nations. This striving for using music and singing as important educational tools was significantly influenced by the idea that the Finns were a nation of exceptional musical talent. This idea arose out of the endeavors of creating the Finnish national epic poem, The Kalevala.

### **The Quality of Congregational Singing.**

If contemporary reports are to be believed, congregational singing in public worship was often very poor and corresponded in no way to the goals which had been set for it. Newspaper descriptions of hymn singing almost predictably began with a comment to this effect. Positive criticism was very rare although not altogether absent, such as remarks that the parishes of Lemi, Rantasalmi, and Juva in East Finland had excellent singers. It was in East Finland where occasionally positive reactions were reported, but in general hymn singing was characterized by confusion, even chaos. The people were not accustomed to regular, coherent corporate singing; ordinarily each individual sang according to his or her own liking and memory. The singing was often very loud and described by the press as "roaring." On the other hand there were parishes where the worshippers did not sing at all or only hummed quietly to themselves while the cantor intoned the hymns. The singing was made more difficult by the unusually slow tempo which made it necessary to catch one's breath many times during a given stanza, which then completely obscured the melodic line of the hymn. All in all, the manner of singing was a mirror image of the low educational level of the people, which was also reflected in their total lack of a singing technique and the purpose of singing in a group.

The people themselves were not put off by their way of singing. Undoubtedly this was due to the fact that hardly any one had ever heard smooth and harmonious singing. To be sure there were also certain parishes where the singing was done well and beautifully, but the melodies were their own local versions which differed considerably from those usual in other parishes. In some parishes these local versions had become so firmly established that although the singing may well have been pleasing to the ear, the tunes themselves were unknown anywhere else. They were basically the well-known hymns common to the whole church which in certain parishes had developed into variants. At the end of the 1850s the existence of such folk variants gave rise to debates on whether all parishes should be obligated to sing uniformly according to a melody book common to all, or whether the parishes should be allowed to sing their own folk variants. These debates did not proceed very far, because for the most part the experiences with allowing parishes freedom in their congregational singing had been so bad that there was no question but that uniformity of church song must be the primary goal. There was as yet no general awareness of the value of hymn variants as authentic products of a national culture.

### **Leading the Singing of the Congregation.**

Leading the congregational singing in public worship was the task of the church wardens, although their competence as singers and conductors generally left much to be desired. Many church wardens were unable to read notes and therefore had to rely on memory and a loud voice. The church warden's voice had to lead the singing and in doing so often had to carry the right melody by drowning out the singing of the congregation. The demands for a better education of the people only made the lack in competence and education of the church wardens ever more painfully evident. In addition to hymn singing they had to be able to instruct the people also in the catechism and teach reading and writing. This of course put pressure on the church wardens and the entire church who was responsible for the education of the people. The church wardens' pay was low which explains why more competent people could not be found for this position. However, organists also served as song leaders and their competence far surpassed that of the church wardens. Many organists had been trained abroad, e.g. in Sweden, and specialized and were involved exclusively in musical responsibilities. In contrast to the ordinary church wardens, they could be considered professional musicians. Unfortunately there was only a small number of them.

Every applicant for the position of church warden had to have a certificate of his musical ability, signed by a musically competent official, such as the music teacher of the Latin school at Porvoo and the cantor of the cathedral at Turku. In practice, such certificates were issued by many others as well. Church wardens who considered themselves competent praised their own teaching and competed for pupils for whom they then issued certificates based sometimes on rather questionable grounds. On the other hand there were also quite respectable private "schools for church wardens" that attracted pupils from all over Finland. The first government-subsidized schools for church

wardens and organists were established during the late 1870s.

The congregations themselves received only sporadic instruction in singing. Around the middle of the century this task was often left to the pastor despite the fact that for a century the leading of congregational singing had customarily been done by the church warden. This is not to say that there were no committed and capable personages among the church wardens, however, the education of the congregation on a higher level seemed to require the dedication and authority of a pastor. Also, the wording of the old church law left a loophole for the church wardens that allowed them to ignore their teaching obligations. Public opinion, however, increasingly expected the church wardens to further congregational singing. Gradually a clear division of labor developed in the parishes and the actual responsibility for teaching congregational singing involved the whole range from a few very dedicated pastors to increasingly better trained and responsible church wardens. The statement of Archbishop T.T. Renvall at the pastors' conference of the archbishopric of Turku in 1885 was characteristic for the development of the preceding decades: Teaching the singing of hymns to the confirmands was the most important of all educational tasks of a church warden.

As the improvement of the people's singing ability was seriously being taken into focus, the scant singing lessons of the confirmands were soon felt to be insufficient. The clergy admonished the church wardens to involve themselves in this task, and in their pastors' conferences proposed holding singing classes Saturday evenings and Sunday afternoons. Such classes became customary from the beginning of the 1860s. Occasionally the church wardens were asked to conduct week-long practice sessions for the youth although their competence was widely being doubted. At the end of the 1860s the cultivation of the national culture was also embraced by the parish song circles. Although folk songs and songs of the homeland were to be taught there as well, the teaching of religious songs had to remain at the center.

### **Linguistic Problems.**

A particular difficulty in singing and learning hymns was posed by the metric irregularities in the hymnbook of 1701. This linguistic weakness of the old hymnal was deplored both by the church wardens and other song teachers as well as by those who promoted the Finnish language and a Finnish national identity. If the people were to learn to sing as befitted a civilized nation, then the texts had to be singable. The song leaders who had to struggle with the poetic meters demanded this emphatically. If one wished to prove that the Finnish language was as capable as other civilized languages of creating metrically beautiful lyrics, then the language had to be rid of mistakes. This was the concern especially of those interested in Finnish identity and the Finnish language. The Finnish language was yardstick for and symbol of the educational level of the Finns. Therefore, when the hymnal was to be revised, experts endeavored to create one that was linguistically as good as possible. Until its publication and official introduction the church wardens and song teachers had to go on struggling with the difficult problem of meter.

### **The Significance of the Public Schools for Congregational Singing.**

In 1886 the so-called public-school edict was issued in Finland. This meant a huge step forward in public education even though it would be decades before each town or township had its own public school. The church was hoping that the public school system would remain under its own supervision and that the church wardens would receive training to be teachers, but this was not to be. The public school system was put under the supervision of the secular commune. Nevertheless great hopes were placed in the public schools both regarding the raising of the educational level as well as that of hymn singing. There was even the expectation that children who had learned to sing in school would later be able to replace song leaders in church. This did not happen but the public school was still of great importance for the development of congregational singing. During the last decades of the nineteenth century several tune books were published for children and schools. The great improvement in congregational singing was in some respects a fortunate by-product of the educational endeavors. From their inception, the public schools considered the cultivation of congregational song a central goal for the spiritual growth of the individual and each person's general education, an idea which was upheld for the rest of the century.

### **Textbooks.**

There were no textbooks for teaching hymn singing before the middle of the century. Church wardens and persons training to become church wardens could have made good use of them and, in fact, several handwritten tune books contained instructions in an appendix. The first printed textbook which focused especially on hymn singing was *Veisun opetuksia* [Rules for hymn singing], which introduced D.H. Kukkasela's collection of tunes. Brief instructions relating to hymns and to the use of the psalmodicon [a very simple stringed Scandinavian folk instrument] could be found in the appendices of other tune books as well. There were, of course, textbooks in other languages available as well, but the emerging national consciousness specifically demanded music textbooks in Finnish. A textbook by B.L. Frosterus (1871) was sharply criticized because its language was considered faulty. Despite many hopeful expressions in the press no further textbooks were published. As a rule singing was taught by ear and occasionally the blackboard was used in teaching the reading of notes.

### **The Psalmodicon and the Violin as Instrumental Aids.**

As only very few pipe or reed organs were available, church wardens also used other instruments. The easiest to acquire and master was the psalmodicon which had been brought to Finland from Sweden at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Adequate instructions made it easy to build one, and the easy-to-follow rules taught the playing of simple melodies, such as hymns. Soon the psalmodicon became very popular despite the resistance of those who were eager to raise the professional standards of the church wardens; for them it was too simple. Those people preferred the violin, because for playing it a certain degree of musicality was needed. However, the psalmodicon won out over the violin because only few were privileged enough to learn to play it. The psalmodicon was used in Finland well into the twentieth century.

#### **Four-Part Congregational Singing.**

In some towns attempts were made to introduce four-part singing after German and Swedish models, which was considered the authentic Lutheran church song. In many parishes four-part singing was in fact the only possibility to make polyphonic music and it was hoped that this would make the church folk receptive for music education on a more advanced level. In some places good results were achieved, in many others there was resistance because it was very demanding and excluded a large part of the congregation from singing the hymns. In practice, four-part congregational singing meant that one part of the congregation sang while the others were listening. For all practical purposes the former constituted a choir who were singing the hymns, or at least a step leading to one. Because of the difficulties inherent in four-part singing, the importance of a unison "cantor" choir began to be emphasized. Such a group was to lead the congregational singing and encourage the worshippers to join in song. Often this was a group of pupils although attempts were made to include adult members of the parish as well.

#### **The Organ.**

The few organs that existed in mid-nineteenth-century Finland were found primarily in the coastal areas where Swedish was spoken. In the Finnish areas there was great hesitancy about purchasing organs mainly because of the expense. The districts were nevertheless encouraged to purchase organs and it was hoped that this would lead Finland further on its way to being a nation of culture. However the main reason for purchasing organs was the hope for a speedy invigorating of congregational singing. Cynics maintained that organs were needed in order to drown out the awful cacophony of the people's voices. The proper use of organs in public worship was discussed at pastors' conferences and in newspaper commentaries. The importance of the organ in supporting hymn singing was pointed out and its wrong use much criticized. The criticism was directed chiefly against too loud and incompetent playing which only served to confuse rather than support congregational singing. Occasionally the criticism was directed at whether or not certain postludes selected by organists for the conclusion of the service were appropriate. Despite these varying opinions about the organ supporting and accompanying congregational singing, its positive influence on public education in general and hymn singing in particular was considered more important, which is why, during the second half of the century, the number of organs increased substantially.

#### **The Lack of a Common Melody Book.**

In addition to the lack of the church wardens' professionalism, congregational singing was made more difficult by the lack of a common codex of hymn tunes. The last melody book before 1850 had appeared in 1702. Consequently the resources for singing were memory and handwritten tune books. None of this made for uniformity in singing and even led to competition among various variant tunes. After the middle of the century private publishers printed numerous tune books, some of which were furnished with number notation for the psalmodicon. The melodies in those collections varied greatly from one another and did not contribute to nation-wide uniformity in congregational singing. The majority of tune books attempted to provide usable melodies for the hymns in the 1702 hymnal which is the reason why the differences between the tune books were not between the tunes as such but between the variants of one and the same tune. The purpose of the tune books was primarily to provide acceptable common tunes for those hymns which the people knew and loved. The official hymnal committee submitted in 1867-1868 a proposal for a hymnal with tunes. However, the tunes were rejected because they contained too many that were unknown and unfamiliar.

Related to the question of nationality were two trends in the renewal of hymn melodies before 1886. Those adhering to a Finnish nationalist persuasion wanted tunes that corresponded to the customs and traditions of the people. This included the collections which consisted of strictly isometric melodies and which rejected the 1702 collection and any rhythmic forms. Those of a pan-European persuasion on the other hand wanted to return to the common pan-European tradition of the Lutheran Church and to teach the Finnish people the hymns of the Lutheran Reformation era and the following century in as authentic a form as possible. Rudolf Lagi (1823-1868) took the first step in this pan-European direction with the proposal of the hymnal committee. This trend is even more apparent in Lagi's chorale book of 1871. Otto Immanuel Colliander (1848-1924) on his part emphatically promoted the idea of adapting the rhythms to the tradition of the Reformation era.

The tune books published around the middle of the nineteenth century and later aimed on the whole at unifying congregational singing. From the viewpoint of the Finnish nationalist endeavors

there were, however, differences among these books. This can be seen most clearly in comparing the selections of tunes for their books by Antti Adam Nordlund (1808-1880) in 1850 and by D.H. Kukkasela (1814-1858) in 1857. Nordlund copied rather closely the Swedish chorale book by Johann Christian Friedrich H effner (1759-1833), thus basically favoring the German tradition of the turn of the century. Kukkasela on the other hand looked for the tune variants in Finnish handwritten collections as well as for tunes which he had heard sung in churches. Several other collections also made special efforts at recording the tunes heard in churches. Kukkasela's nationalist endeavor was however soon overtaken by Nordlund's, chiefly because of the strength of the latter's collection, its four-part music, and its earlier date of publication. Rudolf Lagi, too, had originally tried to make those the common hymn tunes of the church that were most widely used by the people, but he soon had to give up the attempt. He then looked for hymns whose tunes, if not their rhythms, were of Lutheran origin. A side issue entered into the discussion when it was discovered that in some circles religious texts were sung to well-known secular tunes. The people wanted to sing their religious songs to livelier tunes than those of the regular hymns. Otto Immanuel Colliander's demand for a rhythmic restoration of the hymns was partly founded on his rejection of this undesirable phenomenon. The melody reform of the hymnal was actually not influenced by proposals for the use of secular melodies, whereas religious folk tunes and variants were increasingly incorporated.

### **Folk Tunes and Variants.**

The main point of the preliminary discussions for the church synod of 1886 was the creation of a nation-wide uniform canon of hymn tunes. Although during that phase of the discussion the nationalist and pan-European factions were on opposite sides, there was also evidence of a willingness to compromise. The importance of the folk tunes and the customs and wishes of the parishes themselves had become evident afresh and in a new way. People had come to realize that the actual mode of singing in the parishes could not be ignored, and it was therefore proposed that a committee be formed in which the congregations with the best singing from all over Finland would be represented.

The synod of 1886 approved the text-only edition of the hymnal and charged a committee with compiling an appropriate melody book. In principle the synod supported the Finnish nationalist endeavors for guaranteeing to the people the use of the well-known and beloved tunes and their variants. In practice this meant that the canon of hymn tunes was to retain as faithfully as possible the tunes and variants of the second edition of Nordlund's chorale book, edited by Erik August Hagfors (1827-1913). Colliander, who was indifferent to all Finnish nationalist tendencies, represented the almost completely opposite pan-European stance on the chorale book committee.

The situation developed dramatically in the course of a few years. Together with his coworker, Richard Faltin (1835-1918), Otto Immanuel Colliander published a chorale book which contained many German hymns both in isometric as well as rhythmically restored forms. Richard Faltin was a German church musician who had worked all his life in Finland. These two men were not interested in the Finnish folk tunes and the Finnish nationalist idea. Especially Colliander was of the opinion that the original, rhythmic Reformation hymns were the true hymns of the Christian people. But the spirit of the times and its new ideas passed those men by. Several young university students who were collectors of folk tunes had also heard religious folk songs and hymn variants. The first publication of those tunes appeared in 1891 under the title *Kansan Lahja Kirkolle* [The people's gift to the church]. The public had, as it were, at last discovered the spiritual folk tunes and hymn variants, which meant that even the educated people had discovered them, for the common people had always known them. The discussion in the church synod was given a new direction. Colliander's attempts to restore the German Reformation hymns were forgotten and instead as many folk tunes as possible were proposed for the new melody book. It had become important to recognize the value of the folk tunes and to discover a new dimension of the national culture of the Finnish people.

Thus the Finnish national tunes found their way into the official hymnal. At the beginning of the twentieth century their number was not yet large but the principle behind it was more important than numbers, namely the recognition that the Finnish folk tunes and variants were legitimate Christian hymn melodies. That meant that the Finnish people were a legitimate, Christian nation indeed.

(Trans. H.T.D.)