

The Churchman

For fifty years I have known Dr. Pihlblad. I was in the second class of Augustana Academy when he was a senior in the Theological Seminary. In age he was my senior by nine years. During the next twenty-five years I viewed him from afar, but with great admiration, as his illustrious career unfolded.

During the last twenty-five years we have been friends. We discovered that we had much in common. It began when I visited Bethany College during the first World War to establish a Lutheran Brotherhood Center in connection with the R. O. T. C. I spent several days with him in Lindsborg and in Kansas City, whither we went to buy the furniture and equipment. I marveled at his grasp of practical affairs, his erudition, his urbanity, his uncanny ability to evaluate men, his keen, analytical mind, his quiet and wise decisions, his gift of humor and his Christian brotherliness and humility. Since then he has continued to grow in my esteem. He was in the finest sense an "all-around man." Once he told a brother pastor that he liked him because he was a Christian realist. He answered that this must be because he recognized in a lesser brother a faint reflection of a quality that he possessed in a superlative degree.

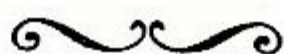
An evening spent in intimate conversation with Dr. Pihlblad was enriching both to mind and soul. My last evening with him was in his home in Lindsborg on May 8, 1943, together with another intimate friend, Dr. Victor Spong. I cherish that memory with gratitude. His philosophical observations concerning people and events, his reminiscences from travels and life-experiences, his whimsical humor, his big-heartedness and genuine piety were refreshing and stimulating.

Dr. Pihlblad was used by God in a large way in the upbuilding of our Synod, particularly in the realm of Christian Higher Education. His stature will grow in the perspective of the years to come. He lives on in the institution to which he gave his life's endeavor. He lives on in the thousands of lives that he influenced for good, for both time and eternity.

The Augustana Synod thanks God for this noble servant of Christ who passed on into the heavenly jubilee in the golden jubilee year of his ordination as a pastor.

P. O. BERSELL.

(President, Lutheran Augustana Synod, Minneapolis, Minnesota.)



President Pihlblad was already a veteran in Lutheran educational circles when I entered the fellowship, first as dean of the Seminary and later as president of Augustana. My memories of him are associated naturally with those of my predecessor, Dr. Gustav Andreen.

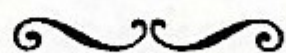
Often they were together at the meetings of the Lutheran Educational Conference, the Association of American Colleges, and of our own Synod, and I cannot help but recall the contrasting impressions they left. One was exuberant, impulsive — the other moved more deliberately and calmly. The one was subjective, the other more objective. But both reverted easily to their beloved institutions whenever they spoke, and both represented those institutions in a way that made you feel that Augustana and Bethany were personally present.

Certainly it would be difficult for any one to distinguish in Dr. Pihlblad between the man and the president of Bethany. Institutions can be incarnated, almost, in a man! When I think of Bethany, I think of Carl Swensson, and Kansas, of the art of Sandzen, and the music of the Messiah Chorus. And are not these exactly the things I think of when I recall E. F. Pihlblad? Carl Swensson's oratory re-echoed in him. Kansas claimed him for large public services. In his thought and feeling one felt the clean, colorful sweep of the prairies in Sandzen, and the heaven aspiring reach of Handel and Bach. We sometimes speak of persons interpreting localities or generations. Here was a man who spoke for a people and made articulate their faith and their emotions. When he goes, something more than an individual leaves us.

Yet he would have been heart-sick, if he had felt that what he had voiced and represented would pass away with himself. He gave himself so whole-heartedly to Bethany because he believed that what Bethany meant to the Church and Kansas and to the nation was enduring and immortal. The best tribute we can pay his memory is our resolve to hold to those convictions, come what may, and to pray that in the grace of God the spirit of Bethany shall find incorporation in a still greater institution and more splendid community.

CONRAD BERGENDOFF.

(President Augustana College and Theological Seminary, Rock Island, Illinois.)



Few of our pastors have spent their days so close to each other as have Dr. Pihlblad and I. We attended the seminary at Augustana together and were ordained at the same time in St. Peter, Minnesota, June 10, 1894. For the last 40 years our lot has fallen in Lindsborg, Kansas, where he was president of Bethany College and I pastor of the Bethany Church. He was a member of my church all the time and I was a member of the College Board for some 30 years and a teacher some 15 years. We have let each one rule in his sphere of work, discussed problems, but never quarreled. He was quite active in politics and I never forgot to vote.

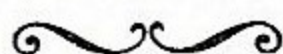
In trying to portray our relationship to each other these many years perhaps it is proper to use his own words, as he wrote to me

when the Bethany Church and the Lindsborg community celebrated my 77th birthday and Dr. Pihlblad was unavoidably hindered from being present: "It is generally conceded that the greatest difficulty is to get along with their nearest neighbors. That this is just one more popular fallacy is proven by my brother Bergin and myself. In the service of the two different groups, yet closely allied, Bethany Church and Bethany College, I feel that we have managed to get along with a fair degree of decency. From time to time there have been differences of opinion on questions that would arise, but though serious at times, they have never seriously disturbed our friendship. The sincerity of our friendship came home to me especially after the serious automobile accident which came to my home in 1938. I have been told that each morning the first one to come to the hospital to inquire about my condition was Dr. Bergin. Let me thank you brother Bergin for your sincere solicitude about my welfare during these dark months". "Tack för gott kamratskap!"

Dr. Pihlblad was born in Missouri and I in dear old Sweden. Both were proud of our ancestry and thankful to God for our United States.

ALFRED BERGIN.

(Pastor Emeritus, Bethany Lutheran Church, Lindsborg, Kansas.)



The Holy Scriptures record that "He gave some to be apostles, some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ". (Eph. 4:11-12) Ernst F. Pihlblad as a youth heard the call and devoted his life to the Church as a Christian pastor and college president.

We thank God for men like Dr. Pihlblad who during the past decades up to the present have heeded the call to repeat the testimony of the apostles and evangelists. Upon graduation from Bethany College in 1891, Ernst Pihlblad matriculated at Augustana Theological Seminary in the fall of that year. He was ordained as pastor at St. Peter, Minnesota, on June 10, 1894 on a call to Paterson and Passaic, New Jersey. With the exception of two years, Dr. Pihlblad has given his entire ministry to the Kansas Conference of the Augustana Lutheran Church.

During his long tenure as college president, Dr. Pihlblad served as vice-pastor in several nearby congregations. He was repeatedly called upon to deliver anniversary sermons and addresses in the local congregations, not only in Kansas, but in many other states. Dr. Pihlblad's sermons on the Reformation were masterpieces. He had a wide knowledge of the Lutheran Doctrines and showed clearly how these doctrines conformed to God's Holy Word. Dr. Pihlblad also had a special gift of speaking words of comfort at funeral services. He was

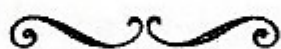
untiring in visiting the sick, and, those in distress always found in him a sympathetic friend.

He retained his interest in the ministry and pastoral service until the last. In order not to lose contact with regular congregational work, Dr. Pihlblad served as pastor of the Falun Lutheran Church for a period of sixteen years. The last communion service he arranged in the Falun Church was in connection with the Salina District meeting held there a few days before his departure from this life. A special feeling of solemnity and the nearness of God prevailed. Together, Dr. Pihlblad, brethren of the district and members of the congregation proclaimed their faith in the Lord Jesus. The writer of this statement well remembers the satisfaction reflected in the features of Dr. Pihlblad as this festive service came to its conclusion. For thirty years, friendly relationships had continued between Dr. Pihlblad and the writer. Little did we realize that this was our last meeting together.

Not only in the Falun Church, where he served as pastor so long, but in the Bethany and Messiah Churches at Lindsborg where he assisted from time to time through many years, he was loved by young and old, as a congenial and sympathetic friend and shepherd of souls, "Christ and Him Crucified" was the central theme in all of Dr. Pihlblad's messages.

J. E. LILJEDAHN.

(Pastor, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Salina, Kansas.)



The Falun Church, during the greater part of her existence, has been favored with distinguished ministers from Bethany College. We, no doubt, owe our very existence today to these generous and self-sacrificing men.

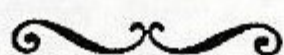
The present generation remembers especially Dr. Pihlblad and what he meant to us in his sixteen years of service. How well we recall his meagre salary and yet, at the annual meeting, he somehow managed to return a large part of it to the treasury.

He enjoyed his relationship with young people and through his influence many attended Bethany College. These young people always found a warm welcome at "The President's" home in Lindsborg. He showed further interest in the young people through his participation in Luther League activities. No program was complete without a message from Dr. Pihlblad.

Many of Dr. Pihlblad's friends wondered why he concerned himself with Falun but always he would reply that his first calling was to be a minister and other things came second. He had many of his closest friends in Falun and was very dear to all of us. He enjoyed his trips out here and physical handicaps did not hinder him. His determination to keep going after his accident was an inspiration to us all.

Falun congregation thanks God for Dr. Pihlblad and may our prayer be that we will not fail him.

HARRIETT NEYWICK,
(Falun, Kansas.)



When the summons of death came to Dr. Ernst Frederick Pihlblad on December 9, not only the Augustana Synod but the entire Lutheran Church in America lost an outstanding leader and churchman. For forty years his life had been intimately linked with the work of Bethany College, and, as such, he had exerted a profound influence on the lives of many others who have gone forth from that hall of learning to become themselves leaders in Church and State.

As a protege of the great Carl Swensson, it became the duty of the pupil to take up the mantle of leadership which had fallen from his master's shoulders when death interrupted the labors of the latter at the height of his career in 1904. Dr. Pihlblad was only thirty-one years old at that time, but he met his new responsibilities with a confidence and courage that could have been born only of an undaunted Christian faith. Bethany College and Lindsborg, Kansas, through Dr. Swensson's efforts, had become famous throughout the Middle West because of its great "Messiah" festivals. Under Dr. Pihlblad's leadership, Bethany's fame went abroad in still wider circles and Lindsborg became the musical Oberammergau of America. When the cultural history of the United States is written, the institution over which he presided for nearly four decades and the prairie community in Kansas where Bethany has its home will undoubtedly occupy a large place in that story.

But Dr. Pihlblad also cherished high ideals concerning the duties of the Christian citizen to the State. Although he refused lucrative positions in the political world—as, for instance, when Governor Landon of Kansas offered to appoint him as State Treasurer—he deemed it his duty to take an interest in the affairs of the community and state. At a personal sacrifice, he served his district as State Senator for some time. He also accepted membership on the State Textbook Commission and the State Board of Education. When the State Civil Service Board was organized, he became its chairman, and it was while attending a meeting of this body in Topeka, Kansas, that he was suddenly laid low by death.

The Augustana Synod and the Church at large share the great loss with the people of Kansas. Men of such lofty ideals, Christian culture, and gracious personality always leave behind them "a lone-some place against the sky." Ernst Pihlblad will be deeply missed.

E. E. RYDEN.

(Editorial in the *Lutheran Companion*, December 29, 1943.)



Prince Wilhelm of Sweden and Dr. Pihlblad.