

Report To The WLS Board Of Control And The Board For World Missions, Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod

[Presented to the World Mission Seminary Conference held in El Paso, Texas in 1978]

By Siegbert W. Becker

In response to a request from Biblicum, the Bible Research Center in Uppsala, Sweden, and the WELS Board for World Missions, the undersigned was given permission by the Board of Control of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to spend three months in Sweden to assist the Lutheran Confessional Church in Sweden (hereafter LBKS) in its program of in-service training of its present pastors and-in the development of a seminary program for its future pastors.

Biblicum will begin a program of theological instruction designed to prepare pastors for the LBKS in September of 1977. The plans for this program were already well-advanced by the time we arrived in Sweden on March 4, 1977.

A series of lectures dealing with the interpretation of Paul's letter to the Romans had been arranged for the 7th to the 9th of March. Four lectures were given each day, two in the morning from 10 a.m. to noon, and two in the afternoon from 3 to 5 p.m. The lectures were given in English, with a translation by Dr. Seth Erlandsson, the director of Biblicum, and they were recorded on cassettes by Mr. Paul Walljö, a member of St. Matthew's congregation in Uppsala.

Although the lectures were based on the Greek text and were intended especially for the pastors, laymen were also invited to attend. None of the pastors from northern Sweden were present, but all the pastors from the south attended with the exception of Bror Roslund, who serves as assistant in St. John's of Yxenhult and St. Mark's in Ljungby. A pastor of the Finnish state church and a pastor of the Swedish Alliance also attended, as well as a number of laymen and a theological student from Gothenburg. The average attendance at the lectures was between ten and twenty.

Many of the pastors of the LBKS are former lay preachers, who have never had formal theological training, but who have been examined by the Doctrinal Commission of the LBKS and have been ordained.

On Friday, March 11, Mrs. Backer and I, together with Dr. Erlandsson, left Uppsala by train for Gothenburg, where Dr. Erlandsson and I were scheduled to deliver a number of lectures on Saturday and Sunday. Pastor Ingemar Furberg had arranged for two so-called "Church Days," as a celebration of the organization of Holy Trinity Congregation in Gothenburg, which had taken place on March 10. I lectured on the subject "Conversion" on Saturday, preached on Sunday, and delivered a second lecture on "Confession in a Time of Apostasy" on Sunday afternoon.

On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, March 21-23, I delivered a series of twelve lectures on the Revelation of St. John. Millennialism has made great inroads into conservative circles in Scandinavia and these lectures were designed to counteract that trend and to help the LBKS pastors and laymen to resist this false doctrine. Seven of the eleven pastors were present and the total attendance at the lectures varied from about 20 to 30.

On Thursday, March 24, Mrs. Becker and I left for Stavanger, Norway, where a Biblicum course on "God's People Israel" had been arranged at the invitation of a group of conservative Lutherans in Norway, who are interested in the formation of a free, confessional church. The lecture series was given from Friday evening until Sunday afternoon and consisted of twelve lectures in all. Of the twelve I delivered three, two on "Israel and Justification" and one on "Israel In Romans." Attendance varied from about 100 to 175. Dr. Erlandsson delivered all the other lectures. On Sunday morning the LBKS arranged for an "exploratory service" in Stavanger and the people attending the lectures were invited to attend. About 140 people were present for the service and they indicated a strong interest in the formation of a free confessional congregation in Stavanger. I preached at the service and on Sunday afternoon was asked to deliver an extra lecture on "What Shall We Do?", dealing especially with false doctrine and church fellowship. It may be of some interest to the members of the

Seminary Board and of the Board for World Missions that the lectures which I delivered in 1972 in Sweden were published in book form with the title "*Skriften och Saligheten*." These lectures were translated also into Norwegian and were being sold at the school where the lectures were held, and the book was referred to in a letter published in a Stavanger daily paper while we were there. We returned from Stavanger on March 31 by way of Bergen. On Palm Sunday, April 3, I was asked to preach in St. Matthew's in Uppsala. Since Dr. Erlandson was out of town and no one was available to translate, I preached in Swedish.

The following Saturday and Sunday, April 9 and 10, we spent in Ljungby, in southern Sweden. Dr. Erlandsson and I delivered a number of Biblicum lectures there on Saturday. About 70 people were present. The subject of my lecture was "The Bible in the Present Situation." In the church service on Easter Sunday I delivered the sermon, with Dr. Erlandsson again translating.

Since Easter Monday is a legal holiday in Sweden, the next series of lectures, on "Biblical Doctrines" was held on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of Easter week, April 12-14. The doctrines treated were the doctrine of the church, the person of Christ, the Trinity, the bondage of the will and conversion, election, and Christian liberty. The attendance was between about 16 and 20 per lecture.

On April 22 and 23 Dr. Erlandsson and I delivered several lectures each at Markaryd in southern Sweden. On Saturday I delivered two lectures on "What Is Our Confession?" and "What Does It Mean to be Confessionally Faithful?" On Sunday afternoon I lectured on "Millennialism."

At the invitation of a man who is interested in the LBKS we stayed a day longer than originally scheduled and on Monday we drove by car to Kylinge near the southern coast of Sweden, where I delivered two lectures on Monday evening, on "Conversion" and a second on "Lutheran Confessionalism Today."

After we returned from Markaryd on Tuesday, April 26, we decided to try to make a visit to Dr. Ernst Lerle in Halle. Dr. Lerle had been scheduled to visit Biblicum early in March, but the government of East Germany refused permission for such a trip. Dr. Lerle did not think that we could get to Halle because of travel restrictions. but Pastor Renz, our chaplain in Europe, thought that such a visit was possible. Because the CICR had encouraged the trip to Halle, we left Sweden on Friday evening, spent the night in Braunschweig, where we met the Renz's, and on Sunday morning drove with them to Berlin, where I preached for Pastor Renz at an army chapel.

We were able to get to Halle, but because of all the red tape involved in getting permission first to enter East Berlin, and then to enter East Germany, we did not arrive there until about 5 p.m. We spent the next five hours in the Lerle home discussing the situation in the free church in the eastern zones. We returned to Sweden on Wednesday evening, May 4.

On Friday, May 7, we left for Råneå, not far from the arctic circle, where I was scheduled to deliver several lectures and to preach. On Saturday I lectured on "Evangelical Lutheran Faith in Times of Apostasy." There were over 60 people present. The lecture was given in the basement of the Engquist home, which has been remodeled to serve as a beautiful place of worship, St. Peter's Chapel.

On Sunday, we had services at a chapel about 16 miles from Råneå. Since it was Reformation Day in Sweden, I preached on Revelations 14:6,7. There were about 125 people at the service since all the congregations in northern Sweden were invited. In the afternoon I lectured again on "Conversion."

We spent several free days in northern Sweden after the lectures in Råneå. Mrs. Becker stayed with Mrs. Engquist while Pastor Engquist and I together with two members of his congregation took a fishing trip to the northernmost lake in Sweden.

We returned to Uppsala on May 14 where I was scheduled to deliver a final series of lectures on "The Books of the New Testament" from May 16 to 18. Several pastors from the free church in Finland were intending to attend that series of lectures but because of a transportation strike they could not come. For the first time an actual count was made of the people present and one day there were 30 people in attendance. Because I was under the impression that there were less than 30, I am sure that all the previous figures for attendance in Uppsala should be raised by at least 5 or 10.

During our last eleven days in Uppsala I worked on the translation of several Swedish articles dealing with the LBKS and in writing out my comments on the book of Revelation. I finished only the introduction and the first chapter. We took off two days to do some sightseeing in Stockholm. We left Sweden on the morning of May 30th, arriving in Chicago at 4:30 the same afternoon. One more thing may be mentioned. Paul Walljö made tape recordings of all the lectures in Uppsala and Biblicum offered the cassettes for sale. Each lecture series consists of six tapes with the exception of the Revelation course which consists of seven. By the time we left they had sold 18 sets of the looms lectures, 31 of the Revelation series, 9 of the lectures on Biblical Doctrines, and 7 on the Books of the New Testament, for a total of 421 Individual cassettes. When we were in Stavanger, Ole Brandal, one of the lay preachers there who had bought a set of the Romans cassettes, had made a number of copies on his tape recorder for distribution in Norway.

During the three months in Sweden I consulted a number of times with Dr. Erlandsson about their plans for the training of new pastors. Because their situation is so very different from ours they will have to experiment for a few years before they establish firm policies. They expect that it will be necessary to send their students to Mequon for a year in order to get the more practical courses that their men will need. However, the decision on that matter will need to be delayed for a time They are committed to a strong confessional seminary and do not intend to establish a school of religion, but they are still not certain what this means in terms of practical implementation.

Last of all. I would like to thank the Board for World Missions and the Seminary Board of Control for the opportunity to spend these three months with the brethren In Sweden. I am sure that the seminary exchange program is a blessing not only to the visited seminary, but it ought to make our faculty members more grateful for the fine facilities and opportunities we have here in America for the training of pastors, and inspire them to more devoted service in the Lord's vineyard. God grant that this may be the result of this visit to Sweden.