

Lappeenranta 1998 & Moscow 2002

The Eleventh and Twelfth
Theological Discussions between
the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and
the Russian Orthodox Church

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Foreword

The Eleventh and Twelfth Theological Discussions between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church

The Eleventh Theological Discussions between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church were held in Lappeenranta, Finland, 12-19 October 1998. As before, the discussions were divided into two parts. In the first of these, the topic was approached from the perspective of principle and dogma, while the other adopted practical and socio-ethical points of view. The topics for the discussions in Lappeenranta were “The freedom of a Christian, the freedom of the church and the freedom of religion” and “Relations between the church, the state and society”. Both of these topics were discussed within the frame of three presentations, all of which are included in this volume.

The Twelfth Theological Discussions between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church were held at the Danilov Monastery in Moscow, 28 September-5 October 2002. Their aim was to produce a joint evaluation of the discussions held since 1970 and also to plan further meetings. The delegates paid particular attention to the changes that have taken

place in the life of all the churches in recent years with respect to theology, social thinking, ecumenical activities and relations between church and state, and church and society. In this Moscow dialogue the following issues were seen as crucial: the sources of faith and doctrine, teachings with regard to prayer, the content of social ethics, and the reception given to the previous doctrinal conversations.

Theological Conversations between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church go back more than forty years. The very first talks were held in Turku, Finland, from 19-22 March 1970. In the course of the subsequent forty years, many changes have occurred in the life of the two Churches. The Russian Orthodox Church in particular has entered into a new phase in her existence. With the collapse of Communism, church-state relations were re-established on a new basis, and the functional possibilities of the Russian Orthodox Church's acquired a completely new level.

In practical terms, discussions have generally focused on two main lines. The first of these has been a dogmatic theme, while the second has had a socio-ethical focus. The dogmatic themes were chosen from among the central topics of Christian dogmatics. Hence, in 1970 the dogmatic topic was the Communion, which was continued in the following two rounds of discussion. In Kiev in 1977, soteriology was chosen as the main focus, and was subsequently treated in two further rounds of discussions (Turku 1980 and Mikkeli 1986). Also within this period, in Leningrad 1983, the principal topic was ecclesiology. From Pyhtitsa 1989 onwards, however, no single dogmatic theme has dominated for such a long period: in Pyhtitsa the topic was Creation, in Järvenpää 1992 the Apostolic faith, in Kiev 1995 the Mission of the church and in Lappeenranta 1998 the Freedom of a Christian/the freedom of religion.

In his treatise *Faith and Holiness. Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue 1959-1994* Risto Saarinen has estimated that the period when soteriology

was at the forefront of attention was the most remarkable of the discussions. According to Saarinen, the main result of this has been a rapprochement in the soteriological views of the two Churches¹. The Finnish side has been keen to see a convergence here, even though the Lutheran doctrine of justification and the Orthodox doctrine of theosis cannot be regarded as identical. Some Russian commentaries also appear to indicate that Russian Orthodox theologians do not regard the convergence as having been as far-reaching as do the Lutherans.²

Together with the doctrinal theme a socio-ethical theme has also been taken up in the discussions. In the Soviet era this socio-ethical theme dealt repeatedly with peace in its many forms. The domestic political and ecumenical situation in the Soviet Union and Russia largely dictated that the theme of peace should dominate as the socio-ethical theme. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, this theme was absent at Pyhtitsa 1989, nor was it treated at Järvenpää 1992 or Lappeenranta 1998. It can, indeed, be concluded that the Pyhtitsa round of discussions, and the Järvenpää and Kiev rounds that followed, all very much reflected the breaking of boundaries. The theological discussions at Järvenpää (1992) and at Kiev (1995) might even be considered as historic in this respect, since these were the first discussions to be held after the disintegration of the Soviet socialist system.

Although more detailed research into the early stages of the discussions between the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church has taken only its first few steps, on a more general level the following details may be noted.

1 Risto Saarinen, *Faith and Holiness. Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue 1959-1994*, p. 8.

2 Juhani Forsberg, *Mihin olemme tulleet ja mitä seuraavaksi? – Venäläisneuvottelujen valmisteluseminaari 24. 5. 2000.* (only in Finnish)

Firstly, the official documents contain only rather limited descriptions of the goals of the dialogues. Nevertheless, much has been said and published elsewhere, with the consequence that, even from outside the process, a picture of the reality can be discerned. A joint view of the discussions has been published in a number of communiqués – Sinappi (1970), Zagorsk (1971), Järvenpää (1974), Kiev (1977), Turku (1980), Leningrad (1983), Pyhtitsa (1989) and Järvenpää (1992). It is perhaps the Kiev (1977) communiqué that captures the spirit of the discussion most vividly: “The parties stress the importance that the bilateral theological conversations have with respect to the wider ecumenical movement and theological dialogue. When future theological conversations and their themes reach the planning stage, attention needs to be paid to making use of their resolutions in support of wider ecumenical cooperation.”

Secondly, it can be stated that the topics introduced in the earliest stages of the discussions have proven to be both relevant and sustaining. The discussions have continued without interruption despite the radical changes in the political environment. As Professor Eino Murtorinne noted in his foreword to the Järvenpää (1992) discussions: “The great change in the political situation did not have any significant impact on the general character of these theological discussions, which the two churches have been conducting for more than thirty years. Accordingly, the delegations were mainly composed of the same members as in previous years. This is an indicator of the fact that these discussions have never relied on ‘political trends’ but have aimed at a genuine inter-church dialogue.”³

Thirdly, it can be noted that since 1995 – when Russia began increasingly to open up to the rest of Europe – Finnish-Russian

3 Eino Murtorinne, Foreword to *The Eleventh Theological Discussions between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church*, p. 7. – Documents of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, 1993.

theological discussions have also developed inwardly, and not merely as dictated by the outer political situation. The new political situation has, however, also provided the Russian Orthodox Church with an opportunity to be an active and serious partaker in discussions on socio-ethical issues. This has been especially evident at the Sinappi (2005) and St Petersburg (2008) discussions. On the latter occasion, the talks were no longer arranged, in accordance with the older tradition, to focus on separate doctrinal and socio-ethical topics. Instead, discussions centred on two socio-ethical themes: human rights and religious education, for which presentations were given by both the Lutheran and the Orthodox sides.

The latest phase in the discussions is now concerned primarily with the socio-ethical roles played by the two churches. With the opening of the borders with Russia the social changes have been accompanied by change in the socio-ethical formulation of the questions posed. In the place of topics such as the peaceful co-existence of nations and nationalities, the individual human being and his or her dignity have emerged at the centre of the debate. Alongside this change in focus a very obvious observation can be made, to the effect that, in the context of globalization, clear boundaries have also seemed to disappear in Europe. This represents the need for a challenging dialogue amongst the different religions and Christian churches.

The documents now available from the Lappeenranta (1998) and Moscow (2002) theological discussions interestingly reflect the enormous political, cultural and social shifts in values that occurred after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Naturally, this volume, which is devoted to the Eleventh and Twelfth round of Theological Discussions between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church, does not contain a complete record of the discussions held in Lappeenranta and in Moscow, but the most important documents of the discussions have been included in it. In conclusion, therefore, we hope that this book

may serve the interests of inter-confessional cooperation and help to foster discussions in many other forums devoted to ecumenical commitment and ecumenical theology.

Joensuu, 28th February 2011

Matti Kotiranta

Lappeenranta 1998

Communiqué

on the Eleventh Theological Discussions between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church.

The eleventh round of theological discussions between delegations from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church were held on 12th – 19th October 1998 in the old town hall of Lappeenranta. The first such discussions had been held at Sinappi, Turku, Finland, in 1970, the second in Zagorsk, Russia/USSR, in 1971, the third at Järvenpää, Finland, in 1974, the fourth in Kiev, Ukraine/USSR, in 1977, the fifth again in Turku in 1980, the sixth in Leningrad, Russia/USSR, in 1983, the seventh in Mikkeli, Finland, in 1986, the eighth at the Orthodox Convent of the Dormition at Pyhtitsa, Estonia/USSR, and in Leningrad, in 1989, the ninth at Järvenpää in 1992, and the tenth at the Convent of the Ascension of Christ (Florov) in Kiev, Ukraine, in 1995.

The members of the delegation from the Evangelical Lutheran

Church of Finland were as follows: The Most Rev. Dr. John **VIKSTRÖM**, Archbishop of Turku and Finland and honorary member of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy (head of the delegation); Right Rev. Dr. Voitto **HUOTARI**, Bishop of Mikkeli; the Right Rev. Dr. Juha **PIHKALA**, Bishop of Tampere; Rev. Dr. Hans-Olof **KVIST**, professor in the Faculty of Theology in Åbo Academy University, Turku; Rev. Dr. Antti **LAATO**, docent in the Faculty of Theology, Åbo Academy University; Rev. Dr. Matti **KOTIRANTA**, research assistant in the Department of Orthodox and East European Church Studies, Faculty of Theology, University of Helsinki; and Ms. Sylvia **RAULO**, B.A., programme officer of Finnchurchaid.

The delegates representing the Russian Orthodox Church were: His Eminence Metropolitan **VLADIMIR** of St. Petersburg and Ladoga (head of the delegation); His Eminence Bishop **TIKHON** of Arkhangelsk and Kholmogory; Archimandrite **YANNUARY** (Ivliyev), docent at the St. Petersburg Theological Academy; Very Rev. Archpriest Viktor **LYTIK** of the Pokrova parish in Helsinki (under the Patriarchate of Moscow); Very Rev. Archpriest Vladimir **MUSTAFIN**, professor at the St. Petersburg Theological Academy; Hieromonk **HILARION** (Alfeyev), Secretary in the Department of External Church Relations at the Patriarchate of Moscow; Rev. Vsevolod **CHAPLIN**, public relations secretary in the same department; Professor A. I. **OSIPOV** of the Moscow Theological Academy; Ms. Elena S. **SPERANSKAYA**, member of the secretariat of the Department of External Church Relations at the Patriarchate of Moscow; and Mr. V. A. **CHUKALOV**, assistant to the chairman of the same department.

The observers invited by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland were Bishop Aarre **KUUKAUPPI** and the Rev. Sergei **PREIMAN** of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia, Bishop **PANTELEIMON** and Rev. Timo **TYNKKYNEN** of the Orthodox Church of Finland, and, representing the Finnish Ecumenical

Council, its secretary-general, Jan **EDSTRÖM** (Baptist), and Rev. Stanislaw **SZYMAJDA** (Roman Catholic).

The advisors to the Finnish delegation were Rev. Dr. Risto **CANTELL**, Executive Director of the Department for International Relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, Rev. Dr. Juhani **FORSBERG**, Executive Secretary for Theology in the same department, and Rev. Heikki **JÄÄSKELÄINEN**, Secretary to the Archbishop.

Ms. Helena *Pavinsky* and Ms. Tarja *Leppäaho* acted as interpreters during the discussions, and Rev. Jaakko *Kuusela* and Rev. Reino *Tillanen* worked as translators. Rev. Timo *Frilander*, Ms. Marina *Latschinoff*, M.Sc., and Ms. Minna *Väliaho*, administrative assistant in the church's Department for International Relations, acted as secretaries to the meeting.

At the opening of the theological discussions in the old town hall of Lappeenranta on Monday, October 12th, Archbishop Vikström noted that reaching the number eleven in these discussions showed that this had become a well-established form of contact between the two churches. They were meeting as long-standing friends, and most of the individual delegates were not meeting each other for the first time.

“As we come together again we feel deep gratitude towards those leaders of our churches who worked on the far-reaching initiative to start these doctrinal discussions back in the 1960’s. Today we especially remember Metropolitan Nikodim of Leningrad and Novgorod, who passed away exactly twenty years ago in the autumn, and we are also grateful to Dr. Martti Simojoki, Archbishop Emeritus of Finland, who celebrated his ninetieth birthday last month.”

“This time, as we turn our attention to the fundamental questions of religious freedom, we are again discussing an issue that is important not only to ourselves but to many others. A deeper understanding of this matter can help us and also those who represent other churches and religions, and even those who have no religious belief at all, to live with each other and to arrange our relationships in a way that is pleasing to God.”

In his reply, Metropolitan Vladimir stated that “As one of the eldest bishops of my church I can say that Russia has never experienced a time of religious freedom like the present. But this freedom continues to be threatened. The old patina of opposition to religion is still affecting those who have been brought up on the principles of atheism.”

“Religious freedom is not self-evident by any means in this world. One reminder of this is the memorial to ten Christian martyrs of the twentieth century that has been erected at the west end of Westminster Abbey in London. I hope that these discussions in Lappeenranta will have broad impact on religious freedom in various parts of the world.”

Pentti Valtonen, the city clerk of Lappeenranta, and Alexander Karmanov, first secretary at the Russian Embassy in Finland, presented their greetings at the opening of the discussions.

The observers at the discussions presented their greetings in the course of the meetings.

Throughout the discussions members of the delegations took turns in leading morning and evening prayers following their own traditions, either Lutheran or Orthodox. On Tuesday morning, October 13th, the delegations took part in a communion service

in the Lutheran church of Lappee. The celebrant was Bishop Voitto Huotari, assisted by Rev. Jorma Taipale, the local pastor. On Wednesday, October 14th, Archimandrite Yannuari celebrated the Holy Liturgy in the Orthodox Church of the Protecting Veil of the Mother of God (Pokrova) in Lappeenranta, and on Saturday, October 17th, the feast-day of St. Vladimir, Prince of Novgorod, a commemorative service was conducted in the same church by Archimandrite Nazary of the Monastery of St. Alexander Nevsky in St. Petersburg. On Saturday evening the delegations participated in the Orthodox service of the Vigil conducted by Rev. Timo Tynkkynen in the Orthodox Church of St. Nicholas, Imatra, and on Sunday, October 18th they attended the service in the Lutheran Parish Church in Lappeenranta, where worship was led by the local clergy and Archbishop John Vikström preached the sermon.

The programme on Saturday, October 17th included lunch provided by the Ministry of Education and hosted by Mr. Håkan Mattlin, the ministry's Director of Administration, followed by the journey to Imatra. On Saturday evening the Orthodox Parish of Lappeenranta provided a meal for the delegates in Imatra. On Sunday, October 18th the delegations attended a reception given by the Lappeenranta City Council.

The themes for the discussions in Lappeenranta were **the freedom of a Christian, the freedom of the church and the freedom of religion** and also **relations between the church, the state and society**. Papers on the first theme were presented by Dr. Antti Laato ("A Christian's freedom, the Church's freedom, religious freedom– the theme of freedom in the Bible"), Professor A.I. Osipov ("A Christian's freedom, the Church's freedom and religious freedom: an Orthodox view"), Professor Hans-Olof Kvist ("A Christian's – the Church's freedom – religious freedom") and

Ms. Elena Speranskaya (“An Orthodox lay view of the freedom of the Church and religious freedom in the society of today”). Comments on these presentations were given by Archimandrite Yannuary, Bishop Juha Pihkala and Sylvia Raulo, programme officer of Finnchurchaid. The papers on the second theme were by Dr. Matti Kotiranta (“The church, the state and freedom of religion in Finland”) and Rev. Vsevolod Chaplin (“Church-state relations and the new legislation on religion activities: a view from Russia”). Comments were given by Professor Vladimir Mustafin and Dr. Risto Cantell.

The results of these discussions are contained in the summary appended to this communiqué.

The documents arising from the discussions were ceremonially signed on Monday, October 19th, on which occasion Metropolitan Vladimir and Archbishop John Vikström both gave a speech. The delegations expressed their thanks to the Lappeenranta City Council and the local Lutheran and Orthodox parishes for providing such excellent facilities for the discussions.

The eleventh theological discussions between representatives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church were held in a spirit of cordial Christian frankness and mutual respect. A wish was expressed during the discussions that an evaluation of the achievements of the dialogue between the two churches up to that point should be made before the next round of talks.

Upon completing their work at the meeting in Lappeenranta the delegations offered their thanks to God and stated unanimously that these theological discussions should be continued.

Lappeenranta, 19th October, 1998

John Vikström
Archbishop of Turku and Finland

Vladimir
Metropolitan of
St. Petersburg and Ladoga

Eleventh Theological Discussions between
the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
and the Russian Orthodox Church,
APPENDIX to the communiqué

Summary

on the themes

The Freedom of a Christian, the Freedom of the Church, the Freedom of Religion and Relations between the Church, the State and Society

The Freedom of a Christian, the Freedom of the Church, the Freedom of Religion

Our discussions on freedom brought up several meanings of the concept. First, freedom means the free will given by God to humans upon creation. Secondly, freedom means a Christian's spiritual liberty, that is, a Christian's special partaking of the Holy Spirit. Thirdly, freedom is the totality of human rights that must belong to an individual in society and with respect to the state. We decided to return to the theme of a human's free will with regard to salvation in later discussions.

1. The freedom of a Christian, the freedom of the church and the freedom of religion correspond to the plan that the triune God has concerning humans, and the concepts are closely linked with each other (Col. 1:14-18; Phil. 3:20-21).¹

2. The freedom of a Christian is not only a person's freedom as an individual and as a member of society, but it is a spiritual freedom from the bondage of sin, death and evil. This freedom is a gift from the triune God's expressing His limitless love that seeks out and saves people, as made apparent in the life, sacrificial death and

1 All biblical quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version.

resurrection of Jesus Christ, and this freedom is upheld by the Holy Spirit, for “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Cor. 3:17). It does not depend on any earthly circumstances, but comes to a Christian as God’s gift in faith and in baptism, and at the same time it is a Christian’s final heavenly goal (Gal. 5:1; John 3:16; 1 John 4:9-18; Phil. 2:13). This gift from God is at work in every Christian who responds to God’s love by fulfilling the Great Commandment (Mark 12:29-31; Gal. 5:6).

3. The freedom of a Christian becomes complete in everlasting life, when the corruption of sin is gone. There, a Christian is a completely renewed person (Rev. 21:1-5). In the temporal life, however, selfish inclinations continually limit a Christian’s internal and external freedom. Because of this we must again and again attend to God’s word that condemns the “old Adam”, calls us to repentance and liberates us into a joyful faith, strengthening the new creation in us (Rom. 1:16-17, 7:14-25; 2 Cor. 5:17-18).

4. The world is heading towards its eschatological goal, when all of creation “will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Rom. 8:20-22). The church occupies a key position in this process, because it is called on to **proclaim** to all people the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ, of which the apostle Paul says, “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:2). The church’s mission is to **unite** people with Christ through baptism, **strengthen** them in grace through the Eucharist, and **direct** them to the true way of spiritual life.

5. On earth the church is the inexhaustible source of a Christian’s spiritual freedom, because it is one with the free and heavenly Jerusalem (Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:22-24; Isaiah 54). The church is a reality that is both divine and human: on the one hand it is communion with the Holy Spirit as experienced by Christians who enact Christ’s commands in their life, so that it is not subject to any human limitations, and on the other hand it is a human community

united by faith and the sacraments and spiritual life, whereupon it is subject to all the limitations of temporal life.

6. As a visible human organization the church is free when it can live according to its inner nature and confession and openly fulfil the task assigned to it by Christ (Matt. 28:18-20). It is, then, in a visible way a mother of faith and love, bearing children for a divine life. Even if the visible church lacks external freedom to carry out its task, it is nevertheless a divinely established entity that is absolutely free in an invisible, internal way (Matthew 16:18; Heb. 13:8) even when it suffers persecution (John 10:28-29; 16:33).

7. From the viewpoint of the universal governance of the triune God, freedom of religion is an instrument by which He gives the church external freedom in which to act according to its nature and task: to proclaim the gospel openly to all and to administer the Holy Sacraments. From the viewpoint of the state and human society, on the other hand, religious freedom is a civil right. A society that nurtures religious freedom understands and advances its own good, because the upholding of religious freedom promotes peace and charity both on the individual level and in the life of society (Rom. 12:18).

Relations between the Church, the State and Society

8. Churches, religious communities and the state have points of contact in all societies and political systems, and they have common interests relevant to citizens. When the state enacts human rights in a civil society, it must not only passively allow freedom of religion (“negative religious freedom”) but also actively promote the rights of citizens to exercise their religion (“positive religious freedom”) and put these rights into practice. In this sense laws on religious freedom have a dual purpose: to ensure opportunities to practice religion and at the same time to prevent the abuse of religious freedom.

9. The church lives continuously in a situation of eschatological tension (Rom. 8:24-27; 1 Cor. 13:12; 2 Cor. 5:7) that characterizes its relationship with the state and society. The church and the state are different by nature, and this means they have different tasks. The church fulfils God's will in the world, bound to time and place, always in a specific state and society. It has a spiritual task, but its message has important social implications as well. Despite its social dimension, however, the church must not participate in political activities that contradict its spiritual task. It cannot identify itself with any political party or grouping.

In fulfilling its task the church is on the one hand subject to the governing authorities (Rom. 13:1-2) and constantly praying that they will act according to God's will (1 Tim. 2:1-4), but on the other it always has a duty to be critical of the authorities and of society (Acts 4:19, 5:29). The church has a prophetic task to remind its own members and those who make decisions in society about God's truth and about peace and justice (Amos 5:24).

10. Efforts are being made in Finland as well as in Russia to find the optimal way of arranging church-state relations. In developing these relations it is necessary to take into account the established cultural, religious and social realities in each country, and it is likewise necessary to harmonize relations between the majority churches and the various religious minorities, relations between believers and unbelievers, and relations between various ethnic and cultural groups. This requires the development of national legislation and administrative procedures concerning religious life. The churches must actively participate in this process.

The parties to these theological discussions express their conviction that the model of positive relations between the church and the state and its society that is typical of many European countries must be strengthened in our own countries. This model combines loyalty to the principles of religious freedom with broad cooperation between the state, society and the churches.

11. The churches of Finland and Russia have different experiences of church-state relations between the church, the state and society. Interaction between them has moulded history, culture and the national identity in both countries.

Cooperation between the church and the state must be developed further, especially in charitable and social work and in the education of children and young people. All these sectors are important for strengthening social morality. Together, the state and the church preserve a country's historical and cultural heritage.

The state and the churches serve the members of society in various fields of life, and they have the special task of upholding peace in their own societies and in the whole world. The church also serves the members of society through its work among the military forces and in hospitals and prisons.

Cooperation between the church and state, and between the church and society, is in harmony with the principle of religious freedom. Such cooperation develops religious freedom in a creative, positive way, opening up new prospects for educating and enlightening the souls of individuals and the souls of our nations and all of Europe.

12. It is our common conviction that the Christian churches must be in contact with each other in order to fulfil their mission in the world.

As for our churches' membership of the Conference of European Churches and its Church and Society Commission, we agree that we can make use of our shared experiences and opinions on church-state relations and relations between the church and society in these and other contacts between Christians.

Christians must be encouraged to provide an active input into pan-European processes, and contacts between the churches and

European communities must be supported and developed together. One thing that the churches can contribute to these political and social processes is their broader view of a Europe that has room for a diversity of languages, cultures and religions.

Dr. Antti Laato

A Christian's freedom – the Church's freedom – religious freedom: the theme of freedom in the Bible

0. Introduction

The aim in this presentation will be to discuss the theme of freedom as it appears in the Bible from the perspective of the salvation of mankind. Given the new historical situation, God issued a new revelation of Himself that represented a reformulation of the previous revelation. The Old Testament revelation of God took place on two levels, the first being concerned with the contemporary situation of the tribe of Israel, expressing God's will as to how the Israelites should act and live their lives, as exemplified in particular by the Pentateuch, and the second containing God's plan for the future salvation of mankind, as contained in the prophets. The message of the New Testament emphasizes this distinction, e.g. in St. Paul's statement that "the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came" (Gal. 3:24). Thus the theology of freedom is formulated differently in the law as laid down in the Pentateuch from that found in the theocentric eschatology of the books of the prophets. We will look first, in section 1, at the Israel-centred theology of freedom as expressed

in the Pentateuch, setting out from the First Commandment, and demonstrate the nature of the practical difficulties to which the attainment of this freedom led. The theology of freedom as found in the books of the prophets, on the other hand, applied to the whole world and created a background for the message of the New Testament. As a special case of this, we will consider in section 2 the content of the Book of Amos, which demonstrates how the theology of freedom could be misused to promote nationalist aspirations.

Jesus Christ was born a Jew and raised in the Jewish tradition. Thus His message and that of the (New Testament) apostles commissioned by Him was firmly anchored in Judaism. In section 3 we shall show that the terminology of the theology of freedom used in the Pentateuch was adopted for use in the books of the prophets as well and that the message of the Old Testament created a background for Christ's witness in the New Testament. Then, in section 4, we will take as a special case of this the theme of the Jubilee Year (= "Year of Liberation") in the Old Testament and in Christ's preaching. This theme is not only a topical one for the Church at the present moment, as it approaches the Jubilee Year of 2000, but it also creates a background for the whole social ethics of the Christian Church.

1. The First Commandment and the law of the Pentateuch

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other Gods before me" (Ex. 20:2-3; Deut. 5:6-7). This commandment together with the words that introduce it forms the corner-stone of the Jewish faith. Yahweh led the Israelites out of captivity to freedom and thus become their one true God. It has become the established view in Old Testament scholarship that the literary style of the Pentateuch mirrors the structure of a vassalage contract,¹ which typically began

¹ There is considerable variation as far as timing is concerned, but the structure of vassal contracts remained essentially unchanged for many centuries.

with a presentation of the Great King, followed by a brief historical review of the events leading up to the concluding of a contract between the Great King and the vassal, after which the duties of the vassals were enumerated. The structure of the Ten Commandments is precisely of this form: Yahweh is introduced, it is stated that He rescued the Israelites from captivity in Egypt, and it is explained that their duty henceforth is to observe Yahweh's commandments.

Lying behind the commandments, therefore, is a motive that is connected with the salvation, God's act of mercy towards the Israelites. The beginnings of the tribe of Israel are thus tied up with "liberation" from slavery and commitment to obeying Yahweh's commandments. Much of the law laid down in the Pentateuch is motivated by the First Commandment and the associated liberation. Each and every Israelite is "free" and it is intended that this freedom shall be made visible as a reality in Israel time and again. One symbol of this (Deut. 15:15) is that slaves shall be freed in their seventh year (Ex. 21:2; Deut. 15:12). Similarly, the justification for the law on the Jubilee Year (Lev. 25), which states that land shall be returned to its previous owner in that year and a person who has sold himself into slavery shall be freed, is justified theologically by the liberation of Israel from slavery (Lev. 25:38, 42, 55). This is expressed most concisely in Lev. 25:55: Yahweh has brought the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt, out of the "house of bondage" (Hebr. *bêt 'avādîm*), and He now refers to the Israelites as "my servants" (*'avādaj*).

The liberation of Israel from slavery led to a vast body of social legislation designed to guarantee freedom for every one of the Israelites. The question of whether the legislation contained in the Pentateuch was ever implemented in its entirety or whether it was just an ideal is a difficult historical problem to which no definitive answer can be given, but this does not prevent us from considering the nature of the Pentateuch's *theology of freedom*.

The "freedom" guaranteed to the Israelites was "freedom in the Lord". They were not entitled to live in the land of Israel entirely as they pleased; they were bound by the laws of Yahweh. One requirement that is repeated many times in the Pentateuch is

that the Israelites should “banish evil from their midst”. The death penalty was prescribed for certain offences, most notably idolatry, blasphemy, murder and adultery, and the Pentateuch makes it quite clear that **“freedom” can never imply loose behaviour, uncontrolled drifting back and forth wherever the current may lead, but rather, since it is always freedom from something specific, it is also commitment to something else** – in this case to Yahweh and his law.

The *theology of freedom* as represented in the Pentateuch raises certain difficult hermeneutic problems. We have examples in the Old Testament of how the Pentateuchal law was observed in society from time to time. The demand that the Canaanites, who worshipped alien gods, should be destroyed was undoubtedly put into effect at some stage in history, and the law forbidding the Israelites from marrying Canaanites (Ex. 34:15-16; Deut. 7:3), is known to have led to the banishing of foreign wives and their children from the community in the days of Ezra (Ezra 9-10).

The examples must be understood in their own historical context. The very existence of the tribe of Israel was frequently threatened by war and hatred, and since the vendetta principle meant that hatred was inevitably prolonged into the future, a war was often pursued until the enemy had been destroyed entirely. The true worship of God was seriously threatened in Ezra’s day, and this helps us to appreciate the extreme measures that he advocated. **The Old Testament as a whole, however, does not suggest that enforcement of the *theology of freedom* as laid down in the Pentateuch was a universal principle.** The Book of Ruth, for instance, recounts that this ancestor of David’s was a Moabitess, which implies that the Messiah was also of Moabite descent (cf. Isa. 16). Application of the theology of freedom in this instance would have led to destruction of the family tree that eventually bore Jesus Christ. The Book of the Prophet Isaiah demonstrates, however, that the tribe of Israel was called to bear witness to Yahweh amongst all the peoples, so that the true knowledge of God should spread throughout the world. This book lays particular emphasis on a theocentric eschatology in which

God releases His chosen people from exile and all other dangers. God guides the course of events, and thus the ideal of freedom can come to pass in the world in a quite new way, so that all the peoples will learn to know the living God. They will not be destroyed or wiped out but will be included in the covenant established with God and will serve the Lord in the temple at Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-4; 51:4-8; 56:1-8).

The Book of Isaiah opens up quite new perspectives on the activities of Jesus and his apostles, since it suggests that no attempt was made to impose the Pentateuchal theology of freedom on society by force. The Old Testament prophecies of a new covenant (see Jer. 31:31-34) also represent this theocentric approach. The Israelites had not proved capable of observing God's law at any time in their existence, and even judicial murders had been possible in the name of the theology of freedom (1 Kings 21, "Naboth's blasphemy"). The message of the new covenant lay in the fact that the Spirit of God freed men to put the word of God into effect. Thus the prophesy of Jeremiah 31:31-34 is seen in the New Testament as coming true in the new covenant established by Jesus Christ (Hebr. 8:6-13). Elsewhere, however, the new covenant is seen as coming to pass only at the end of time, when the Jews recognise the Saviour (Rom. 9-11, especially 11:27).

New Testament times may indeed be regarded as marking the end of the enforcement of the Pentateuchal theology of freedom within society. The Jews still attempted to do so in the wars of 66-70 and 132-135 AD, as the slogan "Freedom for Jerusalem" (*chêrût*) or "Freedom for Israel" has been found on coins minted during those times, but the realism of history soon demonstrated the limitations on such an exercise of human force. The world had changed and was more global in character, and it was essential to see the laws of the Pentateuch within a broader, eschatological frame of reference. Israel could no longer live an isolated life of its own. The prophets had indeed foreseen this age when they had proclaimed that the knowledge of Yahweh would spread throughout the world.

The books of the prophets also contain a warning example

of how the freedom granted by God can be harnessed in the wrong manner for political ends that are contrary to His will. This is to be found in the criticism of the royal temple of Bethel in the Book of Amos.

2. The freedom granted by God in the service of a false religious ideology – the Book of Amos

A severe judgement is passed on the house of Israel in Amos 9:7: “Are you not like the Ethiopians to me, O people of Israel?” says the Lord. ‘Did I not bring Israel up from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir?’” This verse appears to negate Yahweh’s act of mercy towards Israel. The liberation from Egypt was not an exceptional act, but rather God has led other peoples in the same way. This judgement must be looked at in the context of the mistaken politico-religious ideology that is criticized throughout the Book of Amos, an ideology that is in fact closely linked to two major themes taken up at the discussions in Kiev in 1995, “religious nationalism” and “God’s universal plan” (which is taken in the New Testament to be implemented through the Church’s missionary commitment).

The criticism put forward in the Book of Amos centres around the cult of Bethel. Bethel is mentioned in the patriarchal stories and the Book of Judges as a centre for the true worship of God, but following the introduction of the cult of the golden calves by Jeroboam I (1 Kings 12) the temple there is criticized consistently in the Books of Kings and by the prophets Amos and Hosea. The politico-religious ideology of Bethel was linked to the notion of the presence of Yahweh,² who shielded and protected His own people. The significance of this temple becomes evident in chapter 7 of the Book of Amos, when the prophet announces the judgement

2 The politico-religious ideology of the Bethel cult community criticized in the Book of Amos is in many respects similar to the Moabite equivalent described on Meshā’s stele.

passed on Israel and the royal house of Jeroboam II (Amos 7:7–9). This leads Amaziah, the high priest of Bethel, to accuse Amos of conspiracy (Amos 7:10–11) and **deprive him of his freedom** to preach there: “O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, earn your bread there, and prophesy there; but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king’s sanctuary and it is a temple of the kingdom” (Amos 7:12–13). Thus the cult of Bethel as “the king’s sanctuary and a temple of the kingdom” was clearly designed to support the king’s political interests, whereas Amos was strictly opposed to any politicization of the worship of Yahweh (Amos 3–6). Amos 5:18–20 contains a reference to waiting for the “day of the Lord”, which was connected with the war for possession of the lands given to Israel by Yahweh. It was the day of victory, when Yahweh would show the greatness of His power and destroy the enemies of Israel. But the prophet was of the opinion that it was futile to wait for “the day of the Lord”. It would be a day of darkness and not light. In particular, he took issue in Amos 5:14–15 with the often repeated expression of confidence in God as used by the Bethel cult and others “The Lord God of Sabaoth is with us.” (cf. Ps. 46), the content of which had been revealed in concrete form in the Yahweh-war (see Deut. 20:2–4). In the words of the prophet such a claim may be made only by those who live in accordance with the will of God: “Seek good, not evil, that you may live; and so the Lord, the God of hosts, will be with you, just as you have said” (Amos 5:14–15). We are given to understand in Amos 6:13 that the cult of Bethel made much of the military victories achieved by Jeroboam II. The cities of Lo-debar and Karnaim lay on the border with Aram and had evidently been conquered by Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14:25–26).

In chapters 1 and 2 of the book, Amos adopts the scheme of passing judgement that was typical of the cult of Bethel and pronounces the first judgement on Israel’s arch-enemy, Aram. The Bethel community was undoubtedly able to concur with this statement by Amos and imagined that the prophet was a “man of like mind,” and the atmosphere must have been enhanced as he continued his condemnations, but the culmination must have been

a complete shock, as the prophet then turned against Israel for having rejected the word of God.

As a counterbalance to this politico-religious ideology, the Book of Amos underlines that Yahweh is the Lord of the whole world (Amos 4:13; 5:8; 9:6-7) and that he has a universal plan for its redemption (Amos 9:11-12). David's fallen booth will be rebuilt and the gentiles shall share in this salvation. The Lord's brother James, himself a descendant of David, referred to this prophesy at the "first ecumenical council", the meeting of Paul and Barnabas with the apostles and elders (Acts 15).

3. The Pentateuchal terminology of "freedom" in the Old and New Testaments

There are many concepts connected with "freedom" in the Pentateuch that prepare the way for the language of the New Testament, in particular that of "redeeming and making free" (*gā'al* and *pādā*).³ The Greek concept ἐλευθερία cannot be traced back unambiguously to any one Hebrew term, as exemplified well in Delitzsch's Hebrew translation of the New Testament, which is based on the language of the Hebrew Bible, Mishna and Talmud. Thus many of the concepts

3 Other include *chāpšī*, adj. "free", as in being freed from slavery (Ex. 21:2, 5, 26, 27; Deut. 15:12, 13, 18; Jer. 34:9-11; Job 3:19) or from debts (1 Sam. 17:25: "he will exempt his father's family from taxes in Israel" (New International Version, the NRSV has simply "and make his family free in Israel"; cf. also Isa. 58:6: "to let the oppressed go free"). *nādab*, "to be inspired to do something", e.g. "when the people offer themselves willingly" (Judg. 5:2, 9); or frequently "to make freewill offerings" (1 Chron. 29:5-6, 9, 14, 17; Ezra 1:6; 2:68; 3:5). *nātsal*, "release, save", e.g. from slavery in Egypt (Ex. 6:6). Other expressions also used for release in Ex. 6:6, 7, 13 are *gā'al*, "redeem and make free" and *jātsā*, "lead away", and the expression *ēn matsil* frequently occurs in the Old Testament. Here the verb *nātsal* also means "release from sin or guilt" (Ps. 39:9; 51:16; 79:9). *niqqāh* "be released from iniquity" (Num. 5:31). *'āzab*, "loosen, make free", e.g. Ex. 23:5 ("release from the yoke", in addition to which the expression *'ātsūr we 'āzūb* "slave and free man" occurs frequently in the Old Testament (Deut. 32:36; 1 Kings 14:10; 21:21; 2 Kings 9:8; 14:26). *šalach pi 'el* "send" also takes the meaning "send away, set free" (Ex. 4:23; 5:2; see also Ps. 44:2; Zach. 9:11).

connected with the theme of “freedom” within society had become theological terms in Old Testament times, and were often reassigned to a highly eschatological and apocalyptic frame of reference in the Judaism of the intertestamental period, and it was largely in these senses that they formed the background to the New Testament message.

3.1. *pādâ*

The original meaning of this verb was a legal one. In the Semitic languages it means “to buy freedom for” and it is in this sense that it occurs in the Old Testament. Thus it is stated in Ex. 21:8 that a woman sold into slavery could be redeemed with the assent of her owner, or if an ox had gored someone to death its owner could buy himself free of the ensuing death penalty by paying a ransom (*kōfer*; Ex. 21:30).

Also laid down in the law of Moses are regulations for the redemption of a firstborn animal or child (Ex. 22:28-29; 34:19-20; Num. 18:15-18) as an act of commemoration of God’s great mercy in guiding the Israelites out of Egypt, since the decisive event that led to the release of the Israelites was the death of the firstborn children and livestock of the Egyptians (Ex. 13:2). The intention of the new regulations were that firstborn children and the firstborn of valuable domestic animals could be redeemed, i.e. freed from the provisions of this law, by sacrificing a less valuable animal.

The verb *pādâ* is also a theological term in the Old Testament, as it is used to express God’s act of mercy in redeeming his people from bondage in Egypt (Ex. 8:19; Deut. 7:8; 9:26; 13:6; 15:15; Mic. 6:4). It is also used in chapters 40-55 of the Book of Isaiah to describe a new exodus, that from Babylon (Isa. 50:2; 51:11; see also Isa. 35:10).

Frequently the verb *pādâ* is also to be found in the sense of “to free or save from destruction or death” (Hos. 7:13; Jer. 15:18; also in many of the psalms, e.g. Ps. 26:11; 31:6; 49:8; 55:19; 71:23). One interesting case is Hos. 13:14, which is quoted by St. Paul in 1 Cor.

15:55 in the sense that God destroyed death and freed Christians from its powers, although the original form in the Book of the Prophet Hosea should evidently be interpreted as a threatening rhetorical question aimed at the Israelites living in the power of sin: “Should it be left to me to ransom them from the power of the grave? Should it be me that redeems (*gāʾal*) them from death? Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O grave, is your destruction?” [i.e. Why are you delaying, O death? Come and do your job!] Although the context of Hos. 13:14 is that of a threat, rescue from the powers of death and hell is mentioned in a positive vein in Psalm 49:8-9 (cf. Matt. 16:26). No one can redeem (*pādâ*) his brother or pay a ransom or settlement (*kōfer*) for him, because the redemption (*pidjôn*) of his soul is something of immense price. Only God can redeem it! St. Paul’s reinterpretation of Hos. 13:14 may be readily understood against this background. The domination of death has been broken, and thus Christians can be redeemed and set free from its power.

3.2. *gāʾal*

The verb *gāʾal* is typically found only in Hebrew and it is uncertain whether it occurs at all in the other Semitic languages. The profane (everyday) and theological meanings of the word go hand in hand in the Old Testament. Altogether the verb and its derivatives are used in five senses:

- (1) The term *geʾullâ* means “the right to buy (redeem) property that has belonged to one (or to one’s kin)” (Lev. 25:25-34; Jer. 32:6-7; Ruth 3:12; 4:4-6, 9-10).
- (2) *Gōʾel* was a person who had the right to buy (redeem) property belonging to his kin for himself or buy freedom for a kinsman (Lev. 25:47-54).
- (3) *Gōʾel haddām* was the ‘avenger of blood’, who exacted retribution by killing someone who had murdered a kinsman of his. Blood vengeance was a duty that fell principally upon the children of the murder victim, but also on other members of his kin. This ancient duty, which is

still recognised in the Middle East nowadays, was a means of protecting the family, since a murderer would have to reckon with the fact that he would be pursued by his victim's kinsmen for the rest of his life. Someone who had killed another by accident was allowed to escape from such retribution to a 'city of refuge' (Num. 35:12, 19-27; Deut. 19:6, 12; Josh. 20:2, 5, 9; 2 Sam. 14:11).

- (4) A sacred gift promised to the Lord could be bought back (redeemed) by paying an additional 20% on top of its original price (Lev. 27:13, 15, 19, 31).
- (5) *Gōēl* would also act as an advocate for the defence in a trial (Prov. 23:11; cf. Jer. 50:34; Lam. 3:58; Ps. 119:154; Job 19:25).

The verb *gāal* carries an important theological meaning in the Old Testament, as it is frequently used to describe God as a source of security for his own people, freeing them from oppression, danger or evil.

- (1) It often occurs with the preposition *min* (from, out of). Thus the angel of the Lord protected (*gāal*) Jacob from all evil, and a righteous king delivers the poor and the simple from falsehood and wrong (Ps. 72:14). Similarly the message in Jer. 31:11, Mic. 4:10, Ps. 69:19 and Ps. 107:2 is that God will rescue (*gāal*) his people from everything that is evil. In Ps. 103:4, on the other hand, it is a question of rescue from death and the clutches of hell, and both this verse and Isa. 44:22 represent a combination of "redemption" and the forgiveness of sins.
- (2) Like the verb *pādā*, so *gāal* is also used to refer to the salvation bestowed by God upon Israel when he freed the Israelites from captivity (Ex. 6:6; 15:18; Ps. 77:16; 106:10), and in a corresponding manner the term is also used in Isa. 40-55 to describe Israel's new exodus, release from exile in Babylon (Isa. 43:1; 44:22-23; 48:20; 51:10).
- (3) The word *gōēl* often appears in the Old Testament as an epithet associated with God, occurring seven times in connection with the phrase "thus saith the Lord" and twice

with “have no fear” in the course of Isa. 40-55 (Isa. 41:14; 43:14; 44:6; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7-8, 26; 54:5). In other words, the God who speaks to the oppressed people of Israel in Isa. 40-55 is introduced as their redeemer. The term *gōēl* is also appended to the name of God in Psalms 19:14 and 78:35, where He is described as a “rock”.

The most interesting instance of all, however, would seem to be Job 19:25, where Job complains that God has become his adversary while at the same time placing his trust in the Lord. He knows that his redeemer is alive and will eventually save him, even though perhaps after death. Here we see the paradoxical nature of the Biblical beliefs: although God would appear to be against us, we still believe and trust in him (cf. Dan. 3:16-18).

3.3. “Redeem and set free” in the New Testament

The New Testament uses a wide variety of metaphors to describe the nature of the salvation gained for us by Jesus Christ, including atonement, reconciliation, justification and redemption, all of which are closely linked to the notion of the Christian being raised from the kingdom of darkness or the devil to the kingdom of heaven, or the Church of God. Atonement ([ἐξ]ιλάσκομαι) was originally a term connected with sacrificial theology and emphasizes Jesus’ role as an offering for our sins and evil deeds. It is on account of this offering that God forgives us our sins. This comes to the fore most prominently in the Epistle to the Hebrews and in Romans 3 and 1 John. Reconciliation (καταλλάσσω) is a matter of repairing a damaged relationship between two parties. On account of sin, mankind had drifted apart from the righteous God, who, working through Jesus Christ for the good of the world, brought about reconciliation between the world and Himself. Now the whole world can be exhorted to turn to God and make its peace with Him (2 Cor. 5). Justification (δικαιόω) is the judicial process by which God counts us as righteous by virtue of Jesus Christ. This takes place through faith, when we believe that Jesus has died for us and has

made recompense for our sins. Finally, redemption ([ἀπο]-λύω), with its background in the Old Testament usage referring to the freeing of slaves, is one of the most important theological concepts in the New Testament, on account of the significance of Jesus' work of redemption. The New Testament themes related to "redeeming and setting free" can thus be summarized briefly as follows:

- (1) The Old Testament exodus theme is taken up in 1 Cor. 10, where the metaphorical reference incorporates the idea that Christians have been redeemed and set free from slavery to pharaoh, or the devil, and called to voyage towards the Promised Land.
- (2) Jesus is the redeemer of our kin, who has freed us from the bondage of sin (cf. the Old Testament occurrences of *gō'ēl* referring to God and the laws of Moses regarding the redeeming of slaves). Freedom from slavery is especially evident in John 8:31-36, where Jesus speaks of the bondage of sin. His words have the power to set men entirely free, whereas even the Jews, although physically descendants of Abraham, are still enslaved to sin. Only Jesus can redeem them and set them free. This passage bears a resemblance to section 54a of the Tractate of Erubin in the Babylonian Talmud, which explains Ex 32:16 by means of a pun, substituting *chêrût* (freedom) for *chârût* (engraving). The purpose of this figure of speech is to instruct followers that by observing the "engraved" tablets of the law they can become "free".
- (3) Jesus, who sacrificed Himself on our behalf, has extracted blood vengeance for our sins. We are guilty of His death, but He will not require retribution from us all the time we remain in His grace. The blood of Christ Jesus speaks more eloquently than the blood of Abel, and Jesus is metaphorically our "city of refuge" to which we can escape (Hebr. 12:24). If we renounce His grace, however, we become subject to His blood vengeance, and under Old Testament law he who seeks vengeance for a murder may

kill the murderer (Hebr. 10:29; cf. Hebr. 2:3).

- (4) Jesus is our Redeemer, who frees us from death and the anguish caused by the fear of death (cf. Hos. 13:14; Ps. 49:8-9; 1 Cor. 15:50-58).
- (5) Jesus, our Redeemer, will free us from the worldly power of the latter-day antichrist, Babylon, and lead us to freedom, to the New Jerusalem (cf. Isa. 40-55 and the treatment of the latter-day Babylon in Revelations). Luke 21:28 also speaks of the last days and portrays the passage of Christians to the Kingdom of God as an act of “redeeming and setting free” (ἀπολύτρωσις; cf. also Luke 1:68; 24:21). Lying behind this is the Old Testament custom of speaking of the freeing of the people of Israel from bondage in Egypt or exile in Babylon. The term ἀπολύτρωσις is also used in the New Testament to refer to Christ redeeming us and setting us free from sin (Rom. 3:24; 1 Cor. 1:30; cf. also Mark 10:45, where it occurs in the form λύτρον).
- (6) The New Testament way of speaking of the redemption and forgiveness of sins brought about by Jesus Christ has its model in the Old Testament (cf. Ps. 103:4; Isa. 44:22). Jesus has earned full redemption for us by atoning entirely for our sins. The forgiveness of sins implies complete freedom and redemption from the power of evil. This idea comes out forcefully in Gal. 4-5, where St. Paul speaks of the freedom of a Christian and a Christian community.

3.4. A Christian's freedom – the Church's freedom – in Gal. 3-4

St. Paul speaks of the freedom of a local congregation or the Church in general and of the freedom of the individual Christian side by side (Gal. 4-5). The Ishmael-Isaac and Hagar-Sarah configuration is used in Gal. 4:21-31 to describe two covenants. Those who represent the first covenant are (living) in **bondage**, while those who represent the second enjoy **freedom** (the freedom of the Gospel). Paul's theology

aptly sums up the difference to be seen in the Old Testament between enforced freedom and the freedom brought about by God. Theological “freedom” can be distorted to produce a human system of freedom in which the law of God provides the human framework in which the distinction between “good” and “evil” comes about. A person who is righteous under the law can boast of being a child of Abraham and “free”, but he may nevertheless serve someone other than God. He does not rejoice in God but in what he himself has achieved, and therefore he is not truly “free” but in bondage to the law, by which he judges his own deeds and those of others.

The words of Isa. 54:1 that St. Paul quotes would appear at first sight to be somewhat out of context in their new environment (Gal. 4:27), but they are indeed an essential part of the argument. *In the first place*, there is talk of a barren woman who has a large number of children. Sarah was barren, but through faith she acquired innumerable children. *Secondly*, Isa. 54:1 is connected with the whole story of Abraham and Sarah as retold in the Book of Isaiah. It is explained in Isa. 51:2, for example, why Zion will be well populated in the future: “Look to Abraham, your father, and Sarah, who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, but I blessed him and made him many.” *Thirdly*, Isa. 54:1 follows on directly from Isa. 53, which describes the suffering servant of God. According to Gal. 3:2, the Holy Spirit of God is received by believing what one hears (ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως), which harks back directly to Isa. 53:1 “Who has believed what we have heard?” (τίς ἐπίστευσεν τῆ ἀκοῆ ἡμῶν). The message of the crucified Christ is in effect the fulfilment of Isa. 53, and the freedom of the Christian Church rests precisely on this teaching. It is a freedom received through faith, in the same way as Abraham received God’s promises through faith (Gal. 3). The Christian Church has a living bond with the heavenly Jerusalem, which is on high and which is **free** (Gal. 4:26). That is where Jesus Christ himself lives and reigns. Also, the members of the Christian congregation form the true seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:28-29), “the sons of a free wife” (Gal. 4:30-31) and his heirs. The son of a slave woman receives no inheritance but is cast out. The

conclusion to be reached from the argumentation in chapters 3 and 4 is presented in Gal. 5:1: “For freedom Christ has set us free.” We should not, therefore, chain ourselves again to a yoke of slavery. This could happen in one of two ways: (1) by allowing the law the upper hand in determining how the “freedom” granted by God is put into effect in the world (Gal. 5:1-4), or (2) by allowing the flesh to dictate what the freedom given us by Christ from bondage to the law means in practice (Gal. 5:13).

4. Jubilee years – freedom within society – eschatological freedom

4.1. The term *yôbēl*

One important Old Testament concept related to freedom is that of the Jubilee Year. The English word “jubilee” is not ultimately derived from the Latin verb *jubilare* but from the Hebrew word *yôbēl*, which is translated in the Greek of the Septuagint by the word ἀφέσις, which corresponds well to the Hebrew verb *yābal*, meaning to “send away” or “send back”. The principal event of the Jubilee Year, or perhaps better, the Year of Liberation, in Old Testament society was the *returning* of land holdings to their rightful owners and the *freeing* of slaves.

As laid down in Lev. 25:10-11, a jubilee year was declared every fiftieth year, that is after 7 x 7 ordinary years, and it was also counted as the first year of the new 7 x 7 cycle. This was well represented in the Book of Jubilee Years, according to which Adam remained in Eden until the eighth year (from the creation of the world) and Moses received the law on Mount Sinai in the year 2410. This left 49 cycles of jubilee years in between, as $2410 - 9 = 2401 = 49 \times 49$ (Jub. 50:4). This means that the second jubilee was in the year 99, not 100. This cycle of 49 years is also important in an apocalyptic sense, in the according to the Book of Daniel the events of the last days would follow after a period of 70 year-weeks, or 490 years. This

figure in the Book of Daniel is interpreted in the 11Q Melchisedek fragment as representing 10 jubilee year cycles (see section 4.3. below).

No historical documents have been preserved to our day that say anything about how jubilee years were celebrated, although the content of Leviticus 25 gives indications that the law had had to be adjusted to cope with special cases such as the sale of houses in walled cities or of the houses of Levites, and this revision of the law would in turn suggest that it had indeed been implemented in practice.

Other references to the redemption of land holdings are to be found in Jer. 32:8 and Ruth 3:13. Although these say nothing of jubilee years as such, they do allude to the existence of a related custom within society. Likewise, mention is made in 1 Macc. 6:49 of the devout Jews observing the custom of a sabbatical year: the city of Beth-zur fell because there was very little food to be had there, the previous year having been a sabbatical year in which the land was not cultivated.

4.2. Jubilee years and “the theology of liberation”

The key theological themes associated with a jubilee year are “*return*” and “*liberation*”. People are entitled to return to their inherited lands if they have been obliged to sell them in the meantime, and people who have sold themselves into slavery are to be set at liberty. The theological grounds for these acts lie in the return from bondage in Egypt.

The Promised Land did not really belong to the Israelites, of course, but to the Lord. As is stated in Lev. 25:23 “The land is mine; with me you are but aliens (*gērîm*) and tenants (*tôšābîm*).” The terms rendered here as “aliens” and “tenants” are used elsewhere in the Pentateuchal laws to refer to people who lived in Israel but were not ethnic Israelites. Under the jubilee year legislation an Israelite could not be sold for forced labour in the manner of a slave, on the grounds that all the Israelites had been slaves in the land of Egypt

and God had set them free (Lev. 25:42, 55).

As the land belonged to God, it could not be sold in the strict sense of the word. The object of any sale was the harvest obtained from the land, and the price was determined by the number of years still to go before the next jubilee year: the longer this interval, the higher the price (Lev. 25:15-16). When the jubilee year came around the land was to be returned to its owner, the Hebrew term for this action, *dôrôr*, Lev. 25:10, meaning literally “liberation”. It was also possible for the owner to redeem the land before the next jubilee year, and a kinsman had the right to redeem land in order to return it to the extended family (Lev. 25:25-28), but it would revert to the owner in any case in the jubilee year at the latest. In modern commercial terms, therefore, we would be talking about leasehold land.

There were different laws, however, that applied to houses within the walls of a city. These could be redeemed back a year after sale, but beyond that point they remained the permanent property of the new owner. This only applied to walled cities, however, so that houses and other buildings in villages had to be returned in a jubilee year (Lev. 25:29-31). The one exception concerned the Levites, who had the right to repossess dwelling houses within a walled city that had previously belonged to them and these were in any case to be returned to them whenever a jubilee year came round (Lev. 25:32-33).

Israelites could not actually be sold as slaves, but they could be hired out as labourers until the next jubilee year. Their relatives could also redeem them before this time, whereupon the price was determined in relation to the time remaining before the jubilee year, i.e. the payment was in the nature of a compensation for the lost labour input: “the price of the sale shall be applied to the number of years: the time they were with the owner shall be rated as the time of a hired labourer” (Lev. 25:50).

It is similarly explained in Deuteronomy 15 that debts shall be cancelled at the end of every seven years, i.e. in the sabbatical year, but this law says nothing about the restoration of land holdings, and

in this sense the grounds for this law seem to lie in a more primitive economic practice than that of Lev. 25. A warning is given in Deut. 15:9, however, that a poor man shall not be refused help on the pretext that release from his debts is close at hand, in spite of the fact that the time remaining until the next jubilee year is taken into account when defining the size of a loan in Lev. 25. Couched in modern terms, the security on a loan consisted of the harvests to be obtained from the land holding in future years and the lender knew that he would receive the sum back (perhaps with interest?) in the coming harvest years.

4.3. Jubilee years and eschatological liberation

The concept of a jubilee year is used in Isa. 61 as a metaphor for the salvation and liberation brought about by God. He who has received the Spirit of the Lord will be sent to preach the message of joy to the humble in heart, a message that will include the release of prisoners (*d^erôr*, cf. Lev. 25:10). This time of joy is called “the year of the Lord’s favour”, a clear reference to the jubilee year concept.

Isaiah 61 is quoted in the 11Q Melchisedek fragment, which is a Peshier interpretation based on Lev. 25:13 and Deut. 15:2, telling that Melchisedek, the judge at the end of time, will be preceded by the Anointed One, who will proclaim the coming of the eschatological jubilee year (Isa. 61:2). This is the Anointed One of the Book of Daniel (Dan. 9:25) and Isaiah’s “messenger who brings good news” (Isa. 52:7).

Isaiah 61 is also quoted in the eschatological text 4Q521 in the Dead Sea Scrolls, which describes the time when “the heavens and the earth are obedient to His Messiah” and those who are the Messiah’s own “do not turn away from the commandments of the holy ones (= angels?).” This wording harks back to Psalm 146, which in turn closely resembles Isaiah 61 in content. It is for this reason that a connection is often seen between Isaiah 61 and Psalm 146. The problem with interpreting the 4Q521 text is that we do not know whether the Messiah will be a king, a priest or a prophet (other

than that he will belong to the house of David). The linking of the Messiah with the holy ones (= angels?) has a parallel in chapters 37-71 of the First Book of Enoch, in which it is said that the Son of Man (= the Messiah) will come accompanied by His holy angels (cf. also Matt. 16:27; 24:30-31; 25:31; 1 Thess. 4:16; Jude 14; Rev. 19:11-16).

These two Qumran texts show clearly that Isaiah 61 was one of the key eschatological sources in the Judaism of Jesus' times.

4.4. Jesus Christ and the jubilee year

Jesus' "coming out" sermon preached in the synagogue in Nazareth was based on the "year of the Lord's favour" prophecy of Isaiah 61, by means of which he associated himself closely with the expectation maintained within Judaism that the social justice predicted for the eschatological jubilee year would indeed be achieved. Similarly the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:1-11; Luke 6:20-23) follow the formula laid down by Isaiah 61, and Jesus also answers the question put by the disciples of John the Baptist, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" by citing this same prophecy (Matt. 11:2-5; Luke 7:18-23). Jesus' proclamations were aimed at achieving far-reaching social reform, as is alluded to even in the songs of thanksgiving in chapters 1 and 2 of St. Luke's Gospel. Those uttered by Mary, Zechariah and Simeon are "purified" of all references to the events of Good Friday and Easter Day and concentrate on the social changes that will be brought about during the Messianic age. The theological foundation of the movement precipitated by John the Baptist and Jesus thus lay in the Messianic theology represented by the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Psalms of Solomon 17-18.

One important detail in the context of the songs of thanksgiving in St. Luke's Gospel concerns the Jews who were admiring the child Jesus in the temple in Jerusalem, of whom it is said that they were "looking forward to the consolation of Israel" (Luke 2:25) and "the redemption of Jerusalem" (λύτρωσις, Luke 2:38). The phrases "redemption of Jerusalem" and "liberation of Jerusalem" were evidently slogans, as they have been found on coins

dating from the times of the first rebellion of the Jews and the Bar Kochba revolt. It is notable, too, that the travellers on the road to Emmaus described at the end of the same gospel were still full of Jewish Messianic expectations with respect to Jesus, and announced that they hoped that he would be the one who would “redeem Israel” (λυτρώσθαι τόν Ισραήλ, Luke 24:21). The same politically loaded hope is expressed at the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 1:6; 3:21), and Acts 4:34 alludes directly to the law as laid down in Deut. 15, according to which care should be taken of those in need. Many members of the Early Church sold everything they had in order to be able to put into effect the things that Jesus proclaimed in His programme of social reforms. The understanding was that the Year of the Lord was at hand and that the Kingdom of God should be made to come true in every way possible within the Christian Church.

The theme of “liberation”, which is closely allied to Isaiah 61, recurs frequently in Jesus’ parables, as He often tells people that they should forgive others (Gk. ἀφεσις, Hebr. *dʿrôr*) who had offended against them (see Matt. 18:21-35). In this sense the “forgiveness of debts” mentioned in the Lord’s Prayer is an integral part of the process by which the Kingdom of God is established among in human society. Similarly, in his teaching on marriage Jesus no longer condoned the writing of a letter of divorce, because it represented “hardness of heart” (Mark 10:1-12).

Jesus’ insistence upon helping the poor (especially in St. Luke’s Gospel) also arises out of this socially revolutionary doctrine of the eschatological Jubilee Year. The rich young man is given the final great commandment that he should obey in order to work for the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth: “Go, sell what you own and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me” (Mark 10:21). The rich should heed what Moses and the prophets had decreed regarding justice within society. If they will not listen to the words of the Old Testament, not even someone who rises from the dead can help them (Luke 16:19-31; cf. Lev. 25, Deut. 15, Isa. 61).

Many of Jesus' parables speak of the coming of a new age of equality and social justice. In Luke 14:12-24, for instance, the custom for arranging feasts is overthrown by suggesting that in the kingdom of heaven invitations will not be issued on the basis of riches or glory. Likewise, the Prodigal Son is accepted back by his father in the "year of the Lord's favour" and his elder brother is powerless to prevent it (Luke 15), while the vineyard workers all receive the same wages regardless of who did the most work (Matt. 20:1-16). Jesus' explanation that "the last will be first, and the first will be last" foretells the establishment of justice in the world. No one will be able to grab a larger proportion of the Kingdom of God for himself. It will belong to all people, as all people will be invited to it.

Jesus' proclamation of social liberation in connection with the eschatological Jubilee Year places an obligation on the Christian Church to maintain a programme of social ethics and also provides a justification for such a programme. **Social ethics is not merely a matter of natural common sense, but it belongs to the Church's message and to the very essence of its being.** The Church has been redeemed and set free from the bondage of sin in order to serve and advance the cause of the coming of the eschatological Jubilee Year in the world.

5. The spread of the message of Christianity in the "freedom" of the Roman Empire

A state of external peace and **religious freedom** prevailed in the Roman Empire. Obedience to the emperor was essential, but otherwise citizens were free to practise religion as they pleased, and the Jews were in a privileged position as they did not have to worship the emperor.

It was indeed the freedom of religion in the Roman Empire that created the historical conditions for the spread of Christianity. At first the Christians were thought in many places to be Jews – especially since St. Paul preached the Gospel first of all to the Jews

in the synagogues (Acts 17:2-5), but difficulties sometimes arose in places where the Jews informed the authorities that the Christians did not belong to them.

The notion of honouring the secular power has become firmly rooted in the Christian tradition (Rom. 13 and 1 Tim. 2:1-2). The freedom to practise religion outwardly was by no means a foregone conclusion in either the Old or the New Testament, however, and the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelations, respectively, demonstrate that the practising of religion had been and will in the future be threatened by the earthly authorities. On the other hand, the Book of Amos contains a cautionary example of how the Christian Church could be distorted to become a religious ideology dedicated to the deprivation of freedom if it were to attain a position of power. The history of the Christian Church does, in fact, contain many instances of this.

6. Conclusions

A. Examined philosophically, freedom means freedom from something accompanied by commitment to something else in its stead. **The Bible defines freedom as commitment to God and the fulfilment of His will on earth.**

B. One major problem in the Bible concerns the manner in which freedom is realized in the world. Attempts were made to put the socio-religious legislation contained in the Pentateuch into effect by human agency, and the prophetic books of the Old Testament in particular represent this **theology of freedom based on the actions of God**. The Gospel of Jesus Christ also represents this same theology of freedom.

C. The Old Testament tells us that religious freedom did not prevail in the Kingdom of Israel, while that nation's own history indicates that it was not free to act in accordance with God's will. **The restriction of religious freedom did not lead to freedom in God.** Alongside

this Israel-centred perspective, the Old Testament contains a plan for universal salvation that is centred on God, that represented by the New Testament Gospel of Jesus Christ. **The Gospel has the power to liberate people for freedom in Christ.**

D. Freedom within society and theologically argued religious freedom (“Israel was freed from captivity in Egypt in order to serve Yahweh”) are bound up together. **Jesus in his preaching linked the freedom of the Kingdom of God to the implementation of social justice. The Church’s social ethics is grounded in the revelation given by God.**

Archimandrite Yannuary

Comments on the paper by Antti Laato

1. The paper deals fairly thoroughly with the theme of “freedom” in the Old Testament. Freedom from the life of slavery in Egypt was a gift from God, an act of mercy on His part, and it is this freedom on which the law of Moses is based.
2. The author also shows what undesirable consequences can arise from too narrow an understanding of freedom in a national or confessional sense: freedom for some at the expense of others. The books of the prophets in the Old Testament do indeed render this concept of freedom more universal.
3. The semantic analysis of some terms is given only very briefly and leaves much cause for thought. Particularly rich in content is the presentation of the relationship between Gal. 4–5 and Isa. 52–54.
4. Great emphasis in the paper is placed on the theme of the jubilee year, the “year of the Lord’s favour” (Isa. 61), in connection with Jewish apocalyptic and eschatological thinking, and the author demonstrates well how this theme is reflected in the Dead Sea Scrolls and New Testament writings. He has evidently come to the conclusion that the social ethics of the New Testament are grounded in a “jubilee year eschatology”. This conclusion would seem, however, to narrow down the theme of social

ethics slightly, cf. the Pastoral Epistles and the Epistle of Paul to Philemon, for example.

5. It would seem that the paper does not offer any biblical justification for the concept of “religious freedom”.
6. It is a pity that the paper does not contain any analysis, however brief, of the concept of “freedom” in the Johannine books, nor any discussion of the relationship between “freedom” and “truth” (there being just a short reference to John 8:31-36).

Professor A.I. Osipov

A Christian's freedom, the Church's freedom and religious freedom: an Orthodox view

The concept of freedom is by no means an unambiguous one, for the word is used in a number of meanings, of which three are relevant to the present discussion. The first of these, its metaphysical meaning, is free will. This freedom is one of the basic characteristics of human nature and is manifested in the individual's power of choice between good and evil. In terms of Christian doctrine free will is a property of the human character in the sense that if it is lost the individual personality will be undermined entirely. No one can override this human freedom: no other person, nor society, nor the law, nor any power, nor demons, nor angels, nor even God himself.

On the other hand, as soon as the human will is given free rein in the external world, the "materially oriented" human being will come up against an immense number of phenomena that restrict his actions in a variety of ways. A problem of external freedoms, or human rights, will arise, i.e. that of what actions are permitted (by law, custom or social morality) in the world around him. This involves a social concept of freedom.

A further category of freedom is spiritual in nature. St. Paul writes, "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor. 3:17). In other words, this spiritual freedom implies for a Christian

a particular relationship of partaking in the Holy Spirit, which is manifested in control over one's own egoism, passions and sinful feelings and desires – in a word, self-control.¹ He refers to those who have achieved such freedom as putting on “the new self” (Eph. 4:24), implying renewal of the mind, heart, will and body in accordance with the example set by Christ. The converse of this, people who live a sinful life, he regards as having failed to put aside their “old self” (Eph. 4:22), as lacking the strength to follow the advice of their faith, their good sense, their conscience and what is good for them. St. Paul describes this state of spiritual slavery, the antithesis of true freedom, in the following powerful words: “I do not understand my own actions, for I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ... For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. ... But I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members” (Rom. 7:15, 19, 23).

It is this spiritual freedom, as opposed to external freedom, that is the ultimate goal for a Christian. There is indeed a distinct difference between spiritual freedom and the concept of free will. As Kant put it, “By freedom in the cosmological (metaphysical – A.O.) sense I mean the ability to attain this state of one's own choice, whereas freedom in the practical (ethical, spiritual – A.O.) sense is independence of the will from the coercion of all that is sensuous.”²

The above three categories allow us to speak reasonably clearly about which of these corresponds to **a Christian's freedom**, and not merely that of an individual or a member of society. It is without doubt spiritual freedom, which Christians are able to attain only as a result of pursuing an ascetic life. What that life is, what laws govern it, what are the criteria for deciding whether the chosen path is the correct one or not, and what stages the Christian eventually

1 For example, St. Mark the Ascetic has this to say about spiritual freedom: “The law of freedom is read with real common sense and is understood by obeying its commands” (Philokalia, Part 1. Moscow, 1905, p. 523).

2 Kant I. Works, Part 3. Moscow, 1964, p. 478).

has to go through in the process of achieving freedom – these are another matter, one of paramount importance and immense significance for every Christian and for every Christian church. (I would indeed hope that these questions could be taken up and studied seriously some day in dialogues between Christians.)

On another level, one can also speak of the Church's freedom, but in order to do this it is first necessary to return to the question of what we understand by the Church. The Church is the unity in the Holy Spirit of Pentecost that binds together all Christians who aim at implementing the teachings of the Gospels in their own lives and thereby enter into oneness with the Organism of Christ, the Incarnate God.³ ("Now you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it", 1 Cor.12:27). The degree of this unity, of membership of the Church, is naturally hidden from the external gaze, as the sincerity of a faith and the holiness of a soul are not to be assessed in human measures.

The visible manifestation of the Church (although always an imperfect one, on account of the sinfulness of Christians) is a community led by a bishop (a local church, or the universal Church), which is a unity based on faith, the principles of the spiritual life, administration and discipline. Membership of the visible Church is no longer a secret matter, since all those who have been baptized into it and have not been canonically excommunicated from it belong to it (irrespective in practice of the sanctity, sinfulness or even evilness of their lives. The visible Church *sui generis* is the amniotic fluid in which Christians undergo the process of birth, development and salvation within the Body of Christ.

In view of the dual nature of the Church, it has two separate freedoms, which are not commensurate with each other. As the unseen unity of the Holy Spirit, the Church as it exists in those who

3 As St. Theophilact of the Bulgars wrote, "Do not say that men have assembled the Church. The Church is the work of God, of a living and terrible God." Similarly St. Ecumenos says that "The Church is built by God, it is consecrated to God and it is God that lives in it."

love Christ is always free, since “Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.” This freedom is superior to all other, external freedoms, rights and privileges, and the Church has nothing to fear from human limitations and repressions; persecution merely redounds to its glory. This was the case when Christ and His apostles lived on this Earth and it remained the same after His Resurrection and Ascension and has done so up to the present day: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever” (Hebr. 13:8). The visible congregation, however, is a church organization and, like any other social or religious organization, it requires suitable conditions for its existence, including religious freedoms laid down by the state.

Religious freedom is a **right** to confess one’s own religious convictions freely and execute them in practice on both the individual and the collective level. From this perspective it does not differ in any way from the other important social freedoms or human rights to which exceptionally great significance is attached in our modern world. Nevertheless, two important points should be borne in mind.

Firstly, any right can be exercised not only in positive ways and for desirable purposes but also in diametrically opposite ways, for personal or political gain, e.g. information vs. deception (disinformation), the preaching of peace and morality vs. propaganda in favour of violence and fornication.

Secondly, rights in a juridical sense have nothing to do with what is most important for the Christian – **spiritual** freedom. In addition, the catastrophic moral degradation and manifest spiritual decline in the Christian churches to be seen in the countries that have the greatest freedoms in a humanitarian sense provide a clear indication that external freedom without anything to “restrain it” (2. Thess. 2:7) does not enhance human life but frequently proves to be one of the most effective ways of bringing about its spiritual and moral destruction. On these grounds alone it may be said that external freedoms cannot be treated as absolute or self-evident values.

On the other hand, we may arrive at the same conclusion

on the basis of the Christian understanding of human nature and the purpose of human life. The Christian view of man is grounded in two states, which cannot be accepted in the same way from a humanistic, secular viewpoint: the predestined greatness of man, being created in the likeness of God (Gen. 5:1), and at the same time his deep affliction that could only be relieved by the coming of the Saviour, “Christ is born, that He may raise up again the image that before was fallen.”⁴ This point suffices to enable the Christian faith to define a strategic ‘direction’ for human education. The central idea is the following.

The true “human norm” is Christ, the “new man” (Eph. 2:15), and the ‘ordinary person’ is spiritually abnormal, sick, because all his properties became damaged and distorted in the plight of Adam. The goal of society should thus be to create conditions which will not exacerbate this sickness but will promote its healing.

What are these conditions on the level of freedoms? There are rights that are based on natural human needs as experienced in certain material, spiritual and social circumstances, such as the rights to work, education, freedom of religious and philosophical convictions, association in accordance with individual interests and others. There are other rights, however, that are based on purely voluntary and even blatantly unjustified or evil motives, such as the right to disseminate pornographic propaganda, to discriminate between people on the grounds of national characteristics, to practice Satanism etc. How can we evaluate these various rights?⁵

4 From the troparion for the Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ.

5 As is well known, the 18th-century French philosophers were very active in studying questions of human rights, above all Rousseau, who believed that every person has certain natural, inalienable rights, the protection of which is one of the main tasks of the state. The French declaration of human and civil rights of 1789, which was constructed on these principles, defined freedom (rights) as follows: “Freedom is the right to do anything that is not harmful to others. Thus there are no limits to the invocation of natural human rights other than those that ensure that other members of society can enjoy the same rights. Only the law can define these limits.”

In practice, however, the concept of “harmful to others”, even if

Within the limits of a Christian outlook on the world, an answer to this question is to be found in the fundamental dogma that God is love. It follows from this that the only Christian criterion for assessing any rights (i.e. permitted activities) can be love, which aims at the maximum good for one's neighbour (not just secular good but primarily eternal good, see Matt. 22:37-39). This concept of love is the major deciding factor for a Christian in all rulings concerned with human rights and freedoms.⁶ In other words, all rights must be based on the principle of love. Consequently the only rights that are of value to society are those that help to inspire its members with true neighbourly love and wean them away from everything that encourages egoism, selfishness and the passions that arise from these.

Another basis for this criterion lies in the Christian understanding that spiritual freedom is the ultimate goal among all the human freedoms. God is perfectly free, and the saints have achieved a high degree of spiritual freedom,⁷ while the freedom of

we leave on one side the immediate context of these ethical values (that of the French Revolution) and subsequent contexts, has proved utterly unsustainable as a criterion for human rights.

6 The 19th-century Russian Slavophile thinkers A. Khomyakov, I. Kireyevski, Konstantin and Ivan Aksakov and Y. Samarin developed and energetically advocated the notion that God-like human love was an essential for the construction of a normal human society and also an inescapable condition for human freedom. Khomyakov, for instance, examined the Church as a common beginning and, given this property, regarded it as an ideal prototype for a human society, which led him to name two constructive characteristics: "We, on the other hand, recognise a single, united Church," as "freedom and unity are two forces which have been meritoriously endowed with the secret of human freedom in Christ." In his understanding, the main principle that guarantees the preservation of these foundations in the Church is love. "This principle," he wrote, "is the fount of mutual love in Jesus Christ." (A. S. Khomyakov, *Bogoslovskie i tserkovnopublitsisticheskie stati*, ed. Soikina, pp. 109, 205, 44).

7 St. Augustine relates the degree of sanctity to the degree of freedom very neatly when he states that "Magna est libertas posse non peccare; sed maxima libertas – non posse peccare (Great is one's freedom when it is possible not to sin, but the greatest freedom of all is when it is not possible to sin.)"

“ordinary people” is relative. The only people who have lost their freedom altogether are those who are incapable of doing good (John 8:34, 44). In other words, a human being’s true spiritual freedom can develop to an infinite extent only within the “limits” of God’s will. Thus Christianity “restricts” the spiritual freedom of created beings through the agency of God and thereby eliminates in principle any ephemeral or autonomous possibility of it existing “beyond good and evil”. It is this that leads St. Paul to say “Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom”.⁸ But as God is love (1 John 4:16), all rights and freedoms that are established without reference to the Christian principle of love lie beyond the scope of what we term in our human language goodness, freedom or life.

The notion of a freedom which is ‘above love’ and is not ‘restricted’ by it is a frightening prospect. This is the eternal temptation which, having offered knowledge of good and evil that was ‘free’ of the will of God, won over the first man and continues to win over his descendants, rendering everything permissible and making man a slave to his own flesh and passions. The ancient wise men of the heathens were equally aware of this, for Epictetus, for example, wrote, “He who is free in his body but not in his soul is a slave, whereas he who is bound physically but is spiritually free is indeed free”.⁹ It is difficult for modern Christians to understand this, however, which is why the social freedoms have gained the upper hand in their lives and consciousness. Although it is obvious that these freedoms which are proclaimed as absolute, primary values carry within them an element of contradiction or arbitrariness, due to their very nature, they inevitably lead to the moral and spiritual

8 As V. S. Solovyov writes, “It is only when we believe in an invisible God and act in accordance with the faith received from God that our will becomes truly will, i.e. it is free in its origins – free of itself, that is, free of its own factual state at the moment in question. In that situation the will is no longer just a psychological phenomenon but a creative force that precedes all phenomena and is not obscured by any facts, i.e. it is in essence free” (V. S. Solovyov, Works, Vol. 3, St. Petersburg, p. 293).

9 Rimskie stoiki (The Stoics of Rome). Moscow 1995, p. 252.

degradation of individuals and societies, an anti-culture, ideological anarchy and unavoidable enslavement at the hands of powerful individuals, political parties, or secret or open societies etc., for there can be no real freedom other than freedom from passion or sin, i.e. freedom from evil, from a state in which Christian love is not the major corner-stone of one's life.

This caused St. Peter, when exposing the preachers of this external freedom who have forgotten the internal aspect, to state directly that "...they speak bombastic nonsense, and with licentious desires of the flesh they entice people who have just escaped from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption; for people are slaves to whatever masters them." (2 Peter 2:18–19). St. Paul comes to the same conclusion in his Epistle to the Galatians, "For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. ... Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires what is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh" (Gal. 5:13, 16–17). He then goes on to list "the acts of the sinful nature" and concludes quite unambiguously, "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sows to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit."¹⁰

For this reason at least external freedoms cannot be an end in themselves. They represent one out of the many possible kinds of freedom, but they are not essential for achieving the ultimate goal, which is spiritual freedom. Thus the Orthodox concept of man

10 Indeed, it is impossible to think of striving to live life to the full, to enjoy life, without a fullness of social and political freedoms. The maximal fullness of rights and freedoms is an absolute requirement for a materialistic paradise on earth. The axiom of this materialism is a utopian one, however. Kant put this very well when he said that "In effect we are forced to state in the end that the more our enlightened reason thinks of pleasure and happiness in life the further away we are from real satisfaction" (I. Kant. Works, vol. 4, part 1. Moscow 1965, p. 230).

requires that freedoms should always be bounded, so that they can be beneficial.

The first thing is to do what is best for one's neighbour, and only after that what is best for oneself. That is the Christian ideal, the starting-point in the light of which we can understand all the freedoms, rights and duties, including religious freedoms. From the Christian viewpoint the best of all are those things that fashion the human being in the likeness of the source of all good – God himself. These are the commandments and properties of the 'new man' with which every Christian is familiar. Thus nothing that prevents this idea from being put into effect can from the Christian viewpoint be accepted as part of a human society. The secular legislators of all countries, albeit in the simplest possible form, are in agreement with this Christian ideal, in that they proscribe murder, theft, violence and other things of that kind. Life cannot grant freedom to death. At the same time, however, they often fail to observe the real reasons for these crimes – the abnormal spiritual and moral state in which we find ourselves, which is the reason why citizens' freedoms are misunderstood and misused. Thus our modern-day European civilization, both in the East and in the West, maintains unflinchingly that the flesh is free and that there is no danger attached to this and completely overlooks the question of the preservation of the soul. By laying stress on the freedom of the passions and alienating itself from the notion of Christian love at a rapid pace, our civilization is more and more obviously leading people into a final spiral of death. Absolute external freedom is what lies at the heart of all the present-day crises, a freedom that transforms into arbitrariness in relation to nature, thought, creation, spiritual and moral laws and other laws that govern our existence. Freedom of speech and information, for example, is a quite normal phenomenon all the time it functions within the 'limits' of love, within the limits of what is best for mankind, but once we have forgotten that idea and bowed down to the "golden calf", freedom becomes a source of idle gossip, falsehood, lascivious propaganda, crime, war, etc., in other words, it becomes a legalized weapon of evil. Can it be called freedom any

longer if it acts in this way, and does it have any right to exist in a normal society? Is it for this reason that all rights are referred to as freedoms, and that they are called up to release man from the evil that has invaded his fallen nature, to educate him spiritually and to lead him to perfection and not to lead him into fornication, predation, or the killing of himself and those like him?

And what of the freedom of teleinformation? If this is not restricted by the idea of human good, it will become, as one newspaper aptly described it, “a televised plague of violence”. One American psychologist described the television in his country by claiming that “When you switch the TV on you are automatically switching off the process of becoming human.” That is quite correct, for if a schoolchild has been a witness to 150,000 acts of violence, of which at least 25,000 are murders, by the age of 18 years, as is claimed in US statistics, does not this access to violent propaganda infringe the most important of all human rights – that of living without violence?

Without a spiritual and moral criterion there will be no realistic possibility of achieving a positive solution to the question of freedoms. The principle of “freedom for freedom’s sake” that prevails in our present-day civilized world, that is factual supremacy of freedom over love, is indeed the most powerful drug that a human being can take, a drug which is destroying, and is being used to destroy, ever larger numbers of people. All the rights that a young person inherits at birth rather than after having matured in a moral sense combine to form an effective means of developing instinctive powers and all the moral and psychological consequences that result from them. Is not the old Greek saying that “Everything that is given away free is liable to corrupt” speaking about just this?¹¹

It is easy to sell freedom of this kind in return for simple

11 In a society that is genuinely interested in educating people not all rights will be granted automatically, but rather their limits should be extended and deepened gradually as allowed by the moral and spiritual growth of the individual and of society as a whole (there are enough means for testing this available nowadays).

comforts. One modern writer has commented quite correctly on conditions in our times: “All over the world freedom is dying – political, economic and personal freedom. ... It is easier to live without freedom, and increasing numbers of people are eager to exchange their own freedom for a peaceful, comfortable life. You don’t have to make any big decisions, and you have less responsibilities.”¹² In his evaluation of progress in Europe, the 19th-century Russian thinker I. S. Asakov prophesied that “... the trend for denying God and Christ will in the end revert to a regression; civilization will end in savagery and freedom in despotism and slavery. Having shed the image of God, man will inevitably also shed his human image – and is indeed already doing so – and will begin to lean towards an animal image.”¹³

Christianity lays emphasis on the supremacy of love over all other values in life. It is only in the light of love¹⁴ that one can activate to an optimal extent all the rights that are essential to every human society.

An understanding of this problem of rights and freedoms allows us in turn to evaluate the question of **religious freedom**. If personal freedom does not in effect entail anything that sets it apart from other human rights, there must be something special and problematical about the freedom enjoyed by religious communities. In the first place, it is necessary to find more precise criteria for assessing the extent to which a given organization is a religious

12 P. Kalinovski, *Perekhod (Changeover)*. Moscow 1991, p. 15.

13 I. S. Asakov, *Khristyanstvo i sovremenniy progress (Christianity and Modern Development)*, quoted in A. Politski, *Na Zaprosy Duha (On Spiritual Matters)*. Petrograd 1914, p. 7).

14 V. Z. Zavitnevich, who has made an extensive study of the works of Khomyakov, describes the essence of his own understanding of the problem of personal freedom and the common good in the following words: “The Church is defined as united in freedom in accordance with the law of love. This provides a solution to one of the greatest problems in human life, that of reconciling personal grounds for action with those of the whole community.” (V. Z. Zavitnevich, *Russkie slavyanofily (Russian Slavophiles)*. Kiev 1915, pp. 45-46).

one. There are many such communities whose 'religious' nature is of a highly dubious kind, so that in these times of unbelievable confusion between good and evil, light and darkness, sweet and bitter (Isa. 5:20) it is absolutely essential to conduct authoritative investigations into what are the necessary and sufficient dogmatic elements that entitle an organization to be recognised as a religious community. Secondly, we need more responsible ethical criteria for evaluating the moral integrity and intellectual principles of each religious organization that applies for registration as such. The sad tale of the "Aum Sinreke" sect is one of the most blatant cases in point. The legalization of Satanism is an open challenge to the social rationale of our times and its understanding of religious freedom. Thirdly, we should not confuse the concepts of equivalence and equality. It is easiest to illustrate the difference between them with an example. Given that all the citizens of a country are equal before the law, how is it that the president of that country has considerably more rights than those people who were the defeated candidates in the last presidential election? In fact the law itself pinpoints the reason for this: the will of the majority of the people, who by voting for him gave him greater rights than the others. This is a democratic principle. This same natural principle should apply when we seek solutions to questions that are bound up with religious freedom, especially questions connected with the life of society at large, such as education, the upbringing of the young, television and radio broadcasts etc.

To take another example, how should we react to the following real-life situation? A sect which has multimillionaires among its members, having bought up all the information media in a country puts about ideas that are utterly foreign and hostile to the religious convictions of the people of that country. Is this religious freedom and democracy (the power of the people), or is it a blatant violation of both, an indication that the central principle of freedom, the principle of love, has been ignored?

It would seem from this example that the religious freedoms assigned to each religious organization should be regulated by

law so as to be proportional to the degree of acceptance of that organization within society. It is only in this way that a conflict between equivalence and equality can be avoided and religious freedoms can be a manifestation of the love of truth that governs human life.

I would like to conclude my consideration of the theme of freedom with some ideas put forward by a 19th-century saint, Bishop Ignati Bryanchaninov († 1867). “As long as mankind is exposed to the influence of sin and the passions, power and subordination will be necessary. They will without doubt exist as long as the life of the world exists; they will simply take on different forms at different times.” “There cannot be equality, perfect freedom or welfare on this earth to the extent that the enthusiastic false teachers would like and would attempt to promise us.” “The relations of power and subordination will disappear with the end of the world. All dominion, authority and power will be destroyed (1 Cor. 15:24). Then there will be brotherhood, equality and freedom; then unity, power and subordination will be grounded not in fear, but in love.”¹⁵

15 For Bishop Ignati Bryanchaninov’s writings on matters concerning the Church and society, see the appendices to L. Sokolov, *Bishop Ignati Bryanchaninov. His life and Ascetic Moral Views*. Kiev 1915, pp. 20, 21.

Bishop Juha Pihkala

Comments on the paper by Professor A. Osipov

I did not receive a copy of Professor Osipov's most interesting paper until yesterday evening, and in that sense I am in the same position as Archimandrite Yanuari in his evaluation of Docent Antti Laato's paper. Perhaps that is a good thing, as individual comments and questions are usually more apt to arouse fruitful discussion than is an extensive, carefully considered statement, although the abundance of material in Osipov's paper would certainly have warranted the latter.

Of particular interest is Osipov's treatment of freedom in three categories:

1. metaphysical freedom of will, or self-determination, which God is unable to constrain,
2. external or social freedom, which is restricted in many ways,
3. and spiritual freedom that arises through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

My questions on this score are the following:

- Did the metaphysical freedom of human beings remain unconstrained even after the fall of Adam? Are humans really able to choose perfectly freely between good and evil in this situation? Is their self-determination an inalienable

quality even now? In other words, can we who are living in the year 1998 be metaphysically free without the grace of the Holy Spirit? This question is rather far removed from the theme of the present discussions, of course, but it is undoubtedly one that would merit discussion some time.

- Is there really a clear-cut distinction between the “new man”, the Christian who has been liberated by the Holy Spirit, and the “old man”, or non-Christian? In other words, is St. Paul referring in the passage from Romans 7 cited by Prof. Osipov to himself before his conversion or is he describing the tensions that exist within the person of every Christian?
- Must inner, spiritual freedom be the eventual outcome of a long process, or can it be fully present as a gift of God’s grace wherever a person has become one with Christ through Baptism, the Eucharist and the Gospel?

Professor Osipov passes relatively quickly over the question of *the Church’s freedom* and moves on to that of *religious freedom*. This is justifiable, as the Church’s internal, spiritual freedom is a dimension that is hidden from view in the same way as the individual Christian’s spiritual freedom, while the Church’s external freedom is in effect a matter of religious freedom.

I agree wholeheartedly with Osipov’s notion that religious freedom is a part of basic human rights and should be judged on the same criteria. Indeed, the other human rights can be seen as having grown up around religious freedom.

It is easy for a Lutheran to agree with the statement that, from the point of view of society at large, the purpose of religious freedom, like that of other aspects of human rights, is to promote the manifestation of love in the lives of individuals and communities. Rights and freedoms are not ends in themselves within society, but rather their purpose is to serve the human good, which means, of course, that individuals’ freedom to act as they would like is also circumscribed to some extent by the demands of loving one’s neighbour. In fact, it is only reasonable to speak of human rights at all if one also speaks of human responsibilities, the greatest of which

is that enshrined in the command to love one's neighbour.

The question of how society places limits on the generally recognised human rights, including freedom of religion, is a more problematical one, however. It is clear that the purpose of such limits is to promote the common good and that of individual citizens and to protect society and its members from everything that may do them harm – and in this I am very much in agreement with Osipov's criticism of our culture.

This is a difficult question, however, and I am not convinced that the correct solution to it can be found in the direction towards which Osipov points us at the end of his paper. It would be dangerous, to my mind, to determine by a democratic majority decision within society the questions of

- who shall decide upon the *content* of the criteria on which the nature of a religious organization is to be evaluated, and
- who shall decide upon the *content* of the criteria on which the religious or moral purity of an organization is to be established.

Is it not the case that a majority decision will usually protect only the rights and freedoms of the majority? Did the whole question of religious freedom not arise initially precisely because of a need for love and protection on the part of those who did not enjoy any democratic or other power of their own?

Professor Hans-Olof Kvist

**A Christian's freedom – the Church's freedom –
religious freedom**

0. Introduction

One of the ideas behind these doctrinal discussions between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland is that they force the representatives of each church to consider the appropriate theological starting points for justifying and evaluating the issues concerned from their own point of view. The theme of the present discussions forces us into deliberations of precisely this kind.

The Finnish church's relationship to the state – and thereby also the question of its freedom – has been discussed on many occasions from the last century onwards, although mostly from the perspectives of the political administration, ecclesiastical law and practical theology. My aim here is therefore to approach the subject from the angle of systematic theology, or in this case primarily on the basis of the confession of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. As this topic has been touched upon in some theses put forward in earlier discussions between us, I will attempt in the following – within the limits of space – to show, among other things, how the results that we have achieved together fit in with the broader

perspective that arises out of the Lutheran Church's confession.

The freedom enjoyed by a Christian, the Church's freedom and religious freedom are essentially linked together in the Lutheran view, although each expression has a semantic field of its own to some extent. In spite of the fact that they do not all occur as such in the confessional books of the Lutheran Church – the term 'religious freedom' being of later origin, for instance – these books contain sufficient references to the concept to allow them to be approached and interpreted on that basis.

1. The liberation of mankind as a purpose of the Triune God

The content of the Christian faith is explained in the *Large Catechism* in the following words, for example: "...here in all three articles He has Himself revealed and opened the deepest abyss of His paternal heart and of His pure unutterable love. For He has created us for this very object, that He might redeem and sanctify us; and in addition to giving and imparting to us everything in heaven and upon earth, He has given to us even His Son and the Holy Ghost, by whom to bring us to Himself. For (as explained above) we could never attain to the knowledge of the grace and favour of the Father except through the Lord Christ, who is a mirror of the paternal heart, outside of whom we see nothing but an angry and terrible Judge. But of Christ we could know nothing either, unless it had been revealed by the Holy Ghost."¹

It may be seen from this quotation that the initiative for the salvation of man lay entirely with God. Thus we were able in the discussions held in Järvenpää in 1974 to reach the joint statement that salvation is a gift received by mankind.² Likewise, the representatives

1 Large Catechism, II, 64-65.

2 Kampuri, H. (ed.) *Dialogue between Neighbours. The Theological Conversations between the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church 1970-1986*, Helsinki 1986, Järvenpää 1974,

of our churches in Kiev in 1995, when discussing missions, observed that the motive and point of departure for all missionary work is the love shown by the Triune God. “The Triune God loved the world when he created and redeemed it, and he continues to love the world in sanctifying it. Because of his love, the Father sent his Son to the world to save it: ‘God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.’”³ It was then noted in the seventh thesis on the first topic of the subsequent conversations in Järvenpää, in 1992, that the purpose of Christ’s coming into the world and the Gospel disseminated by the Apostles was the salvation of humankind after the descent into sin, and correspondingly in 1995 that “What mission aims at is the salvation of the world, humankind and the whole of creation. The Triune God brings that which has originally been His back into communion with him (1 Cor. 15:24-28).”⁴

The point in the *Small Catechism* concerned with sanctification also sheds light on the freedom enjoyed by a Christian. Christians do not possess freedom in their relation with God – with respect to His justification: “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith; even as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith; in which Christian Church He forgives daily and richly all sins to me and all believers, and at the last day will raise up me and all the dead, and will give to me and to all believers in Christ everlasting life.”⁵

The principal confession of the Lutheran churches, the

Third theme, IV, 11th thesis p. 66.

3 Kiev 1995. The Tenth Theological Discussions between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church. Helsinki 1996, First theme, thesis 2, p. 12 (trans. Tuire Valkeakari).

4 Kiev 1995, First theme, thesis 3, p. 12 (transl. Tuire Valkeakari).

5 Small Catechism, II, 6.

Augsburg Confession, similarly maintains that human beings – in an existential sense – do not have freedom. The Triune God liberates them from the condemnation of original sin and the ensuing everlasting perdition when they are reborn at baptism and in the power of the Holy Spirit, who instils faith into those who receive the Gospel wherever and whenever God sees fit.⁶ One of the central truths in the Augsburg Confession is “that men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works, but are freely (lat. *gratis*) justified for Christ’s sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favour, and that their sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake, who, by His death, has made satisfaction for our sins.”⁷

The above citations indicate quite clearly the Lutheran concept of what may be thought of as the freedom of Christians when it is a question of the issue that concerns them most deeply, namely salvation. They cannot free themselves from sin by their own devices, merits or deeds. Only the Triune God can free them. In our earlier conversations the representatives of our churches jointly emphasized the role of the Holy Spirit in our faith in their fourth thesis on Christ’s sacrifice and the Eucharist approved at Zagorsk in 1971, and stated jointly at Järvenpää in 1974 that the Holy Spirit offers and distributes the fruits of Christ’s work of redemption in the word of the Gospel and in the sacraments, raising to life those who have died through sin and incorporating them into the body of Christ.⁸ We cannot be saved on account of our own good deeds (Eph. 2:9).⁹ More particularly, the delegates to the meeting in Kiev

6 Augsburg Confession, II, 2; V, 2.

7 Augsburg Confession, IV. See also V, 3: “to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ’s sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ’s sake, ‘so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit’ (Gal. 3:14).

8 Kamppuri, Dialogue between Neighbours, Järvenpää 1974, Third theme, III, thesis 6, p. 64.

9 Kamppuri, Dialogue between Neighbours, Järvenpää 1974, Third theme, III, thesis 7, p. 64.

in 1977 emphasized that Jesus Christ the Redeemer is the initiator and fulfilment of our salvation.¹⁰ “In Baptism we are freed from the power of sin, death and the devil and, reborn to eternal life, we enter the kingdom of Christ.”¹¹

2. The realization of freedom: the work of the Triune God

In the Lutheran understanding the freedom granted through the sacraments and the proclamation of the Gospel may be equated with freedom from enslavement to the law. As the commentary to the Creed in the Large Catechism puts it, “the Creed is a doctrine quite different from the Ten Commandments; for the latter teaches indeed what we ought to do, but the former tells what God does for us and gives to us. Moreover, apart from this, the Ten Commandments are written in the hearts of all men; the Creed, however, no human wisdom can comprehend, but it must be taught by the Holy Ghost alone. The latter doctrine [of the Law], therefore, makes no Christian, for the wrath and displeasure of God abide upon us still, because we cannot keep what God demands of us; but this [namely, the doctrine of faith] brings pure grace, and makes us godly and acceptable to God. For by this knowledge we obtain love and delight in all the commandments of God, because here we see that God gives Himself entire to us, with all that He has and is able to do, to aid and direct us in keeping the Ten Commandments – the Father, all creatures; the Son, His entire work; and the Holy Ghost, all His gifts.”¹² The freedom enjoyed by a Christian is the freedom of

10 Kamppuri, *Dialogue between Neighbours*, Kiev 1977, First theme, II, 1st thesis, p. 68. Similarly in Turku in 1980 the delegates confirmed their mutual understanding that Jesus Christ, who has overcome sin and death, is the foundation of our salvation and the source of our faith. God, in his mercy and love, grants us salvation. We cannot earn it with good deeds. First theme, theses 1 and 5, pp. 86-87.

11 Kamppuri, *Dialogue between Neighbours*, Kiev 1977, First theme, II, thesis 1, and III, thesis 3, pp. 73-74.

12 *Large Catechism*, II, 67-69.

a person inspired with grace, the comprehensive love for God and his neighbour experienced by one who has received the gift of faith.

Alluding to the Schmalkalden Articles, our church teaches that the most important function and effect of the law is that it exposes original sin and its fruits (Rom. 5:20), and the law continues to serve this purpose even in the New Testament (John 16:8; Rom. 1:18; 3:19-20). Preaching of the law leads to repentance (*passiva contritio*), which is not man-made repentance (*contritio activa*) but real heartfelt anguish, the suffering and experience of death. A person who truly repents nevertheless receives “the consolatory promise of grace through the Gospel, which must be believed,” for as opposed to the imprisonment of sin, with God there is “great power to redeem” (Ps. 130:7).¹³

At some points in the confessional books of the Lutheran Church the liberation of mankind is described as taking place on the basis of actions that are either alien to God, Christ or the spirit of Christ, or else His own. Thus the Defence of the Augsburg Confession explains that one action that is alien to God is to strike terror into man, while that which is His own work is to console and restore to life: “For the two chief works of God in men are these, to terrify, and to justify and quicken those who have been terrified. Into these two works all Scripture has been distributed. The one part is the Law, which shows, reproves, and condemns sins. The other part is the Gospel, i.e., the promise of grace bestowed in Christ. ... For all the saints were justified by faith in this promise, and not by their own attrition or contrition.”¹⁴ The same idea is repeated in the Epitome of the Formula of Concord, where proclamation of the law is said to be “foreign to Christ”, while His “proper office” is “to preach grace, console, and quicken, which is properly the preaching of the Gospel.”¹⁵

13 Schmalkalden Articles, Part III, Article III, 4-5.

14 Defence of the Augsburg Confession, XII, 50-54.

15 Epitome of the Formula of Concord, V, 1-8, and especially 10. See also Declaration of the Formula of Concord, V, 1-27, especially 11.

Our churches' delegations have united earlier¹⁶ to affirm that, in the opinion of St. Paul, the law is written in the hearts of all people (Rom. 2:14-15) and that this implies that all people have a concept of good and evil. The fall from grace lay in the fact that man disobeyed God in wishing to decide for himself what was good and what was evil. Thus he became enslaved to sin and doomed to perish. Christ, the Prince of Peace, nevertheless fulfilled the law, and therefore Christians are able to participate in that fulfilment, i.e. in His love.¹⁷ In the words of St. John Chrysostom, in Christ "we were at once freed from punishment, and put off all iniquity, and were also born again from above and rose again with the old man buried, and were redeemed, justified, led up to adoption, sanctified, made brothers of the Only-begotten, and joint heirs."¹⁸ On the same theme, our churches' delegates to the 1977 meeting in Kiev approved the thesis that "Christ's message frees people from the slavery of sin. As children of God they are given freedom, for the Heavenly Father has made them His children in our Saviour Jesus Christ. This freedom of God's children takes away fear, abolishes hatred, calls forth hope and creates mutual understanding and harmony among people."¹⁹ Thus the Triune God brings that which originally belonged to Him back into communion with Him.²⁰

A Lutheran Christian has the conviction that freedom is a gift from God, in the manner described above. As we have said together in the words of our Saviour and the Apostle Paul, "... Christian freedom is a gift of God. 'If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth

16 Kiev 1995, First theme, theses 1 and 2, p. 12.

17 Kamppuri, H. Mikkeli 1986. *The Seventh Theological Conversations between the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church*. Helsinki 1986, p. 18, theses 1 and 2.

18 Kamppuri, *Dialogue between Neighbours*, Järvenpää 1974, Third theme, II, end of thesis 5, p. 64.

19 Kamppuri, *Dialogue between Neighbours*, Kiev 1977, Second theme, III, beginning of thesis 4, p.79.

20 Kiev 1995, First theme, thesis 3, p 12.

will make you free' (John 8:31-32). 'For freedom Christ has set us free' (Gal. 5:1).²¹

3. The Church's freedom

In the Lutheran view the Church's freedom can be examined on the one hand with reference to its fundamental message and the fulfilment of that message, in which case this will include a statement in principle of how the Church's relation to the State should be understood in terms of its own confession (this may be termed Church Freedom I), or on the other hand with reference to the freedom enjoyed by actual historical churches in relation to the respective states (Church Freedom II).

In a theological sense, i.e. in terms of the Church's own beliefs, the Church is free when it expresses its own convictions and is able to function, and does indeed function, in accordance with the mission entrusted to it by Christ. This freedom entails, in the words of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, the requirement that it should be "one Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church".²² The requirement that it should be "one church" may be regarded as satisfied when unanimity is achieved with regard to the doctrines of the Gospels and the administering of the sacraments, and it may be regarded as "apostolic" all the time it is a community of saints in which "the Gospel is rightly taught and the sacraments are rightly administered" (Augsburg Confession, VII, 1-2). Understood in this way, the Church achieves its freedom by being faithful to the missionary task assigned to it by Christ.

In effect, the whole Augsburg Confession can be understood as a defence of this Church Freedom I. It is when the Church mingles this with alien elements that it ceases to be free. And it is then that it needs to be reformed, or cleansed of its aberrations. Once we

21 Kiev 1995, First theme, thesis 10, p. 14.

22 See also Kiev 1995, First theme, thesis 3, p. 12.

know what the Church's apostolic freedom consists of, we are also able to oppose the heresies and acts of misconduct that threaten it. The Augsburg Confession is aimed precisely at preserving the unity of the Church, by stating what this unity implies and by pointing at certain scores on which practices in the church of its day were leading it astray.²³ It is stated at one point, for example, that "Since ... ordinances instituted as things necessary, or with an opinion of meriting grace, are contrary to the Gospel, it follows that it is not lawful for any bishop to institute or exact such services. For it is necessary that the doctrine of Christian liberty be preserved in the churches, namely, that the bondage of the Law is not necessary to justification, as it is written in the Epistle to the Galatians: 'Be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.' It is necessary that the chief article of the Gospel be preserved, to wit, that we obtain grace freely by faith in Christ, and not for certain observances or acts of worship devised by men."²⁴ The Church's freedom thus lies in the inviolability cast upon it by its nature and its fundamental message.

Church Freedom I is also to be found in the fact that in accordance with the law of God, the Church may freely teach and proclaim the purposes of the Triune God with regard to states and dominions. The law of God is written into the hearts of men. Obedience to the First Commandment implies that a believer should trust in God in all things and take refuge in Him, which also entails, for instance, recognition of the implication in the Fourth Commandment that one should honour the earthly powers. It is important for the earthly powers that their task of maintaining external order should be one that is granted to them by God, who expresses his love for the world through the action of the earthly authorities in maintaining order in the face of the corrupting powers of sin. It is part of the Church's freedom to trust in this. The

23 Augsburg Confession XXII-XXVIII. Heresies, deeds, practices and aspirations to power that threaten the Church's freedom are also discussed in the Schmalkalden Articles.

24 Augsburg Confession, XXVIII, 50-52.

Triune God who creates, redeems and sanctifies has charged the earthly powers with the critical task of protecting all people, so that He, through His word (the law and the preaching of the Gospel) and through the sacraments, can fulfil His plan for the salvation of mankind. Christians, who enjoy freedom in Christ, will gladly trust in the earthly powers to carry out their task within God's plan, that of ensuring external freedom, and that this task will be understood as including the guaranteeing of the Church's ability to perform its mission of proclaiming the eternal nature of the human soul. The Church's freedom within the plan for the salvation of all mankind is thus both internally (I) and externally (II) in the hands of the Triune God.²⁵

When discussing Church Freedom II in relation to religious freedom it should be borne in mind that in the Christian view religious freedom is to be regarded above all as an instrument intended by the Triune God for ensuring the external freedom of the Church (Church Freedom II). The argument for this claim will be presented below.

4. Human freedom, the freedom of the liberated Christian and religious freedom

According to the Lutheran confession, God's act of creation has left human beings with the free will to organize and agree on their own external affairs.²⁶ In particular, the Christian's freedom of action

25 See Mark 12:17; Rom. 13:1-10 and the old creeds, also the Augsburg Confession, I-V, XVI and XVIII and the commentaries on the Ten Commandments and the Creed in the Large and Small Catechisms.

26 I ignore for the purposes of this paper what Luther says regarding free will when moved by the Holy Spirit and filled with the grace of God in his *De servo arbitrio* (1525): "It would be correct if we should designate as the power of free will that [power] by which man, who is created for life or eternal death, is apt to be moved by the Spirit and imbued with the grace of God. For we, too, confess this power, i.e. aptitude, or, as the Sophists say, disposition and passive aptitude. And who does not know that trees and animals are not endowed with it? For, as the saying goes, heaven is not

in external matters requires in addition to this the word of God proclaimed in a Church that enjoys freedom, in order to stimulate and strengthen the faith of Christian people, and the sacraments administered in the manner laid down by Christ (Church Freedom I) and external freedom for the Church to act in this way (Church Freedom II). Human beings do not have free will as far as their justification – salvation – is concerned, but human beings and Christians who are liberated by God and are internally free are able to exercise free will in accordance with God's will in order to observe the ordinances of the secular power and provide assistance to their fellow men. The faith of people who have been liberated by God, i.e. Christians, provides them with a source of strength and inspiration to deploy their free will in the service of others.²⁷ The fruits of a faith expressed through a living sense of love are good works (see Gal. 5:6).²⁸

In the Lutheran confession God, acting through the social order, “wishes those who are carnal to be restrained by civil discipline”, and for this purpose “has given laws, letters, doctrine, magistrates and penalties”.²⁹ As the legal order in society is one aspect of God's good works, Christians are permitted to be employed in positions of authority, to resolve legal matters, to impose punishments in accordance with the law, to enter into legally binding contracts, to

created for geese. (*Hanc enim vim, hoc est, aptitudinem, seu, ut Sophistae loquuntur, dispositivam qualitatem et passivam aptitudinem, et nos confitemur; quam non arboribus neque bestiis inditam esse, quis est, qui nesciat? Neque enim pro anseribus, ut dicitur, coelum creavit.*)”, Weimar Edition, 18, 636, 16.

27 This matter is discussed in more detail by Martin Luther in his epistle “Ein Sendbrief an den Papst Leo X von der Freiheit eines Christenmenschen” (1520) (Weimar Edition 7, 20-38). See also Ossi Kettunen, *Martti Lutherin reformatorisessa teologiassa 1518/19-1546* (Diss.) STKS publication no. 110, Rauma 1978; Otto Hof, *Schriftauslegung und Rechtfertigungslehre. Aufsätze zur Theologie Luthers. Mit einem Geleitwort von Edmund Schlöcker*, Karlsruhe 1982, 181-189.

28 See also Kamppuri, *Dialogue between Neighbours*, Kiev 1977, First theme, IV, theses 3 and 5, p.79; Turku, First theme, thesis 5, p. 87.

29 Defence of the Augsburg Confession, IV, 7-8, 22-23.

swear allegiance to the secular power if so required, etc. Even though human nature may have been tarnished by sin, human reasoning is capable of discharging the duties expected of it. The human will possesses a certain freedom to maintain righteousness in society and make choices in matters subjected to reason.³⁰

Thus the Lutheran confession does not represent any hindrance to the interpretation of rationally formulated international agreements on the protection of human beings, e.g. the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as consistent with the Christian faith. Indeed, our earlier discussions have led to expressions of support for international efforts in matters of human rights.³¹

But how should we approach the question of religious freedom from the above theological starting points?

The commentary on the First Commandment in the Large Catechism begins "*Thou shalt have no other gods before Me. That is, thou shalt have Me alone as thy God. What is the force of this, and how is it to be understood? What does it mean to have a god, or what is God? Answer: A god means that from which we are to expect all good and to which we are to take refuge in all distress, so that to have a God is nothing else than to trust and believe Him from the heart; as I have often said that the confidence and faith of the heart alone make both God and an idol. If your faith and trust*

30 Augsburg Confession, XVI, 1-2; XVIII, 1-2; Defence of the Augsburg Confession, IV, 8, 23.

31 See Kamppuri, *Dialogue between Neighbours*, Zagorsk 1971, Second theme, thesis 5, p. 53; Järvenpää, theses 5, 8 and 9 on peace, pp. 61-62; Kiev 1977, Second theme, II, thesis 3, III, these 1, p. 78; Turku, Second theme, thesis 8 (mentioning international human rights and proclamations of human dignity), p. 90; Kamppuri, Mikkeli 1986, Second theme, theses 5 (mentioning generally recognised human rights), p. 18; and Kiev 1995, Second theme, thesis 8, p. 16.

Although the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights does not contain any explanation in principle of the justifications for these human rights, it is clear that Roman Catholic thinking on natural rights has played a part in the formulation of the proclamation. See Carl-Gustaf Andrén, *De mänskliga rättigheternas religiösa och rättsliga bakgrund*, Svenska teologisk kvartalskrift 4/1975, 158-166, especially 160-166.

be right, then is your god also true; and, on the other hand, if your trust be false and wrong, then you have not the true God; for these two belong together, faith and God. That now, I say, upon which you set your heart and put your trust is properly your god.”³² There exist, therefore, both true belief that places its trust in God and wrongful belief that relies on false gods. The three sections of the Creed serve to define Christians and to distinguish them from all other people on earth. Although it is said that the Ten Commandments are written in the hearts of all people and that non-Christians and hypocritical Christians still believe in one true God, they do not know what God wishes of them. The Ten Commandments still do not make anyone into a Christian, but people who are unable to keep the commandments will meet God as their judge. Only belief ignited by the Holy Spirit brings with it purely grace and makes people acceptable to God. Since God gave Himself for us, we will be able to fulfil His commandments.³³

As it is the purpose of the Triune God to bring all men to union with Him, the intention of external religious freedom must be to serve this purpose, i.e. to be an instrument of the secular power and other structures, e.g. the United Nations, and of the Church’s external systems of relations and other external systems of relations, e.g. those of the secular authorities and religious communities and organizations, for ensuring that it is possible for the Church to preach the pure Gospel and maintain activity that serves God’s purpose. As God forbids us to worship any other gods, the multiplicity of religions and of interpretations of the Christian faith and the permanence of this situation are not manifestations of the primary purpose of the Triune God, the salvation of man.³⁴ Since

32 Large Catechism, I, 1-3.

33 Large Catechism, II, 66-69; see also Defence of the Augsburg Confession, IV, 8.

34 Cf. Kiev 1995, First theme, thesis 10, where it is stated that “The Church’s mission and its dialogue with non-Christian faiths and ideologies are not mutually exclusive but interconnected. The uniqueness of Christianity does not mean that tolerance, which is a necessary condition

religious freedom implies acceptance of an external multiplicity of religions and of Christian churches and communities and external efforts to defend the freedom of the religious and Christian cults that correspond to them, the fundamental cause of the emergence and existence of religious freedom must lie in Christian terms in the reality of sin.³⁵ This does not mean, however, that there is anything wrong in this external defence, but merely that it is necessary on account of the reality of the multiplicity of religious convictions.

But is there any theological justification for the rejection of religious freedom as suggested above? The answer that comes to mind from the Lutheran confession is a negative one. All the time sin is rife in the world and among men in the form of a multiplicity of religions and Christian churches and communities, all people who are obedient to the secular powers are obliged *for the sake of peace within society* to arrange matters jointly in the manner that suits them best. This calls for common sense and the exercise of free will. Christians will see in this the workings of the love of God in various ways, on the basis of common structures such as human rights agreements and external structures of churches or religions or of actions on the part of the authorities, and also through the efforts of private individuals. At the same time they will be reaching out in their faith towards the life of the next world, in which perfect love will prevail, the freedom of Christians and the freedom of the heavenly host will exist and religious freedom in the earthly sense will no be longer necessary.

The representatives of our churches at earlier discussions, especially in Kiev in 1995, have spoken in support of religious freedom as a social principle: "Religious freedom establishes fundamental preconditions for the realization of human rights and fundamental social rights, and it must not be used for their

for peace, should be abandoned (1. Tim. 2:1-14)." (transl. Tuire Valkeakari)

35 See also Kamppuri, *Dialogue between Neighbours*, Leningrad 1983, First theme, thesis 11, p. 99.

violation.”³⁶

Although religious freedom is brought about through the medium of external arrangements and structures, it is fundamentally aimed at ensuring individuals’ external freedom to practise religion, in spite of the fact that their religious affiliations cannot be understood without reference to the religious collectivities that lie behind them. God’s redeeming will extends to all people (1. Tim. 2:4). Religious freedom is likewise treated as a personal freedom in the UN Declaration of Human Rights, although in a manner in which it is not explicitly linked to Christianity or any other religious persuasion. Since it is also a question of the right of the individual to resign from a religious body, e.g. the Evangelical Lutheran or Orthodox Church, or to refuse to belong to any such body, it is also conversely necessary to ensure that the freedom of religious bodies is guaranteed externally in a legally satisfactory manner.

The following levels may be distinguished on which religious freedom may be analysed conceptually and from the viewpoint of systematic theology and different concepts may be compared:

Theological level I: Religious freedom is *above all* an instrument which the Triune God has intended for guaranteeing the external freedom of the *Church*, i.e. for ensuring preaching of the pure Gospel and activity that is consistent with God’s purposes. When the will of the Holy Spirit is fulfilled in this sense we have *the most positive kind of the religious freedom* for the Christian believer.

Theological level II: Since sin prevails in the whole of creation and in human thoughts, words and deeds, not everybody believes in the Holy God, nor do all people know or obey His will, so that many people break the First Commandment. There are many religious communities, too, which do not believe in the manner taught by the Church. Although religious freedom of the

36 Kiev 1995, First theme, thesis 10, pp. 13-14 (transl. Tuire Valkeakari). See also Kamppuri, Dialogue between Neighbours, Zagorsk 1971, Second theme, thesis 5, p 53; Turku 1980, Second theme, theses 5 and 8 pp. 89-90; Leningrad 1983, Second theme, thesis 13, p. 103.

kind presupposed at level I cannot grant external protection for the activities of all possible religious bodies, Christians believe that it is the duty of the secular authorities to protect their subjects from all forms of hostility mounted on religious grounds, in order that the love ordained by God should prevail. It then becomes a matter of rationality that common external structures of all kinds and those in the service of the authorities should act together on behalf of external religious freedom in order to bring about and maintain *peace within society*. Interpreted theologically, religious freedom in this sense implies external religious freedom within the earthly society as intended by the Creator, based on rational principles and the exercise of common sense, in other words *positive religious freedom*. Although not all applications of this religious freedom will necessarily be consistent with God's primary purpose of salvation, the concept does include the right to join or resign from churches or religious communities.

Theological level III: Considered theologically, *negative religious freedom*, i.e. freedom from all religious belief, including Christian belief, cannot be anything other than a manifestation of sin. When we examine religious freedom on this level it is inevitably connected with theological interpretations of God and the powers that are opposed to Him, even though the advocates of negative religious freedom may not understand the matter in this way. *As far as theologically defined peace within society* is concerned, this level represents *negative religious freedom*.

The non-theological level: Religious freedom at this level, where *the emphasis is on external and rational factors affecting peace within society, without any religious connotations*, is largely positive religious freedom in the sense of peace within society, although evaluated on a secular basis it may also be detrimental to social peace and integrity and in that sense *negative religious freedom*.

I have attempted above to show in terms of systematic theology how the freedom of Christians, the freedom of the Church and religious freedom are interconnected when viewed from the perspective of the Lutheran faith and confession. Religious freedom

has come into being only gradually and in many different ways in the course of history in Lutheran countries, and no one way in which this has occurred may be regarded as better suited to the purpose than any other. But although the manners of its implementation may have varied greatly, the theological grounds for religious freedom can be shown to have been consistent and at the same time intimately linked to the freedom enjoyed by a Christian and the freedom of the Church.

Ms. Elena Speranskaya

An Orthodox lay view of the freedom of the Church and religious freedom in the society of today

This topic is of great significance to me personally as a matter of principle, since lay members of the Church also belong fully, professionally and frequently also politically to the life of the secular society, and as bearers of and witnesses to the truth of Christ in the bustle of the everyday world, it is they who define what is the role of Christianity in today's society. Thus, in order to define the lay person's view of the Church's freedom it is necessary above all to understand the extent to which that person experiences freedom within the Church.

Laymen are not merely believers who do not belong to the clergy; they are members of the body of Christ who have a place of their own in the Church. And that place does not by any stretch of the imagination conform to the frequently expressed concept of Orthodoxy as an environment in which the priests decide everything and the lay members merely have to humbly keep silence and submit to the power of the hierarchy without objection. In reality the doctrines of the nature of the Church are such that lay members are assigned a particular role.

In the New Testament a person's membership of the Church is defined in terms of being spiritually born again: "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit" (John 3:5). Baptism and Chrismation open the way to participation in the Holy Liturgy, and taken together, Baptism, Chrismation and the Eucharist form the three moments of grace through which believers come to the Church and become members of God's people.

St. Peter, in his first epistle, defined the value which is to be placed on those who belong to the Church: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people" (1 Peter 2:9). In other words, God's whole nation is dedicated to Him. As St. Paul puts it, "You belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God" (1 Cor. 3:23). The followers of Christ are not isolated groups, but all of them together worship God. This unity in Christ and the Holy Spirit, and through them with each other (what we know as communion) in itself eliminates all images of slavery on the part of believers. On achieving freedom in Christ, they believe freely in the body of Christ and identify with the Church's consciousness of its own communality. In that way all members carry within themselves the fullness of the highest degree of unity to be found in communality, while still preserving independent personalities in their own faith, love and freedom in the Holy Spirit. The Rt. Rev. Sergei Bulgakov has referred to communality (Russ. *sobornost'*) as "the soul of Orthodoxy".¹

This communality is expressed at the highest level in the unique experience of Eucharistic union with the whole Church, in heaven and on earth. And in this act of association all hierarchical differences disappear. As St. John Chrysostom writes, "There are situations in which a priest does not differ from those subordinate to him: for instance, when he partakes of the Holy Communion. We are all equally worthy to receive this. ... The people also take an active part in the prayers ... and when celebrating the Eucharist the

1 Rt. Rev. Sergei Bulgakov, *Pravoslavie*, Kiev 1991, p. 76.

priest prays for the people and the people pray for the priest, for the words “And with thy spirit” mean exactly this. Similarly the prayers of thanksgiving are common to all, for it is not only the priest who gives thanks but the whole congregation.”²

Every lay member of the Church is a carrier of a form of ‘internal communality’, a “union with the body of Christ, in which the Holy Spirit is at work”.³ Living within the Church means living in the Truth, but if this life in the Truth, or “merging with the Truth” is possible for some people “it has not been granted to them so that they should stand out from others or be contrasted with others, but in the concrete multi-unity of life in a living, intimate union in accordance with the image of the consubstantial and indivisible All-Holy Trinity.”⁴ And “that living experience of multi-unity is what we mean by communality.”⁵

The fact of universal priesthood is not at variance with the existence of a hierarchy. Indeed, it is a prerequisite, as a hierarchy of this kind cannot arise in a society without grace. The gifts of grace differ considerably, as do the forms of service that individuals are able to render: “There are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone” (1 Cor. 12:6). “And just as there may be various levels of priesthood within the hierarchy, so there may be, and must be, a distinction between the hierarchy and the people within the concept of a universal priesthood.”⁶ It is therefore quite unfounded to speak of slavery in the relation of laymen to the hierarchy.

The internal life of the Church is not subject to external laws, whatever these may be. The Church and the State are quite different in nature, and Orthodox Christians are well aware of this.

2 St. John Chrysostom, *Tolkovanie na Vtoroe Poslanie k Korinťianam* (Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians).

3 Bulgakov, p. 79.

4 Idem.

5 Ibid., p. 87.

6 Ibid., p. 52.

For them spiritual power is on a level above earthly power, because it is responsible for that which is most important – not material welfare but the salvation of souls. It is for this reason, too, that spiritual power does not manifest itself in dominion but in service. “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves” (Luke 22:25-26).

No connection of any kind exists between Orthodoxy and any political structure, and thus Orthodox laymen may exhibit a wide variety of political persuasions and sympathies. That is a matter for their political conscience.

Similarly, believers nowadays look on the separation between Church and State as a guarantee of their right to profess their religion openly, as it were, and regard this as a good thing. But it should not be forgotten that this separation may carry different implications. In the days of the Soviet Union, for instance, the separation of the Church from the State brought with it persecution – ranging from open, remorseless terrorism to the clandestine pressures of the last years of Soviet rule. For this reason the essential thing is not the political system in which the Church has to operate or the freedoms that are proclaimed for it within that system, but something quite different: the extent to which the Church can influence the society around it.

Russia has always lived with the ideal of a wise Christian ruler, of a tsar and a just Christian state, an ideal that has never been achieved at any time in history. At the beginning of the twentieth century, and especially from 1918 onwards, following the Russian Revolution, Orthodox thinkers were engaged intensively in the search for a form of parallel existence for the Church and the State which would suit the needs of both. One figure who stood out among these thinkers was Ivan Ilyin (1883–1954), who was imprisoned six times in the 1920s and was eventually banished from Russia. I would like to mention in this connection some of Ilyin’s concepts of freedom, because he was a lay member of the Orthodox Church

and constructed his system with a view to adaptation to life in a democratic state. In addition, Ilyin's works are being printed in large editions in Russia nowadays and have acquired a certain authority with Orthodox readers.

Ilyin divides the concept of 'freedom' into three categories: external freedom, internal, i.e. spiritual, freedom, and political freedom.

External freedom is "freedom of belief, world view and conviction, in which others should have no right to interfere by means of violent orders or prohibitions".⁷ He describes the presence of this freedom in very powerful terms: "Do not force me by violence, do not force me with threats, do not prevent me with prohibitions, do not lead me into temptation, do not lure me with earthly recompense, do not try to frighten me with punishments. Let me experience the divinity of God, believe in God and accept His law freely with my whole heart and will."⁸

It is easy to agree with this, but greater doubts are aroused by the meaning that Ilyin gives to this external law, as he claims that "External freedom is a natural and essential prerequisite for the emergence and strengthening of internal freedom."⁹

It is quite obvious for the Orthodox consciousness that no external pressure can take away our internal freedom, because "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor. 3:17). A Christian is free in Christ no matter whether he is in prison, exiled from his country or on the executioner's block. It is a different matter, of course, if the Church's freedom to proclaim the Gospel is restricted, or if the violent propagation of some ideology narrows its scope for action within the world, even if it doesn't extinguish its freedom. Ilyin understands internal freedom as the freedom to be

7 Ilyin, I.A., *Put' dukhovnogo obnoveniya* (The Road to Spiritual Renewal). In: I. A. Ilyin, *Sobranie sochineniy* (Collected Works). Moscow 1993. Part 3, p. 89.

8 Idem.

9 Ibid., p. 97.

receptive to Christ's teachings.

Again, the positing of a dependence relationship between internal and external freedom gives Ilyin an opportunity to speak of the significance not only of spiritual authority but also of social authority. The sort of authority "that originally arose from family connections", and which is nowadays grounded in power and is refined and given patriotic depth through the law, is not called upon to extinguish the spiritual independence of the human person but "to build it an external order and an organized common life... People should be able to freely accept the words of this authority and freely apply them to themselves, as this acceptance and adaptation is what we know as 'loyalty'."¹⁰ This "parallel existence in freedom and loyalty is presented as something less real, however, whereas spiritual and social authority are placed on an equal footing, as it were, although the difference in principle that exists between these is clear to every Orthodox believer, who will have been familiar from childhood with the words of the psalmist "Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help ... Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God" (Ps. 146:3,5).

Finally we should say something about political freedom, which Ilyin regards as a variation on external freedom. This not only extends to the personal deeds of private individuals, but it also calls for "participation in taking care of matters of importance to society". After a person has "educated and made himself free" in terms of external and internal freedom, he "can educate others for freedom"¹¹ Indeed, what will a person do with political freedom if he has not matured sufficiently for that freedom? How will he fulfil his political rights if he himself has remained a slave to his passions and the pursuance of his own interests? ... What can a person do for his country if he is accustomed to misusing the freedoms of opinion, assembly and the printed word, if he makes his choices on dubious

10 Ibid., p. 105.

11 Ibid., p. 107.

grounds, if he takes bribes to secure his vote and if he makes all his decisions on behalf of a community or the state on the basis of his own preferences and interests? Does he not become the worst enemy of general freedom and the freedom of others? Does he not infect everyone else with his own slavery in the course of a process of general degradation?¹²

As you read these lines it is as if you are looking at Russia today, a Russia which, as it would seem, is certainly not yet ready for political freedoms. Ilyin is right in the sense that a healthy society can be founded only on people who are spiritually free, and that it is the Church, which proclaims the Truth as it is in Christ, that calls us to spiritual freedom. But that does not imply by any means the education of our fellow human beings in the spirit of political freedoms. The right to political freedoms is merely an indication of the level of spirituality of those who deploy this right, but it cannot as such be in any sense the aim of church activity.

At the same time, “the Church, in accepting the juridical distinction between what belongs to Caesar, i.e. the state, and its own freedom does not in any way renounce its mission to influence every aspect of the life of the state and penetrate all its pores ... The Church exercises its influence from within, and from below, from the people and through the people,¹³ partly through lay members, who may be serving in any capacity whatsoever in the state administration or even be members of parliament.

The Church has a great need to exert an ethical influence on the state and on the whole of society. Even a well-known agnostic such as Arnold Toynbee was moved to write in 1969 that “None of the post-Christian ideologies ... is able to help people retain their own personality, even though this is the most primitive of all necessities in an age when the triumphal progress of technology threatens to render personality inhuman by making it nothing more than a product that isn’t even known by its own name but is

12 Ibid.

13 Bulgakov, p. 198.

identified by means of a series of numerical digits recorded on a card and in the depths of a computer. The historical religions are capable of giving people the psychological strength to escape from the slavery of man-made technology and enter a genuine human community where they can achieve true human freedom. A person who has succeeded in participating in this spiritual reality and has chosen living in harmony with this reality as his goal in life is an indication that human existence is justified.”¹⁴ It should also be remembered that Toynbee wrote these words for western readers who were fully accustomed to enjoying political freedoms.

But when taking upon themselves the task of promoting spiritual recovery in the world, laymen should not forget that they have dual nationality – a heavenly home and an earthly one. Believers have to be cautious that the world does not swallow them up. Modern states, after all, tend to “be like God” (Gen. 3:5), and in doing so are apt to distort Christian values and declare themselves to be the supreme value. It is common in our day, in particular, to proclaim “a return to spirituality”, which in practice turns out to be destruction of the unique character of Christianity and the Christian spirit before the face of the gods of the modern age. As St. Augustine said, We are all Christians, but as yet still in this world.” We are saved only “in hope” and we still have to “wait for it with patience” (Rom. 8:24-25).

Church and State, as we have said, are fundamentally different. There cannot be true harmony between them. Our Lord Jesus Christ announced this quite clearly: “My kingdom is not from this world” (John 18:36). And again, “I have given them your word and the world has hated them, because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world” (John 17:14). The Church stands in the midst of the world, as if in the midst of a battlefield. Complete understanding between the Church and the world is an illusion which has come to the fore repeatedly in the course of the

14 Arnold J. Toynbee, *Sivilizatsiya pered sydom istorii* (Civilization on Trial), Moscow – St. Petersburg 1996, p. 397.

history of the Church of Christ.

I will take the liberty at this point to quote Cardinal Henri de Lubac, who has said that the end of the persecution of the Church is not always a good sign. “It may, of course, be a consequence of an objective improvement in the general situation ... But it may also be a sign that the high values that the Church proclaims have become attuned to the world and its ideals, its conditions and its ways. It may be an indication that these values have ceased to demand anything of the world, for as we know from the Gospels, salt can lose its taste (Matt. 5:13). So, if we are able to live more or less at peace with the world – it may well be due to a general cooling of our ardour.”¹⁵

Whatever conditions may establish themselves in the world and whatever high-sounding words may be uttered, the crucial thing for Christians will remain the task of bearing witness to the risen Christ. It is better that Christ’s Truth should be proclaimed under conditions of external freedom, but political freedom of religion, like other liberal freedoms, should not be allowed to transform itself into a new idol, a new god, so that in our anxiety to satisfy it we forget that under all political conditions it is only the truth that makes us free (John 8:32).

15 Henri de Lubac, *Mysli o Tserkvi* (Thoughts on the Church). Milan – Moscow 1994, p. 150.

**Sylvia Raulo, Programme Officer of
Finnchurchaid**

Comments on the paper by Elena Speranskaya

1. The laity

Although the concept of the “laity” which is discussed fairly extensively in the paper is in itself an interesting one, I will not dwell on the subject here. My only comment is connected with the claim at the beginning that it is the lay members who define what is the role of the Church in society. I would have liked to see more discussion of this matter and of broader questions related to it which could be of relevance to the theme of our meeting. I refer in particular to situations in which lay people’s religious convictions are at variance with society’s demands, in matters concerning the army, medical ethics and the commercial sphere, to mention just a few. What are the speaker’s views on these problems in modern-day Russia?

2. Orthodoxy and political systems

The speaker suggests that there is no internal connection between Orthodoxy and any political system. This can perhaps be understood as something of an idealistic perspective. The claim nevertheless has problems of principle and of history tied up with it.

In the first place, it is difficult to understand this claim in

the light of history. Changes in political systems have affected the life of churches throughout the ages, destroying their internal life and causing dissension and destruction. Can one, therefore, really say that it doesn't matter in what kind of political system a church is living? In my opinion one can't. It has a considerable influence not only on the life of the existing church and the lives of its believers but also on the lives of those who have not yet come to know the Gospel of Christ. It may be true that a church and its adherents can retain their faith even under pressure, but what about those who are prevented by the existing situation from hearing the Gospel of salvation?

My second question, which is more a matter of principle, is whether a dichotomy between faith and the changing world is possible following the incarnation. Does the Church not live in the created world? Is it not a part of that world?

3. The world and the state

My third comment concerns the bracketing together of the state and the "world". The state is a system which people, including Christians, have forged in order to organize their mutual affairs. This includes an accepted body of legislation which regulates relations between people. The "world", on the other hand, is a much broader concept. I can imagine that the criticism that the author is searching for here is more a matter of cultural criticism or criticism of civilization, but the analogy with the discussion of religious freedom is plain to see. Should one judge the laws that guarantee freedom of religion on the grounds of the extremist phenomena that they may lead to or on the grounds of the way in which they regulate relations between people and religious communities in a rational way?

4. A general comment

My fourth comment is an observation that is to some extent relevant

to the other papers as well. One might with only mild exaggeration say that the world seems to be an arena for the forces of evil. This world is nevertheless created by God and Christians are called to serve in it. It is important, in my opinion, that alongside the various wrongs and objects of criticism, we should acknowledge the good in our common life, in which the use of common sense is not denied us.

Dr. Matti Kotiranta

The Church, the State and Freedom of Religion in Finland

1. The basis of Church-State relations in Finland today

Since Finland joined the European Union, the issue of Church-State relations has in a new way become a matter of topical interest in Finland.¹ The deepening integration of the European Union, the associated intergovernmental co-operation and the development of legislation, have raised in particular the question of the importance of freedom of religion and of the position of the churches and religious bodies in the Europe of the future. In the 1990s Church-State relations were evaluated in human rights documents primarily from the point of view of the religious freedom of the individual. Does

1 In this connection it needs to be pointed out that discussion of Church-State relations did not become relevant only when Finland joined the European Union, but the matter has been pondered for decades. Before the 1970s the Evangelical Lutheran Church made a detailed study of matters concerning the religious freedom of the individual and Church-State relations. The Church and State committee, constituted in parliamentary fashion, produced a five-year survey in the years 1972–1977. The committee's report investigated almost all the connections of the Church with the State and took a stance with respect to areas in which there was room for improvement. See *the report of the Church and State committee* (1977:21).

the close relationship between the Church and State infringe the religious freedom of the individual – or to what extent does the privileged position of one or two churches in a country encroach upon the rights and freedom of other religious bodies? In this connection it needs to be emphasized that, for example, one of the eccentricities of the Finnish system is that two churches, the Lutheran and Orthodox, to this day occupy a legal and economic position differing from other churches and religious communities. While other religious bodies are required to register on the basis of the law of freedom of religion, the status of the Lutheran and Orthodox churches is based on specific regulations.

The main hallmarks of the *status under public law*² of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland are the special mention (1919) of church law in the constitution (Constitution 83 § para. 1) and in the parliamentary constitution (PC 31 § para. 2), which contains the exclusive initiative of the General Synod and the non-interference of Government legislative bodies in the content of bills proposed the General Synod. In practice this means that the Church's own decision-making body, the General Synod, has power to introduce bills for enacting and altering church law. Parliament, which finally enacts laws, only has the right to accept or reject church bills.

When regulating the legal status of religious bodies attention must be paid not only to matters of religious freedom but also to the religio-political realities. The most important of these are the *historical legacy* – on the one hand the significance of Lutheranism in the history of our country, and on the other hand the influence of the state church in the Scandinavian tradition more generally – and

2 In the Finnish legal system communities under public law include, beside the State itself, the municipalities and the Evangelical Lutheran Church and its parishes. The Church may have a status under public law even after disestablishment. This is the situation in Germany, for example.

the *religious distribution* of the population.³ Since almost the whole population of Finland once belonged to the Lutheran Church, and the Orthodox Church had a stronghold in Ladoga Karelia, Olonets Karelia and Russian Karelia, Syväri and Petsamo, these two churches have through the course of history gained a special position in relation to the State.

It must be stated that in religiously uniform Scandinavia and Finland there has been no urgent need to re-evaluate Church-State relations. In the Nordic countries political and social development has taken place without abrupt crises in the position of the churches.⁴ Actually, only in the 1990s did the human rights documents of the Council of Europe (CE) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE, now OSCE) and European integration genuinely force the Nordic churches to evaluate the organization of Church-State relations on the basis of the principle of freedom of religion; however, from quite a new perspective. The whole discussion of Church-State relations has altered in nature. The old-fashioned idea of “freedom from religion” and an ideological antithesis be-

3 Archbishop *John Vikström* has said that in discussion of Church-State relations it has from time to time been thought that the distribution of the population by religion should not be taken into account in decision-making. “In support of the idea it has been suggested that the majority of church members are only nominally so, without any genuine religious conviction. Membership of the Lutheran Church, so the critics say, should not be assigned any real significance.” Vikström emphasizes that behind this train of thought is not always concern for the strengthening of the religious convictions of church members but it is thought to open the doors to altering the Church’s social status in a way that restricts its freedom of movement. *Vikström J.* 1992, 50.

4 The course of events was different in the USA and France, where a clear distinction was made between the spheres of Church and State. On this, see *Seppo* 1995, 408. Seppo draws attention to the fact that separation of Church and State received different expression in the USA than in France. France is a country in which the separation of Church and State was a sign of the conflict between the Church and the political establishment. In the USA the separation corresponded to the actual religious and ecclesio-political situation where there was no single uniform church organization covering all the colonies in the manner of a state church. *Ibid.*

tween Church and State is losing ground, and similarly the antithesis between Christian values and the values of society. They have been replaced by a positive interpretation of freedom of religion that has been in high profile in international documents on the subject of freedom of religion since the Second World War. *Citizens have the right to religion and its communal practice* and not only the right to be unattached to anything to do with religion. Now the new European idea of freedom is particularly concerned with how the state can actively protect and safeguard the implementation of human rights and civil liberties – including religious observance – in their region.⁵

A fixed state church system has gradually disintegrated in most Nordic countries. In this connection, for the sake of clarity, it should be explained that what is called the state church is a model of Church-State relations in which Church and State are almost identical. From the Nordic perspective the essential features of the state church system are: (1) *commitment by the State to a particular concession* and (2) *a particular national church being an integral part of government*.⁶ The absolute state church system, where the state religion can be defined as a kind of official ideology, is represented by Norway, in whose constitution “the Evangelical Lutheran religion” is defined as the “public”, that is, official religion of the realm (“Statens offentlige

5 A clear account of the formation of legal theory concerning the freedoms of the individual and of communities in contemporary Europe is provided by Professor Juha Seppo’s report “New freedoms and Church-State relations in Europe. The Tilburg conference November 17–18, 1995”. *Reseptio* 1/1996, 22–28. See esp. pp. 24–25.

6 Here the definition of the Nordic state church system is provided by Hannu Juntunen, secretary of the episcopal conference. See *Juntunen* 1996, 39. In Europe there are three distinct ecclesio-political models. *Seppo* (1998, 242) describes the differences between these models as follows: “First of all, there are countries where there is clear separation of Church and State. Then there are countries where there is a certain system of agreement between Church and State. The third model is composed of elements of national state church systems. If we want to retain this classification, Finland is in the latter group, although the degree to which it is a state church is the least in the whole group.”

Religion §, 2 a). However, citizens and communities have freedom of religion. The king must profess the Evangelical Lutheran religion and “uphold and protect it”. The king is also administrative head of the Church of Norway (Den norske kirke). In practice this leadership belongs to the government and the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs. The organization of the Church is regulated by the Storting, the Norwegian Parliament.⁷

In the Nordic countries the pace of development in religious and ecclesiastical policy has been the fastest in Sweden. In our western neighbour freedom of religion was implemented much more slowly than in Finland,⁸ for in Sweden the law of freedom of religion was

7 In recent decades the Church of Norway has created its own central administration, to which has been transferred the ecclesiastical powers formerly exercised by the king, that is, the government. On the constitutional level, however, it has been decided to preserve the state church system. On this, see in more detail e.g. Hannu Juntunen’s report on the Church of Norway: “The Confession of the State or the Confession of the Church”. *Juntunen* 1991. See also *Juntunen* 1996, 33–42.

8 The Finnish law of freedom of religion of 1922 (267/1922) states: “In Finland religion may be practised publicly and privately, provided that the law or good manners are not infringed” (1 §). Every Finn over 18 years of age is free to decide on belonging to or resigning from a religious body (5 §). A minor over 15 may not resign from a religious body without his or her written permission with his or her guardians (§ 7). On the other hand, he or she cannot resign from or join a religious body without the permission of his or her guardians. If religious education is provided in public schools in accordance with a particular faith, a person not of that faith may be released from it upon request.

According to the law of freedom of religion, non-church members are exempt from all church tax and its equivalent. By contrast, firms, limited companies, co-operatives or other financial corporations that pay municipal tax must continue to pay church tax, even though its members or shareholders do not belong to the Church and even though they do not pay tax to the Church in their personal taxation. Measures to correct these defects in the system are studied in greater depth in the report of the Church and State committee 1997:21. See also *Huovinen* 1992, 11–14. Cemeteries are owned by the Church, although the law does provide the opportunity for establishing a private cemetery or grave. Lutheran parishes must, however, if necessary, hand over a grave in their cemeteries for the burial of a non-church member

only enacted in 1951. In Sweden, however, at the end of the 1950s there commenced a study of ecclesio-political conditions, making preparations for change. This work has continued up to the present day. During this process it has, on the one hand, been attempted to “realize” complete separation of Church and State⁹ and, on the other hand, the administrative independence of the Church and its readiness for the possible separation has been increased.¹⁰ The latest stage in the Swedish Church-State debate was spring 1994 with publication of the committee report *Staten och trossamfundet* (The State and the community of faith). From the beginning of the year 2000 changes came into effect that could be interpreted as separation of Church and State in Sweden.¹¹ It is necessary to point out that this does not mean separation of Church and State with the aim of hindering citizens’ religious observance. Rather it is an interpretation arising from the civil society based on positive freedom of religion both for individuals and for communities. Traditional viewpoints, realization of freedom of religion, and the neutrality of the State in matters of religion, are interpreted in a new way appropriate to the civil society of a modern democratic state. Everyone has the right to profess their chosen faith or remain completely outside all religious bodies.

9 In this connection Juha Seppo has pointed out that, in addition to full individual freedom of religion, separation of Church and State was for decades desired by the Swedish political left wing and the free churches. See *Seppo* 1995, 410.

10 See e.g. *Svenska kyrkan och staten* (The Swedish Church and the State) (Statens offentliga utredningar 1968:11), Stockholm 1968; *Samhälle och trossamfund* (Society and the community of faith) (SOU 1972:36). Stockholm 1972; *Robert Schött & Göran Göransson & Eskil Hinn*, *Kyrkolagen. Den svenska kyrkorätten* (Church law. Swedish church law) 1. Gothenburg 1993, 18–26; *Göran Göransson*, *Svenska kyrkans församlingar. Den svenska kyrkorätten* (Swedish church law. Swedish church law) 2. Gothenburg 1993, 60–72.

11 *Staten och trossamfundet* (SOU 1994:42). Stockholm 1994; *Remissammanställning*. Kyrkobereidnings slutbetänkande Staten och trossamfundet.

In comparison with Norway and Sweden, Finland can be regarded as a good example of a country where traditional Church-State relations have been dismantled in stages without complete separation between Church and State.¹² Demands for disestablishment have indeed increased visibly, first before there was freedom of religion, then during the period of Finnish independence, especially during the radicalism of the 1960s. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland today is clearly a separate institution from the State, with its own legal status. Nevertheless, in Finland there has been constant debate as to whether and in what sense our church is a “state church”. Our church has certain links with the State, and we have retained certain features of the state church. The special position of a state church is clearly shown by certain features of our ecclesiastical legislation, such as the legal status of the Church, the President’s right to nominate bishops,¹³ and up till 1995 the State’s obligation to maintain the diocesan chapters, many economic ties to the government, the right to levy church tax, and the employment of chaplains (army, prison and for the blind and deaf), etc. In the true sense of the word the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland has not, however, been a state church since the church law of 1869 and the constitution of 1919. The Finnish State is neutral in matters of religion, and the Church is legally and administratively very in-dependent in relation to the State.

12 The basic problem given as a reason for disestablishment arose at the end of the eighteenth century with the American Declaration of Independence and the French Revolution. The ideological inspiration for the course of events was the popular philosophy of the Enlightenment, rationalism, and the associated Declaration of Human Rights with its demands for freedom of religion. On this, see in more detail *Seppo* 1995, 407–411.

13 From the list of three candidates chosen by the electoral committee the President usually nominates as bishop the first person on the list with the most votes. During the period of Finnish independence the President has rarely exercised the right to nominate as bishop a person other than the first on the list of candidates. This happened twice during President Kekkonen’s term of office.

In social debate the concept of a state church has often been given a negative ideological shade of meaning. It has been suggested that the majority church, because it is a state church and enjoys certain privileges, is a threat to genuine freedom of religion and the status of religious minorities. An alternative expression to state church that is often mentioned, and a softer one with regard to the social position of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, is *folk church*.¹⁴ The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland has emphasized for decades that it is first and foremost a folk church.¹⁵ In fact the same status is enjoyed in Finland by the Orthodox Church. With the shift to folk church the traditional state church has been assigned to history. However, the concepts of state church and folk church express different things. The concept of folk church is indefinite- from the legal point of view, because its legal basis can be organized in very different ways in different countries. To clarify, the concept of state church is mainly to do with ecclesiastical law, while the concept of folk church has more to do with sociology. The concept of folk church illustrates the historical significance of the Church and the

14 The unusual English expression “folk church” is often used by Finnish theologians when they refer, in English, to Finland’ (Lutheran) national church, wishing to emphasize its nature as the church of the people, as opposed to a mere governmental body. This English concept has been derived from its Swedish and German equivalents (S. “folkkyrka”, G. “folkkirche” in Finnish. “kansankirkko”) In the Finnish language, the word “kansa” can stand for “people”, “nation” and “folk”.

15 “Folk church” is also ambiguous. See in more detail *Report of the Church constitution committee* 1979, 17–25. The concept of folk church has had numerous interpretations depending on the context. We may mention the following: A sociological “folk church”; A missionary “folk church”; A nationalistic “folk church”; A “folk church” as a necessary organization; A democratic “folk church”; The “folk church” as a serving institution; The “folk church” of the underprivileged; The “folk church” as a serving institution; The non-state-church “folk church” An educative “folk church”; A “folk church” of opportunities; A “folk church” of grace; The “folk church” as the people gathered together before God; The civil religion “folk church”; The “folk church” as the local manifestation of the Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. For a deeper understanding of these ideas of the folk church, see *Kamppuri* 1994, 24–25. See *Appendix 1*. See also *Report of the Church constitution committee* 1979.

way in which this Church understands its position and vision in relation to the people. The Church is always a community within a country and its members are citizens of that country. In planning its activities the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland has always emphasized the idea of a folk church which serves the whole people.

In addition to this idea, largely due to the ecumenical (bilateral) dialogues of recent decades – which have helped our church to re-discover its roots – there has been a tendency to emphasize the historical continuity of Lutheranism. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland considers that it represents not only the nations but also more widely the continuity of Lutheranism in our country. It has never seen itself as a modern local alternative to Roman Catholicism but as the representative in Finland of the whole of western Christendom. Bishop *Eero Huovinen* aptly defines the identity of our Evangelical Lutheran Church as a “Lutheran folk church which lives between East and West and is deeply rooted in both early Christian tradition and the discoveries of the Lutheran Reformation”.¹⁶

I outlined above in a preliminary way some general factors which are essential for our understanding of Church-State relations in present-day Finland. Next I shall examine in more detail (1) the background of Church-State relations, which will help us to understand why in Finland certain state church features have been preserved, although Finland no longer has a state church system. Second, I shall examine (2) the development towards freedom of religion and the main content of the law of freedom of religion from the point of view of Church-State relations. Third, I shall attempt (3) to approach Church-State relations from the standpoint of the Church. Then I shall ask what we are to think of the Church’s present ties to the State. Lastly, the latter indirectly involves (4) the question of European integration and the challenges posed by the EU to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. The European Union will in the

16 Lutheran World Information 3/1996.

future be of even greater importance for the status of the churches of the member states and for the formulation of religious legislation. Both general international (5) and ecumenical developments have significant consequences for church law. A good example of this is the *Porvoo Declaration*, which so far has been ratified by eleven Lutheran and Anglican churches. The Declaration not only signifies rapprochement between the churches but also full communion between the churches of the Nordic countries, the Baltic States and the British Isles. I shall now examine the first four of these five points.

2. The historical development of Church-State relations in Finland

The historical roots of Church-State relations in Finland are in the great social, religious and ecclesiastical change caused by the Reformation in Sweden-Finland in the 1520s. With the coronation of Gustav Vasa in 1523 and the Diet of Västerås in 1527 Sweden broke with Rome. The connection with the supranational Papacy, with its independence of the State and its legal system, was now severed, and in its place a national church was born. Its position was regulated by new ecclesiastical regulations and social legislation. While in Sweden the mediaeval Catholic Church was affected by both internal canon law and the external ecclesiastical code contained in contemporary provincial laws, with the Reformation canon law did not entirely disappear but its sphere was considerably reduced.¹⁷ In practice the Reformation was introduced by state decisions. At the Synod of Uppsala in 1536 the Church of Sweden became a national evangelical church. At the Diet of Västerås in 1544 Sweden declared itself an evangelical kingdom. The important church constitution of *Laurentius Petri*¹⁸ (1561) was published with approval by the king

17 See Ylikangas 1967; Kvist 1998.

18 *Laurentius Petri* (1499–1573) was the first Lutheran archbishop of Sweden (from 1531). The 1541 Swedish Bible translation was largely his

in 1571. With the Reformation in Sweden-Finland, as in other Lutheran countries, the Church became an integral part of the State. From the legal point of view the change was very considerable.

The Reformation created the doctrine of the secular and spiritual realms in which the secular power was responsible for maintaining peace and order and thus protecting the Church (*officium circa sacra*), but it was not permitted to interfere in doctrinal matters and the life of the Church (*in sacris*). When we speak of Luther's doctrine of the two realms, this was not part of his political and social programme of reformation, as is often thought. The matter of the two realms goes to the centre of Luther's biblical theology. Above all Luther wanted to fight for the purity of the Gospel, which he though had been obscured because the medieval Catholic Church had attempted to extend its authority to all areas of life and make the Church all-dominating. This was apparent in the demand that the secular sword (authority) be subjugated to the spiritual. Although Luther was naturally unacquainted with the modern democratic system of government, and although his doctrine of two realms was not in the slightest a political and social programme, it had a significant political and social dimension and influence.

This was apparent in two things, first in the changed attitude towards secular authority, and second in the changed attitude towards secular vocation. When Luther and later Lutheranism, on the basis of the idea of two realms, emphasized that both secular and spiritual government were God-created reality, this was likely to emphasize, in contrast with the past, the intrinsic value of secular authority, not subordinate to the spiritual sword but alongside it and independent of it. The goal of the secular realm was also love, but by means of legislation and, if necessary the sword, to protect the weak. Thus

work. He also drew up the 1572 church constitution and wrote a two-part book of homilies.

the realms are related but different. Accepting secular authority as “the actions of God’s left hand”, and thus justified, made possible the growth of all secular authority, an increase in the power of the princes, the birth of national monarchies, which historians regard as the hallmarks of the beginning of the modern period. All these are, however, factors which have created tensions within the Lutheran state church system, as can be seen in the later history of the system.

The development of Church-State relations initiated by Gustav Vasa became settled with the church law of 1686, during the reign of King Charles XI. It obliged all citizens of the realm to hold to the Lutheran confession (so-called “compulsory confession”. In this period of ecclesiastical discipline and order, population registers began to be kept. Lutheranism had become a state religion at the Synod of Uppsala¹⁹ in 1593, and this principle was also written into the constitution of 1634. In it the Lutheran Church and its doctrine (*Confessio fidei*) was given secure status in the constitution. Although freedom of religion in the full sense of the word was not recognized, after the Peace of Stolbova in 1617 religious minorities – Orthodox, Reformed and Anglican – were, due to the pressure of circumstances, given concessions and granted the right to private religious observance.²⁰ The importance of religious uniformity with its cohesive influence on the State was clearly stated in the constitution of 1634, in the words “Unanimity in faith and right worship are the strong-

19 Westmann 1943, 3, 27–29; Gnattingius 1942, 135–136 and Kvist 1991, 219–222.

20 In particular, this affected the Orthodox population of Käkisalmi and Ingria. At first attempts were made to convert the Orthodox to Lutheranism, but the pressure exerted on the Orthodox population did not lead to the desired result. In 1658 the Orthodox were granted the right to their own clergy and services according to the Orthodox rite. The general policy was, however, that concessions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries solely concerned foreigners residing in the country. In the 1780s freedom of religion was extended to members of all Christian denominations. Jews were also given permission to practise their religion.

est foundation of worthy, harmonious and enduring government". These words were later repeated in all constitutions up until Finnish independence in 1917.

The 1686 church law signified in principle the end of the Church's independence and the concentration of power in the hands of the king. This was apparent, for instance, in the sovereign's right to influence the appointment of bishops. The roots of our church's present-day taxation rights and the right of the sovereign (now president) to nominate bishops derive from this period. Due to compulsory confession, membership of Church and State became the same thing. Church law was in fact regulation of actions of State in ecclesiastical form.

As a state institution, during the period of autocracy (early eighteenth century) the Church exercised influence through the State. The clergy formed one of the four estates of the Finnish Diet, along with the aristocracy, the bourgeoisie and the peasants. A step in the direction of a more independent church was taken in 1723 with the privileges granted to the clergy. These set certain limits to the power of the sovereign.

3. Development towards freedom of religion

3.1. Finland's religious policy during the Period of Autonomy

Finland's centuries long state connections with Sweden were severed in 1809, and Finland was incorporated into the Russian Empire as an autonomous Grand Duchy. The 1686 church law was still in force and thus became part of the legislation of the Grand Duchy of Finland. The Orthodox Czar of Russia became head of the Lutheran Church of Finland. However, there was no change in the legal status of the Church. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland retained its doctrine and order in accordance with the decree issued

by Czar Alexander I at the Diet of Porvoo.

In the Finnish church, however, there was fear concerning the religious policies of the sovereign of another faith. After Old Finland was annexed to the rest of Finland in 1811, the Orthodox population increased tenfold to approximately 30,000 members. In 1827 an imperial edict opened up military and civil posts in Finland to members of the Orthodox Church. Because the Orthodox professed the “Czar’s faith”, they enjoyed his special protection. All attempts to convert the Orthodox to Lutheranism were forbidden. The confessional Lutheran thaw instantaneously became an Orthodox cold spell in spring. In this altered religio-political situation it was felt that the Finnish Lutheran Church should be given a more independent position. After the Czar gave his approval, in the 1860s the Finnish Senate set up a committee to reform church law. *Frans Ludvig Schauman*²¹ (1810–1877), a professor of theology, became a member of the committee and his proposals formed the basis of new ecclesiastical legislation.

Schauman’s main definition of policy concerning the division between Church and State was that the Church should have its own legislative body, the General Synod. Concerning purely ecclesiastical matters the sovereign had only the right of approval or rejection of legislation. However, both social and ecclesiastical elements were contained in state legislation. One may state that there has been no change so far in this basic policy in Finland. The General Synod has retained its position as a source of ecclesiastical jurisprudence. The setting up of the Church’s own decision-making body and its canonical right to initiate legislation in matters of church law, and its right to issue statements on Church-State issues created the basic

21 *F. L. Schauman* was Professor of Practical Theology at the University of Helsinki 1847–1865 and Bishop of Porvoo 1865–1877. He was also a member of the Finnish Diet 1863–1872.

pillars on which Church-State relations still function today.

The church law of 1870 meant that once again the Church became a community under public law separate from the State. The new church law was also a significant step towards freedom of religion. Compulsory confession was abandoned, and the State's commitment to the Lutheran confession was relaxed. Although the law was enacted solely for members of the Lutheran Church, it recognized that there were members of other faiths than the Lutheran Church living in Finland. Special mention was introduced into the law that citizens could not be tied to membership of the Lutheran Church contrary to their convictions, nor prevent them from leaving the Lutheran Church and joining another denomination. The law did not by any means recognize full freedom of conscience and religion. In the church law of 1869 freedom of religion meant primarily freedom of religious observance. A religiously neutral state was still an unknown concept in the 1869 church law.

To sum up, Finland's connection with Russia during the Period of Autonomy created, paradoxically enough, the basis for in-dependence for the Church, too.²² When the Church emphasized the west-

22 This development could not be changed even by the Period of Oppression. The Period of Oppression means the periods of Finnish history 1899–1905 and 1908–1917, when Russia attempted to eradicate the autonomous status of Finland. The first Period of Oppression, known in Finland as the “years of frost”, began with the February Manifesto. The language manifesto of 1900 dictated that Russian was to be the internal language of the central and provincial administration of Finland. In 1901 the law of military service was passed, according to which Finns were required to do military service. Censorship was tightened and freedom of assembly was restricted.

The new Period of Oppression began in 1908 when the Czar subordinated Finnish affairs to the Russian Council of Ministers. In 1910 the Russian Duma approved a law whereby Finnish affairs came under its jurisdiction. Some of the most important controversial issues were those of the “military millions” with which Finland had to compensate for military service, and the 1912 “law of equality” whereby Russians were guaranteed the same rights in Finland as Finnish citizens. The second Period of Oppression

ern ecclesiastical tradition in its Nordic form alongside the different church of the Czar, holding that it was the representative of western Christianity in Finland, it was successful in ensuring for itself a new, legally guaranteed status of non-interference. Before the increasing integration of the European Union the Finnish church and the associated co-operation with the State had no need to open this preserve to outsiders in any significant way.

From the point of view of the Finnish Lutheran Church, the aforementioned developments have meant that the Church has not been primarily an instrument and vassal of government religious policy, but with its own *constitution*²³ it has been able to form its own perception of its nature and mission as a servant of the people. In Finland, in the course of history church work has taken on such forms that in spite of the ruler-centred system democratic elements have naturally become part of our ecclesiastical system from within the situation in which the Church is placed. At the same time the independence of the Church in relation to the State has been sufficiently ensured.

3.2. The issue of freedom of religion during Finnish independence

The principles of Western democracy include guarantees of religious freedom as one of the basic civil rights. The meaning of freedom of religion becomes clear from its connection with the constitution, with the State's ideas of justice and freedom on the constitutional level. What is essential in freedom of religion as a basic right is that

ended with the Russian Revolution in March 1917.

23 By the constitution of the Church is generally meant that proclamation of the Word and the administration of the sacraments is organized, there is a parish community, the Church's ordained ministry, the episcopate, the threefold ministry, and parish administration, etc. The purpose of the Church's constitution is to ensure that the Church can function as a community of faith and love.

public authority does not interfere in matters of religious conviction nor make distinctions between citizens on the basis of religion or similar convictions (or their lack) when assigning rights or duties. Since the turn of the twentieth century the concept of freedom of religion has usually involved three basic elements: freedom of confession, freedom of worship and freedom of membership.

In Finland conditions for full freedom of religion were created with the declaration of Finnish independence (1917). The republican constitution of 1919 marked a decisive turning-point in this matter. Paragraph 8 § of the constitution guaranteed Finnish citizens freedom of conscience and religion:

Finnish citizens have the right publicly and privately to practise religion, providing that law and good manners are not infringed, and also, as is specifically laid down, freedom to leave the religious community to which he or she belongs, and freedom to join another religious community.²⁴

The constitution gives equal civil rights and civil obligations to all, irrespective of whether they belong to a religious community or not.

When the constitution was drawn up there was a long debate as to whether the special status of the Lutheran Church in relation to the State should be mentioned in the constitution. The full implementation of the principle of freedom of religion in the constitution of 1919 meant that the Finnish State became religiously uncommitted and neutral. The 1922 law of freedom of religion laid down detailed regulations on religious freedom. It also confirmed the different status in relation to the State of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Orthodox Church as compared with other religious communities.²⁵

24 *Finnish Constitution*, July 17, 1919, 8 §.

25 Because the Finnish State, when accepting the principle of freedom

When the law of freedom of religion came into effect a population register system was created,²⁶ which was kept by the Orthodox Church, by other religious communities, and for others by the district registrar (the so-called civil register). This complex system was reformed in the 1970s, and in 1995 the Central Church Board and the Ministry of the Interior agreed on measures to improve cooperation between Church and State.²⁷

Religious freedom for the individual and the acceptance of the non-confessional nature of the State did not, however, according to the constitution, require breaking off the relationship between the State and the Lutheran Church. Although the new constitution, on the

of religion, has chosen to adopt a neutral stance towards the religion of its citizens, the special relationship of the State with two churches demands an explanation. Here I refer to the analysis by Bishop *Paul Verschuren* (The Catholic Church in Finland). *Verschuren* (1992, 45) states that from this state of affairs “one can reach the conclusion that is’ often reached abroad, that Finland is a country of two confessions or two churches, which means such a logical ‘salto mortale’ as is denied to private individuals. Usually it is held that a person cannot have two religious convictions at the same time.” *Verschuren* emphasizes that a distinction must be made between the two directions of the State: on the one hand, in the relation of the State to religion, on the other hand in the relation of the State to a particular church. Both relationships affect the other and are close to the other, but they do not express the same reality. Although the State is religiously neutral on the basis of freedom of religion, it can still have special authority and a special relationship with respect to a particular church. This authority is called internal authority if it concerns the Church’s teaching and liturgy, and external authority if it concerns appointments to an office, the Church’s constitution or its property. *Verschuren* points out that in general a state that has recognized freedom of religion does not demand internal authority in the affairs of a particular church. *Ibid.* This is not always the case by any means. The religious policy of the Bolshevik Soviet State offers a good example of how formally recognized freedom of religion can assume the most destructive forms from the Church’s point of view. See also *Rössler & Strickler* 1988, 617–626.

26 Originally the register produced for the needs of the Lutheran Church developed into a national state population register.

27 The agreement means a change of emphasis as compared with previous years, when the objective of the Ministry of the Interior was the transfer of responsibility for the population register to civil servants.

one hand, restricted the Lutheran Church to being one religious community among many, the so-called “church paragraph” (§ 83) confirmed, on the other hand, the constitution of the Lutheran Church and its special legal status based upon it.²⁸ The constitution also indirectly confirmed the special legal status of the Orthodox Church, which was based on the statute of 1918 founding a national church.

The most important change compared with the period of compulsory confession and autonomy was the right granted by the law of freedom of religion to leave the Evangelical Lutheran Church without the obligation to join another religious community. The names of these citizens are entered in the civil register, which was established in 1917. As a matter of curiosity, in Finland until recently Finnish Pentecostal assemblies felt unable to register as a religious community under the prevailing law of freedom of religion. They therefore registered under the law of associations. In 1917 the law was changed to allow civil marriage.

In Finland the law of freedom of religion has been in force and in essential respects has remained unchanged for 75 years (in 1997).

28 Section 83 of the 1919 Constitution Act reads: “Provisions on the Organisation and administration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church shall be prescribed in the Church Code. Other existing religious communities shall be governed by the provisions enacted or to be enacted as to those communities. New religious communities may be established in the manner prescribed by Act of Parliament.” Quotation from the Constitution Act is from Constitutional Laws of Finland, Procedure of Parliament, Helsinki 1992; Parliament of Finland, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice.

4. Church-State relations viewed from the perspective of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland

The major and complex problems of Church-State relations can be approached from several different angles. Finnish studies of Church-State relations have usually concentrated on historical, legal, ecclesio-political, administrative and economic matters, as has been done here. Details and many different factors concerning Church-State relations can easily obscure the most important thing: the Church's self-understanding. The basis of the Church's activities and constitution²⁹ is the fact that the Church's task is given. Its task is to preach the Gospel, the grace of God through Word and sacrament. The Church ultimately exists solely for this task. The Church becomes concretely *visible*³⁰ only as it carries out this task. For this reason the nature, task and administration of the Church are always unique as compared with society and the economy. If Church-State relations are viewed solely as a technical matter, we easily lose the ideological or religious background factors that should be the basis for organizing those relations.

What, then, from the Church's point of view should we think of

29 See above, note 23.

30 The twofold nature of the Church has traditionally been expressed with the pair of concepts the visible Church – the invisible Church. The invisible side of the Church refers to revelation and the Incarnation as tenets of faith. The Church is the one body of Christ, a divine-human organism which is indivisibly united with God in the person and work of Christ. The unity of the Church – the unity of human persons in the person of Christ – is communion with the humanity of the risen and ascended Christ. The Church is also always a visible community. There does not exist a merely invisible Church, at least not in the sense of an ideal supernatural Church (cf. the theory of the Church as a perfect archetype of Divine Wisdom, Sophia, developed by the Russian sophiologists – *Vladimir Soloviev*, *Sergei Bulgakov* and *Pavel Florovsky*) or a mere community of the saints distinct from the Church that exists in a perceivable way for its task as a medium of the grace of God. On the ecclesiology and sophiological theory of the Russian sophiologists, see *Kotiranta* 1995, 88–175.

the present ties to the State, when Church-State relations are approached *consciously* from this angle? In this area of ties to the State we have in Finland such undeniably problematic matters as the status of the Church under public law and its extent,³¹ the right of the President of Finland to appoint bishops, the right of the government to decide on the division of dioceses, the responsibility of the Lutheran Church for the upkeep of cemeteries,³² confessional religious education in schools, the keeping of the population register, and last but not least, the section of the new constitution which makes no mention of other churches or religious communities than the Lutheran Church. In the European context this policy is undoubtedly odd,³³ especially when it is viewed in the light of our extremely open ecumenical atmosphere,³⁴ as a result of which not only relations between our folk churches but also our relations with the free churches have greatly improved. In 1992 our church was engaged in

31 E.g. Heikkilä (1992, 8), in his analysis of the new church law, suggests that the objective could be a more limited status under public law for the Church, based on our historical tradition and altered social conditions. Heikkilä suggests that direct Church-State relations could be defined in a different way. However, the internal affairs of the Church and the churches would remain to as great an extent as possible dependent on their own regulations. "The Church would be left, if it so wished, with the possibility, on the basis of historical tradition and the interests of society, of levying membership fees in the form of church tax." *Ibid.*

32 Responsibility for the upkeep of cemeteries.

33 Seppo (1998, 244) comments that "such a procedure is (in the European context) so exceptional that it could hardly be considered in any other member state of the European Union". On Finnish ecclesiastical policy in the European context, see *ibid.*, 240–245.

34 A concrete demonstration of the present open ecumenical atmosphere was a historic incident when representatives of the churches in Finland (Lutheran, Orthodox and Roman Catholic, Finnish Free Church Council and the Finnish Ecumenical Council) together approached the President of Finland at the end of 1995 and suggested that the Finnish delegates take more religio-political initiative at the inter-governmental conference in 1996. During their visit the representatives of the Finnish churches expressed their entire agreement with the efforts of the German Evangelical Church (EKD) and German Catholic Episcopal Conference to have a statement on religious communities appended to the founding document of the European Union.

trilateral negotiations with the Finnish Free Church and Pentecostal movement, studying the experiences of a minority church and Pentecostal assemblies with respect to religious freedom in Finland. The leadership of our church has stated that these churches will receive all our support, so that freedom of religion as a positive basic right might be realized in our country as totally as possible.³⁵

Without attempting to give an exhaustive answer to the question how the problems involved in the Church's ties to the State should solidly be resolved,³⁶ it must be said that the Church's relationship with the State, and with social authorities more widely, come within the scope of natural human reason, in other words, their relevance needs to be assessed in the same way as the Church's administrative system. Solutions should be based on the nature of the Church and serve the Church's task. In relation to the State and political decision-making, it is not decisive to what degree there is a state church reflected in Church-State relations, but whether a particular decision does justice to the Church's and churches' relationship with the State and society. It is then decisive that the Church and churches themselves interpret their own confessions and develop their own constitutions. This self-understanding arising from the nature of the Church can be said to be what supports the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland in its relations with the State and surrounding society.

As has become clear, the Evangelical Lutheran Church has such a long history in our country that in our society it is able unashamedly to participate in social debate. Since the early days of Finnish independence, but especially in recent decades, our church's leadership has actively participated in social and socio-ethical debate.

35 Vikström 1996, 6.

36 On discussion of the new church act with the aim of solving these problems, see Heikkilä 1992, 6–10.

Archbishop *John Vikström* issued a very significant statement on the ethical evaluation of neo-liberalism and its values.³⁷ Since Finland joined the European Union, preserving the Nordic welfare state has become a burning issue, because Catholic social doctrine – although it has not been adopted as such – has indisputably influenced the social ethics applied in the Union and thereby reflected in the member states. A state in which the social role and responsibility of the government is strong has grown up in areas whose culture and way of thinking is Protestant and Lutheran.³⁸ Some emphases of Catholic thinking, however, are such as are seen in neo-liberal criticism of the welfare state.

5. The challenges to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland posed by European integration and the European Union

EU integration is still such a new matter in Finland, that the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland has so far not produced a detailed EU strategy³⁹ nor taken a stance on the ideological goals that the Church wants the EU to represent.⁴⁰ Since Finland joined the

37 Archbishop Vikström gave a talk at the symposium of the Finnish Society of Theological Literature *International Solidarity and Social Ethics* in November 1997. The paper was published in the STKSJ series vol. 212. Vikström 1998, 69–77.

38 On social responsibility in the Lutheran and Catholic views, see Raunio 1997, 113–142; Paul 1997, 19–29.

39 More generally the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland has defined its preliminary policy with respect to the European Union by supporting the initiative of the EKD and the German Catholic Episcopal Conference concerning the mention of the status of the churches in the new EU agreement (Maastricht II).

40 This is how one can interpret Archbishop Vikström's talk on the ethical evaluation of neo-liberalism and its values, and certain of his comments at the STKS symposium *The Churches and the European Crisis* 1995. See in more detail Vikström 1998, 69–77 and the STKS Yearbook 1996. STKS publications 204, ed. Matti Kotiranta. and STKS Yearbook 1996. 204 ed. Matti Kotiranta.

European Union the issue of Church-State relations has become more complex and more difficult to comprehend. Governmental co-operation is inevitably reflected in the churches. In the future, member states of the European Union will not only have to draw up regulations for national churches but also join new government legislation for the whole Union. This development also includes many positive elements, it cannot be denied. One of these is the emphasis on the importance of Christianity as a building-block in European integration.⁴¹ In particular, Christianity is seen to have moulded European culture, social and political history, having made and continuing to make a significant contribution to the formation of Europeanism and the identity of the European peoples.

This view was very clearly presented at the intergovernmental conference in Amsterdam in June 1997, when it was decided to include in the agreement of the European Union (Maastricht II) a declaration (not article) on the status of churches and religious communities. The declaration in the final act of the Amsterdam conference on the relation of the European Union to the churches and religious communities in its member states reads as follows: "The Union respects and does not restrict the position of churches and religious organization or communities in accordance with member states."⁴² The reference to the position of the churches is an intergovernmental agreement means a change of mind so far *only* in the European

41 Although in EU "ecclesiastical policy" it is recognized that the churches have a significant cultural role to play as building-blocks in the integration of Europe – in the twentieth century European identity was repeatedly based on the tripod of Antiquity, whose supporting pillars are Greek critical thought and the legacy of democracy, Roman law and order, and the message of Christianity – the difficulty is that the discussion will have to be held between religions and churches. In the European Union there is no single church or single European religion which supports Europe's aims and European identity, and whose ideas as such might be accepted as building-blocks of European identity. A good example of this is the discussion in the European Union of the subsidiarity principle, which Lutherans and Catholics interpret in different ways.

42 Quoted from a bulletin by *Mari Malkavaara*.

Union as an economic and political community. Although the declaration in question is not included in the EU agreement as a separate article,⁴³ when its legal signification is less compared with the situation had a separate article be composed on the matter, it must be acknowledged that declaration is politically binding. It is also extremely likely that an article on the churches and religious communities will be included in future EU legislation.

What, then, does the European Union agreement (Maastricht II) mean for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland? The question can be answered at least in the following way. – It is true that Finland's joining the EU means that the State has handed over some of its powers to supranational bodies. It is also true that on the national and supranational level decisions will be taken concerning the status of religion and the churches, either directly or indirectly. This does not, however, mean that the EU will issue a special church directive. The Amsterdam agreement does not essentially change the ecclesio-political situation in the Nordic countries, because it assumes that *decisions on the status of the churches are taken on the national level in accordance with the subsidiarity principle* at as low a legal level as possible. The possibility of taking national decisions based on the subsidiarity principle is crucially important, in particular for France and Great Britain, of the EU countries, in both of which there are substantial Muslim minorities, which have caused certain problems for preserving the Western European cultural tradition – in particular Sunday observance. Germany's decision to ban scientology as religion can be seen as arising from a desire to protect the European

43 The text of the Amsterdam declaration approved in July 1997 is palid compared with the original proposal of the EKD and the German Catholic Episcopal Conference concerning an article on religious communities and the principle of proximity to be included in the Maastricht II agreement (1996): The Union takes into account the legal status of the religious communities in the member states as an expression of the uniqueness of the member states and their cultures and as part of a common culture and tradition. Concerning Maastricht II (1996): The Union culture and tradition.

religious cultural legacy.⁴⁴

Professor *Juha Seppo* in interview with *Näköala* magazine, has stated that the Amsterdam agreement can be viewed on the general level as promoting diversity and not at all as aiming to increase uniformity either within the member states or between them. Some new articles or changes to former articles are linked with the process of EU expansion. The agreement emphasizes to a greater extent the responsibility of member states to make a commitment to democracy and guarantee impeccable human rights for all citizens. As far as religious policy is concerned, this means that the State cannot ignore citizens' religious needs either.⁴⁵

The greatest legal and political significance of the declaration concerning the churches in the final document of the Amsterdam meeting is undoubtedly that, without in any way negating the agreements on human rights of OSCE, it wants to do justice to a significant part of the European cultural and religious legacy and also guarantee that legislation concerning religious communities come within the scope of the legislative powers of the EU member states, thus giving space to the special religious and cultural features of the different countries. The declaration also guarantees freedom of religion in the member states of the European Union.⁴⁶

44 The appearance of new religious communities (e.g. scientology) on European soil has raised the question in terms of legislation as to the kind of values a community needs to uphold to meet the conditions for forming a religious community. In certain Western European countries control has begun to be exercised to ensure that groups based on tax evasion or self-destructive behaviour do not abuse freedom of religion.

45 *Näköala* 2/1997, 15.

46 In accordance with the spirit of international human rights agreements, the concept of freedom of religion is seen in the European context as also including religious-like beliefs which its devotees are unwilling to describe as religion. In addition, it is considered that the essential aspects of *freedom of religion are freedom of conscience, freedom of worship and freedom of assembly.*

We can only guess what the relationship between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the (federal) State will ultimately be like in integrating Europe in the 21st century. If some conclusions can be drawn from pan-European debate in recent years, the most significant is undoubtedly the change in the general atmosphere of the debate, which is seen as openness to deal with Church-State relations in a new way. Traditional considerations, implementation of freedom of religion (positive freedom of religion) and the religious neutrality of the State, are to be interpreted in a way appropriate to the civil society of a modern democratic state, when it is genuinely felt that the State, the Church and religious communities must work together because it is ultimately a question of the same citizens.

Such an approach is one our church can easily agree with. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland considers that it represents in our country not only the nations and the continuity of Lutheranism but also the universal Church of Christ, which is fundamentally supranational. The universality of the Church's message transcends political, geographical and economic boundaries. The Church is by nature ultimately always above people. It is the spokesman of those who cannot make their voices heard, either at all or sufficiently well. In integrating Europe the churches will to an increasing extent be approached to enquire about both the Church's universal role and its socio-ethical role.

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Professor Vladimir Mustafin

Comments on the paper by Dr. Matti Kotiranta

In terms of content the paper addresses four themes:

1. A theoretical evaluation of the current situation in church-state relations is presented in the first section, “The basis of church-state relations in Finland today”.
2. The history of church-state relations in Finland is outlined in the second and third sections, “The historical development of church-state relations in Finland” and “Development towards freedom of religion”, the latter being further divided into two parts, “Finland’s religious policy during the period of autonomy” and “The issue of freedom of religion during Finnish independence”.
3. Problems affecting relations between the Finnish state and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland at the present time are discussed in the fourth section, “Church-state relations viewed from the perspective of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland”.
4. Finally, proposals that have been made regarding the nature of church-state relations in Finland are examined in the fifth section, “The challenges to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland posed by European integration and the European Union”.

The author’s key idea regarding the first theme is that the traditional

relation between the church and state in Finland (represented by the concept of a “state church”) is gradually being dissolved, although the process has not yet advanced to the point of a complete juridical separation. On the one hand the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland is undeniably a separate institution and not an arm of the state (e.g. it has the status of a legal person), but on the other hand it still possesses the characteristics of a traditional “state” church (the legal status of a corporation in public law, the right to levy a church tax and the state obligation to ensure the material remuneration of chaplains in the army, prisons, hospitals etc.). This transitional juridical status of the Evangelical Lutheran Church is increasingly being referred to as that of a “national church”, or “folk church”, although the latter in particular is legally speaking an indeterminate expression that is largely of general cultural and historical significance. The Orthodox Church of Finland also has the status of a “national” or “folk church”.

The second, historical theme may be divided into three parts:

1. Church-state relations at the time when Finland was part of the kingdom of Sweden (from the first half of the 16th century up to 1809),
2. Relations when Finland was part of the Russian Empire (1809–1917), and
3. Relations during Finnish independence (from 1917 onwards).

The period of Swedish rule in Finnish history was dominated by two fundamental factors: the establishment of Lutheran doctrines at the general cultural level, implying a relation between the state authorities and the newly created Lutheran Church that meant in practice the full subordination of the church to the state, and the eventual adjustment of church-state relations in 1686, after the break with Rome, when all the inhabitants of the kingdom were obliged under a special law to convert to Lutheranism. This was the final, unequivocal form in which political loyalty was equated with membership of the church.

The key factor in the relation between the power of the Emperor and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland during the Russian period was naturally the manifesto issued by Alexander I at the Diet of Porvoo in which he pledged that the authorities would not interfere in the internal doctrinal or administrative affairs of the church. This pledge was adhered to without any notable infringements right up to 1917.

When Finland gained independence, a paragraph on religious freedom was included in its constitution of 1919 granting all citizens the right to practise religious observances in private and in public and the right to change religious community should they so desire. In this way the state committed itself to religious impartiality from that time onwards. The law on religious freedom of 1922 that corresponded to this paragraph in the constitution finally legalized the concept of freedom of religion in Finland. This law remains in force today.

The third theme in the paper is an analysis of problems currently facing relations between the church and state in Finland. All these problems, including the right of the president, as head of state, to appoint the bishops, the right of the government to determine and alter diocesan boundaries, the church's administrative responsibility for the upkeep of cemeteries, the church's role in religious instruction in state schools etc., arise almost entirely, as one can easily appreciate, from the juridical contradiction that places all religious communities in Finland on the same level as far as their juridical competences are concerned and yet assigns to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland certain characteristics of corporative status under public law that give it privileges which infringe the rights of other religious communities.

There is no doubt whatsoever that a substantial proportion of these problems will be resolved in the near future in a direction that will guarantee the freedom of religious observance more precisely than at present.

On the fourth and last theme, the author examines prospects for church-state relations in Finland in the light of the

country's accession to the European Union. Membership of this body means that sooner or later the state authorities will have to hand over some of their duties to pan-European, i.e. supranational, institutions of government. It is easy to predict what might be the consequences in the case of church-state relations. Above all, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland will have to relinquish its privileged (or allegedly privileged) position in favour of the principle of strict equality under the law between all religious communities, as prevails in all the member states of the European Union. It will then be possible to resolve all the other, smaller problems at the level of maximal implementation of the principle religious freedom. The church should not fight shy of exercising its influence in this way on a society composed of supranational institutions and correspondingly reducing its influence on the society subject to state control, for Christianity as such is of a supranational nature, so that nationalism is in principle alien to it. The real object of the Church's influence – human society – is in any case the same within the spheres of all nation-states.

The paper is any extremely valuable one in terms of content, i.e. when viewed from its principal perspective; in fact it is an exhaustive treatment of the topic as expressed in its title. And it is of especial value to the Orthodox participants in these doctrinal discussions, as they are able to extract the maximum richness of first-hand information from it.

Rev. Vsevolod Chaplin

**Church-state relations and the new legislation
on religious activities: a view from Russia**

The author puts forward briefly his own personal view of the discussions taking place in Russian society with regard to church-state relations and the new law on “freedom of conscience and religious communities” in the context of the conceptual conflicts that are so typical of modern-day Russian thinking.

**1. Quo vadis, Russia? The discussion surrounding
models for church-state relations**

One could scarcely say today that the search for the optimal model for relations between the Russian state and the country’s religious communities has come to an end. It is still possible to hear diametrically opposed statements from influential representatives of religious communities, and from time to time also from the mouths of state representatives: anything from dreams of a theocracy to suggestions that people employed “in the service of the state” should be prohibited from setting foot inside a church.

On the other hand, it can very well be said that while relations between the church and the state were reorganized recently in the course of stormy changes in society at large, so that the role

of religious bodies in people's lives, having previously been forcibly suppressed, began to recover, although in a somewhat disorganized manner, the situation at the present moment is a good deal more stable. It is clear to everyone that there is to be no return to the minimization of the Church's role in society and that the residual legal and other barriers that restrict the participation of religious communities in the life of society will be removed. It is nevertheless equally evident that there is not likely to be any qualitative growth in the numbers of believers in the near future and that the religious communities – whether the majority church, the Islamic community, the various western Christian denominations or the missions and sects that have become fashionable in recent times – have virtually exhausted the hidden potential for growth that existed prior to the restoration of religious freedom.

Similarly, the emotional outbursts surrounding the relations between religion and politics appear to have subsided somewhat. The various religiously oriented political structures have proved incapable of attracting sufficient attention in the social sphere and, having fared badly in elections, have more or less become assimilated into the major parties and political movements. Meanwhile the latter have made substantial efforts to gain the exclusive support of major religious communities, most notably the Russian Orthodox Church, but their advances have been determinedly rejected. Most recently, it was decided by the Synod of Archbishops at their meeting in February that the Church should not grant its blessing to any political organizations or structures that were engaged in election campaigns or involved in political agitations. Likewise, priests were henceforth to be banned from membership of political parties or movements (they had already been prohibited from standing as candidates in any political elections under a decree issued by the Synod of Archbishops in 1994). In the same way the Islamic religious centres have refused to become involved in politics, although admittedly less determinedly. Since this decision was taken politicians have been considerably less eager to establish contacts with religious leaders and, having expressed their disappointment

at this decision and their criticism of it, have largely abandoned any attempts to manipulate the opinions of religious organizations against their opponents.

This means that the political struggle over religion has in part been transformed into a struggle over the development of relations between the church and the state, which has become visible in the Russian arena primarily in the form of a competition between three models for such relations: the European model, the American model and the Soviet model. It is a well-known fact that in the majority of European countries the church, even when formally separated from the state (there are many countries which have a state church), still enjoys a measure of financial support and a wide range of privileges and is entitled to express its opinions directly to the government authorities not only on matters of especial interest to it but also on numerous general social problems. Naturally such a system implies that by no means all the religious organizations in the country receive government support or enjoy any privileges. In some places the criterion is the number of members, and in others one church may be specially recognised in law or by tradition. In other cases certain leading religious communities may together decide on the distribution of government funds, and elsewhere only certain organizations may be granted access to state schools.

Few of the above principles could be directly applied in Russia, of course, as the legacy of the atheist period, during which the living tradition of a vast volume of religious activity was effectively lost, is far too pressing. More alien still to our way of thinking is the American model, in which all religious organizations are purposefully cast aside from the country's secular life by virtue of an exaggerated government policy of religious neutrality. Thus there is no one dominant religious confession in the United States, although in practice the American Buddhists, for example, scarcely have any less reason to protest at the predominance of Christian symbols in the media and in public ceremonies that do their counterparts in Russia.

In Europe the role of the traditional Christian churches, the

Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant churches, is in principle somewhat different. In most of these countries the majority of the population at least nominally acknowledge membership of some church or other, so that taxpayers feel that they have a right to demand decisions in favour of these churches in the same proportions. We believe that this idea is gradually catching on in Russia, too, and all the more so because those who favour the American model for our country are apt to confuse it with Soviet atheism and blame it for the greatly exaggerated alienation of our society from religion, which is by no means the case in the United States. In practice, social and even political cooperation between the state and various religious circles is quite common in America, so that it would not occur to anyone to forbid President Clinton to go to church or suggest that he should abolish the system of military chaplains, although these do not by any means represent the whole spectrum of religions in that country. Such demands would lead to infringements of human rights, whether the president's right to acknowledge a religion of his own choosing or a soldier's right to seek spiritual guidance. As far as corresponding rights in Russia are concerned, the first-mentioned is a matter of constant dispute and the second is questioned in the law governing the status of military conscripts.

The question is, then, whether we can borrow a pattern for church-state relations from abroad. I personally think that we could not do so in any pure form, although the European experience is easier for us to accept than any other. But could we return to the Soviet model, or even to that which existed before the revolution? It would seem that life has progressed so far since the days of those models, and they have not as such done anything to make themselves especially appealing. In view of all the experience that has been gained in this field, it would be essential to construct a model for relations between the state and the country's religious communities that would take account of circumstances as they really are at the present time and aim at continuous development of these relations without setting any utopian goal of either maximizing or minimizing the role of religion in society. It would be important, too, to legalize

and support the significant activities of those religious bodies that have already gained a firm footing in our lives and arouse profoundly positive overall reactions in society.

For this purpose it would appear necessary to construct an ideological buffer zone between the state and the country's religious communities, representing an ideology in which the latter are actively engaged in all fields in which this is conceivably possible. Certain areas of church and state collaboration have been determined by life itself, as they have in practice already been implemented everywhere. These include working for peace, the restoration of architectural monuments (not only churches), charity work and other social programmes and cultural and scientific activities. Other fields in which cooperation between the Russian state and the country's principal religious communities would seem entirely natural would be the strengthening of morality in society, broad-scale social policy issues, crime prevention, foreign policy activities and dialogue between those in power, society at large and the mass media. This list may be continued more or less *ad infinitum*, for it is indeed the case that the religious factor affects every aspect of life and persons of a religious bent are to be found everywhere, from nuclear physics laboratories to sports clubs, and it is imperative for responsible state authorities to listen to their voices and pay due attention to the true role of religion in the nation's life.

More specialized and controversial issues at the present time are the presence of religious communities in the army and schools. The compulsory teaching given in schools is of a secular nature in Russia, and it will no doubt remain that way in order to avoid perpetrating psychological acts of violence on children, but children who wish for religious education, or study of the Koran or the Torah, for instance, should have the right to this, and if children of this kind are in the majority in a school, families ought to be entitled to demand that the state should organize voluntary classes in religion for children of religious families. Similarly, there should be no discrimination among those serving in the army on religious grounds, nor should conscripts or others have any particular world-

view thrust upon them, but a soldier who is a religious believer has every right to see a priest (minister, mullah or rabbi) at an appropriate time and to take part in religious services or pray to God together with others of the same persuasion. The strengthening of these clauses in the existing laws and administrative practices would be helpful for many people and could scarcely encroach on anyone's freedom.

It should not be forgotten, however, that there are very many areas in which cooperation between the church and the state is difficult and sometimes impossible. It is part of the nature of the church, for instance, that it cannot condone aggression, and certainly not civil war; it is not the church's business to engage in political battles. Given its calling to openness in the face of all people, it should not involve itself in spying, interrogations or any kind of clandestine activity. It cannot in general take part in action directed against anybody, not even against the most diehard criminals or obvious enemies.

The church and the state have separate functions and their priorities are quite different. Strange though it may seem in this world, people and families, countries and nations, political systems and even the whole existence of the visible world as we know it are not values in their own right for the Church. "Strive first for the kingdom of God and His righteousness," these words of our Lord Jesus will be preserved in the hearts of Christians for as long as the Church remains standing, and they will remind us that Christ's disciples will sometimes have to forgo even the things that are in human terms the most essential and significant and to lay aside some of the highest goals of states and earthly societies in order to stay faithful to the spiritual ideals of the Gospel. Christians should be prepared to stretch out a hand to the worst of their enemies and forgive those who have grievously insulted them, or to compromise on the most important of worldly principles in the name of love and reconciliation. At the same time, however, they are called on to show a quite exceptional sense of principle in remaining faithful to the spirit of Christ, which may be perceived as an incomprehensible or

even hostile attitude as far as the secular environment is concerned.

It seems to me that other religions also recognise a similar subordination of even the finest of human goals to the demands of the spiritual life, and the state should be capable of understanding and accepting this feature of religious communities. It does mean, however, that complete unity of church and state is impossible, for that would imply either that the state would cease to be a state or that the church would lose its prophetic ardour (as witnessed by the experiences of the Byzantine church and the papal church). Instead, cooperation between church and state should proceed along natural lines, without pressures or compulsion. That is the key to success. I am inclined to hope that the efforts to find practical ways and models for achieving cooperation between the church and the state in Russia will take precisely this course, in the spirit of good will and wise stewardship and for the good of all Russian citizens, whether believers or non-believers.

2. The old law and the new law: progress or regression?

When the new law on “the freedom of conscience and religious communities” was approved and came into force in Russia it aroused a great deal of lively and at times emotional discussion in society at large and in the press, and also in the international arena. As is well known, the National Duma approved the original draft of the new law on 23rd June 1997 and the Council of the Russian Federation followed suit on 4th July, but President Yeltsin refused to sign it on 22nd July and subsequently placed a revised version before the Duma on 3rd September. Further negotiations between the President and the Duma led to a number of additional changes, and eventually the Duma approved the new version on 19th September and the Council of the Russian Federation on 24th September, whereupon the President signed it into law two days later.

The “presidential version” of the new law received the support of all the leading churches and religious communities in Russia with the exception of the Catholics, the Baptists and the

Adventists, who had originally signed a petition in favour of the draft law but had later withdrawn their support. The Russian Orthodox Church, the majority of the Muslims, the Buddhists and the Jews, representing the vast majority of the religious population of Russia, had supported both the “Duma version” and the “presidential version” at the draft stage.

The critics of the new law had been stopped in their tracks by the observation in the preamble to the effect that the Assembly of the Russian Federation was approving the law “in recognition of the special contribution made by the Orthodox Church to the creation of the Russian state and the development of its spirituality and culture and out of respect for Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism and the other religions that form an inseparable part of the historical legacy of the peoples of Russia.” This introduction had no legal force whatsoever, of course, and could very well be regarded merely as “a lyrical departure from the main theme”. The content of the actual law, on the other hand, was juridically quite clear-cut, and its outstanding merit lay in the fact that it filled a legal void in the field of religion that had prevailed ever since the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic had passed its law on “Religious Freedom” in 1990.

This earlier law had given rise to a well-known conflict of interests between the freedoms granted to associations of individuals and their rights within society, in that it was possible to provide support in a selective manner for groups of citizens that happened to generate something of benefit for the system. Under the existing statute I could, for instance, have gone out into the street and collected the signatures of ten “founder members” for an association of sun worshippers, which the state would have been obliged not only to register within a short space of time but also to exempt from taxes, granting it the right to acquire real estate and in general affording it protection. In simple terms, by investing in ten cans of beer and distributing these to alcoholics in the street in the name of the “founding” of a pseudo-religious organization I could receive millions of roubles out the taxpayers’ pockets. And

more besides: I could do this even if I was merely a tourist from Madagascar!

This situation, which would be impossible in any constitutional democracy, was plainly absurd, and much discussion ensued in Russia from 1992 onwards on how to overcome the problems caused by the imperfections in this law. Many people took issue with this, and the Russian Supreme Soviet did in fact approve a new law on religions in 1993, but the President rejected it. In the meantime many regions of the country passed laws of their own, with greater or lesser success, but these were of course at variance with the law of the Federation, which, although imperfect, had not been abrogated.

The new law of the Russian Federation recognises two types of religious community, religious groups and religious organizations, of which the latter may be either local or centralized. Religious organizations that are actively functioning at the present moment are required to register their membership regulations with the state in accordance with the new law. A religious group, on the other hand, does not have the status of a juridical person, but under paragraph 7 of the law is formed by citizens for the purpose of acknowledging and propagating their common faith and has the right to “conduct divine services and other religious rites and ceremonies, engage in religious teaching and provide a religious upbringing for its members”.

Once a group has been in existence for 15 years it is entitled to apply for registration as a religious organization, with the status of a juridical person and numerous privileges. (Under paragraph 27 religious organizations that have already registered as such even though they have not been in existence for 15 years are also granted the status of a juridical person on condition that they re-register annually. This means that the new law will not lead to the “disbanding” of any religious communities as had been feared by its critics.) Members of groups will in no way lose their right to the joint exercising of their religious freedom, but only religious organizations will be permitted to build and maintain premises

of their own, carry out organized visits to hospitals and prisons, arrange optional course of teaching in schools, form action groups for charitable purposes, engage in business etc. A centralized religious organization that has been formed by at least three “local” ones may then found as many new “local” organizations as it wishes.

All this complicated juridical phraseology means one fairly simple and, to my mind, quite correct thing: that certain privileges will be granted to religious communities, not on confessional grounds (contrary to what some opponents of the draft bill maintained, being of the opinion that it gave a green light to the Orthodox and a red light to the Baptists) but on realistic grounds linked to their existence in the country, their distribution and the time that has elapsed since their foundation. Any confessional organization that can prove that it has been in existence for 15 years, that it has at least three local branches and that it has not been closed down for infringement of the law will in practice enjoy the same advantages and authority as the majority church. Even so, it does not oblige the state or the community to grant this status automatically to any small group at all by conceding at once to the will of ten “founder members”. They will still have to pay taxes and manage without acquiring premises of their own for the first 15 years.

A separate question concerns the status of aliens and representatives of foreign religious organizations. The new law grants the right to found religious communities (in this case in the category of “groups”) not only to Russian nationals but also to “other persons who live permanently and legally in the territory of the Russian Federation” (paragraph 6). It is clear that this does not include tourists or private visitors to Russia. Religious organizations can be founded only by Russian nationals. Under paragraph 13, foreign religious organizations may set up representative offices in Russia either in conjunction with existing religious organizations or independently, but they may not practise religious observances directly – in the same way as the Moscow office of “Daimler Benz” may not itself buy and sell vehicles but only carry out research and representative functions. Paragraph 20 grants aliens the right to

engage professionally in religious activities, including preaching, at bases within Russian religious organizations.

The new law has also created possibilities for legally disbanding religious organizations that force families apart, persuade people to commit suicide or refuse medical treatment, prevent children from receiving compulsory schooling, disseminate war propaganda or incite people to social, racial, nationalist or religious hatred. In view of the bacchanalian conditions under which some totalitarian sects are said to be living, this is a provision that could well be borrowed by many western countries.

All this means that there is now a concrete hope that the new law will finally plug the legal gaps that have led to impossible situations in some spheres of life.

Rev. Dr. Risto Cantell

Comments on the paper by Rev. Vsevolod Chaplin

I would like first of all to thank Father Vsevolod for his most interesting and informative presentation. My comments are grouped under four headings: (1) the religious situation, (2) models for church-state relations, (3) religious legislation and (4) the mission of the church within a state.

1. The paper starts out from the current situation in Russia with regard to religious affairs and the ongoing discussion of church-state relations there. Father Vsevolod's description of the situation is a personal and very genuine one, and he notes that the discussion is taking place "in the context of the conceptual conflicts that are so typical of modern-day Russian thinking". It is impossible for me to judge how typical conceptual conflicts are of modern-day Russian thinking, but I can say that the back-and-forth struggle over the religious legislation in Russia has been followed here in Finland with great interest.

The concrete situation that prevails in society provides a natural and important starting-point for such a discussion. We are not talking now about church-state relations as timeless, theoretical matters of principle but in terms of concretely existent connections between our churches and our states. The Church lives within history,

and the historical situation at any given time has a substantial effect on its life, activity and witness.

The Church is by nature catholic and universal, but at the same time it is also anchored in a particular time and place. This context affects the Church and shapes the concepts that we all have of it. The religious situation in Russia differs from that in Finland, and in the same way the arrangements that govern the relations between church and state differ. It is exceedingly important for our mutual discussions that we should be able to give and receive correct, detailed information on the situation in our own country and in the country of our opposite number.

2. Church-state relations can be organized, and have been organized, in a variety of ways. Father Vsevolod draws attention to three models, which he terms “European”, “American” and “Soviet”, and asks whether Russia can import a scheme for church-state relations from abroad. His answer is a cautious negative one, but he does conjecture that “the European experience is easier for us to accept than any other.” There is no question of a return to the relation which prevailed in Soviet times or in the days before the revolution.

Viewing the situation from a Finnish perspective, it would seem quite natural and appropriate to fall back on the European experience. Russia is, after all, a part of Europe, and one would hope that its cultural legacy and church life would continue to fashion the soul of Europe in the future as well.

One particularly interesting remark that Father Vsevolod makes is that “Certain areas of church and state collaboration have been determined by life itself, as they have in practice already been implemented everywhere.” There are thus points of contact between the church and the state and issues that are common to both in all societies and under different political systems. This is because “the religious factor affects every aspect of life and persons of a religious bent are to be found everywhere...”

Church-state relations can indeed be organized in different ways in principle. And a whole range of alternative models exist,

from a state church to complete segregation. It is nevertheless the case that relations still exist between the church and state even when they are segregated – perhaps even more so then. It would even seem that it is in countries where such a separation exists that the state monitors, supervises and regulates the life and activities of the church most diligently.

It must also be accepted that relations between the church and the state are constantly changing and developing, so that although these relations are arranged differently in Russia and Finland for historical, cultural and political reasons, one can very well say that in Finland, too, “the search for the optimal model for relations between the state and the country’s religious communities” has not yet come to an end. Even good relations can always be improved on.

Both of our churches undoubtedly have a major interest in developments in church-state relations in both Russia and Finland. Thus we may equally well say “Quo vadis, Russia? Quo vadis, Finlandia?”

As for the question of the criteria on which we should evaluate church-state relations and the principles which we should follow in order to develop those relations in the right direction, Father Vsevolod expresses the hope that “cooperation between church and state should proceed along natural lines, without pressures or compulsion”, observing that “That is the key to success.” It is easy for us Finns to agree with this idea, as also with the observation that follows it: “I am inclined to hope that the efforts to find practical ways and models for achieving cooperation between the church and the state in Russia will take precisely this course, in the spirit of good will and wise stewardship and for the good of all Russian citizens, whether believers or non-believers.”

That “the church and the state have separate functions” is a true statement and one with which Lutherans will readily concur. In our church’s understanding, the Holy Bible teaches us that God is almighty and that the affairs of both the Church and the world are in His hands. Everything that happens in the Church or in the world

happens through God's providence. Both the Church and the state are under His jurisdiction and subordinate to His omnipotence.

The Lutheran doctrine of two regimens recognises a fundamental difference between the church and the state. The secular regimen, society and the state, is a matter of rationality and impartiality, in that all people have an innate ability – at least to some extent – to act correctly and to aim at the common good, whereas the spiritual regimen, the Church, is a matter of salvation and eternal glory. God is active in both of these regimens, employing the law to maintain order and achieve justice in the secular regimen and the sacraments and His word of grace in the Church. It is essential when establishing the relations between the Church and the state that both of these regimens should be able to fulfil their own authentic role and mission.

3. A country's legislation on religious matters determines the conditions under which the life of its church and religious communities proceeds. Again the situation in this respect is different in Russia and Finland. Russia passed a new law on "the freedom of conscience and religious communities" just over a year ago, and Father Vsevolod gives the section of his paper on the origins of this law the enigmatic title "The old law and the new law: progress or regression?" He is optimistic about the ability of the new law to eliminate the problems and loopholes that have existed in the religious life of Russia in recent years.

The situation in Finland is somewhat different. The current law on religious freedom was passed in 1922 and came into force as of 1st January 1923. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Orthodox Church of Finland are both reasonably satisfied with the country's religious legislation, but the minority churches have been dissatisfied, above all with the exclusive rights of these two churches to levy church tax and to maintain their registers of members as parts of the public population register, and also with the status that they enjoy in public affairs.

The Church and State Working Group set up a couple

of years ago by the Finnish Ecumenical Council proposed last spring that Finland should undertake a complete revision of its law on religious freedom, and the Ecumenical Council forwarded a suggestion to this effect to the Ministry of Education. This led to the formation a few weeks ago of a broad-based committee to study the question of reforming the religious legislation in Finland. A substantial task awaits this committee, as it will be expected to adjust and revise the law so that it will protect the interests of all the country's churches and Christian communities and those of people who profess other religions better than at present and guarantee the maximum possible freedom of religious observance in Finland.

It is interesting to note that the paper presented here on church-state relations and these comments on it have dealt extensively with the problems of religious freedom, which goes to show how church-state relations are inseparably tied up with this question. The purpose of a law on religious freedom is two-fold: it should prevent injustices occurring in the name of religion and it should guarantee favourable conditions for the practise of religion.

4. The mission of the Church in society and within a state is quite clear in the opinion of our churches: it is to proclaim the kingdom of God. At the press conference held to mark the opening of these discussions, Archbishop John Vikström used precisely the same words as Father Vsevolod in his paper, that the Church and the state have separate functions. He then went on to emphasize that the Church's function is a spiritual one. It does not engage in politics, but it does have a message that is of considerable social significance. Thus, by proclaiming the word of God and operating as a spiritual community, a "faith community", the Church is also able to perform a lasting service for society.

These, in all their brevity, are the comments that I have. I hope that they will carry the discussion forward and will not be simply what Father Vsevolod so beautifully refers to as "a lyrical departure from the main theme". The discussion on the relation between Church and State must, of course, be continued.

Moscow 2002

Communiqué

on the Twelfth Theological Discussions between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church.

The twelfth theological discussions between the delegations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church was held at the Danilovski Monastery in Moscow on 28th September – 5th October 2002. The aim was to produce a joint evaluation of the conversations conducted since 1970 and to plan future continuations to these.

The first theological discussions between these two churches were held in 1970 in Sinappi, Turku (Finland), the second in 1971 in Zagorsk (Russia/USSR), the third in 1974 in Järvenpää (Finland), the fourth in 1977 in Kiev (Ukraine/USSR), the fifth in 1980 in Turku, the sixth in 1983 in Leningrad (Russia/USSR), the seventh in 1986 in Mikkeli (Finland), the eighth in 1989 in the Orthodox Convent of Dormition in Pyhtitsa (Piukhtitsa, Estonia/USSR) and Leningrad, the ninth in 1992 in Järvenpää, and the tenth in 1995 in the Convent of Christ's Ascension (Florov) in Kiev (Ukraine) and the eleventh in Lappeenranta in 1998.

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The members of the delegation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF) were the Most Rev. Jukka **PAARMA**, Archbishop of Turku and Finland (leader of the delegation), Right Rev. Dr. Voitto **HUOTARI**, Bishop of Mikkeli, Right Rev. Dr. Juha **PIHKALA**, Bishop of Tampere, Prof. Gunnar **HÄLLSTRÖM**, of the Faculty of Theology, University of Joensuu, Prof. Antti **LAATO** of the Faculty of Theology, Åbo Akademi University, Rev. Irja **ASKOLA**, planner in the Department of International Affairs, Diaconia Polytechnic, Helsinki, Ms. Sylvia **RAULO**, programme officer of Finnchurchaid, and Prof. Hans-Olof **KVIST** of the Faculty of Theology, Åbo Akademi University, as an advisor.

The members of the delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) were Metropolitan **VLADIMIR** of St. Petersburg and Ladoga (leader of the delegation), Bishop **HILARION** of Podolski, representative of the Patriarchate of Moscow in the international communities of Europe, Archimandrite **YANNUARI** (Ivliyev), docent at the Spiritual Academy in St. Petersburg, Rev. Vsevolod **CHAPLIN**, deputy chairman of the Department of External Church Relations, Patriarchate of Moscow, Prof. A. I. **OSIPOV** of the Spiritual Academy in Moscow, Y. S. **SPERANSKAYA** of the Department of External Church Relations, Patriarchate of Moscow, and Y. A. **RYABYKH** of the Department of External Church Relations, Patriarchate of Moscow.

Bishop Aarre **KUUKAUPPI**, representing the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria, Rev. Veikko **PURMONEN**, parish priest of Helsinki, representing the Finnish Orthodox Church, and Prof. Alar **LAATS** of the Faculty of Theology, University of Tartu, representing the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Estonia, took part in the meeting as observers invited by the Russian Orthodox Church.

Also present as advisors to the delegation from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland were Rev. Dr. Risto **CANTELL**, church

counsellor and executive director of the Church Department for International Relations, Rev Dr. Kimmo **KÄÄRIÄINEN**, director of the Church Research Centre, Rev. Dr. Matti **REPO**, executive secretary for theology in the Church Department for International Relations, Rev. Heikki **JÄÄSKELÄINEN**, secretary to the Archbishop, and Rev. Timo **ROSQVIST**, secretary in the Archbishop's Office.

The interpreters during the discussions were Ms. Helena *Pavinskij*, Ms. Marina *Latschinoff* and Ms. Tarja *Leppäaho*. Ms. Minna *Väliaho* participated in the work of the secretariat.

The discussions were held on the premises of the Department for External Church Relations at the Patriarchate of Moscow.

In his opening address, Metropolitan Vladimir stated that the purpose of the meeting was to evaluate the theological discussions held so far since their inception in 1970, emphasizing, among other things, that "With the dissolution of the Soviet Union we have achieved a degree of religious freedom that has never previously existed in Russia. Unfortunately, representatives of a few western churches and sects have been taking advantage of our freedom and have begun to practise proselytism in our country, contravening the resolution of the third general assembly of the World Council of Churches (1961).

Metropolitan Vladimir noted in particular the good relations that existed between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. "The many years of these conversations have enabled us to become more familiar with our neighbours' church life, theology and good Christian characteristics and to strengthen the contacts between our churches. We are resolutely determined to maintain good, neighbourly relations, mutual understanding

and a striving for unity in the whole of Christendom, recalling our Saviour's words, "There shall be one flock and one shepherd" (John 10:16).

In his reply, Archbishop Paarma evaluated the discussions that had taken place over more than 30 years from his own church's viewpoint, noting that "The doctrinal conversations have had the effect of making the teachings and life of each church more widely known. Several dozen theologians have taken part in the seminars held in Finland prior to the conversations, and the parish visits and opportunities to share in church services in the parishes have transformed the conversations into a living reality for the communities where the meetings have been held.

Our churches have had a programme of scholarships that have enabled students from the Russian Orthodox Church to study in Helsinki and Turku and Finnish theologians to visit the Spiritual Academy in St. Petersburg. In addition, the first friendship agreements between parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland were signed in 2001.

The conversations have also had a significant influence on the revival of church life in the Lutheran and Finnish-speaking parishes of the Leningrad area and on the founding of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria.

The conversations have also produced material which has been of value in other theological discussions, benefiting programmes conducted within both the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches. Material from the conversations has also been published in English. The conversations have similarly provided new stimuli for discussions between the Lutheran Church and both the Orthodox Church and the free churches in Finland.

The conversations have been reflected in both Finnish and

international research into the theology of Martin Luther on account of the rediscovery of the viewpoint that emphasizes Christ's real presence in faith: "*In ipsa fide Christus adest*".

The more recent Finnish-Russian conversations have also offered the Finns an opportunity to follow at close quarters the development that has taken place in the Russian Orthodox Church during these years of rapid social change."

The invited observers took the opportunity to present greetings from their churches at the opening session of the meeting.

The members of the delegations took turns in the course of the meeting to lead morning and evening prayers according to the Lutheran and Orthodox traditions.

On Sunday 29th September the participants were present at a celebration of the Holy Liturgy by Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow and All Russia in the Cathedral of the Dormition of the Mother of God in the Kremlin and were later taken on a tour of the churches of the Kremlin. On Wednesday 2nd October the representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church were present at a Lutheran service of Holy Communion.

The participants in the conversations had an audience with Patriarch Alexy II at the Danilovski Monastery on Tuesday 1st October, and on the previous day, Monday 30th September, Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, gave a lunch in honour of the delegates. On Wednesday 2nd October the participants met with V. Y. Zorin, a minister of the Russian Federation, and on the same day Mr. René Nyberg, Finnish Ambassador to Russia, held a reception in their honour at the Finnish Embassy. He also invited

the chairmen of the delegations to dinner on Saturday 5th October.

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The participants visited the Church of Christ the Saviour on Saturday 28th September and the Monastery of the Holy Trinity and St. Sergei of Radonezh at Sergiev Posad and the workshop for the manufacture of church vessels and vestments at Sofrino on Friday 4th October. The programme on Saturday 5th October included visits to the Convent of Martha and Mary and to the Tretyakov Gallery.

The following papers were presented at the meeting:

1. Bishop Hilarion of Podolski: "The Russian Orthodox Church and relations between Christians in the 20th century and at the turn of the millennium"
2. Bishop Voitto Huotari of Mikkeli: "Ecumenical relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, 1998–2002"
3. Archbishop Jukka Paarma of Turku and Finland: "The Church in Finnish society"
4. Rev. Vsevolod Chaplin: "The Russian Orthodox Church, the state and society at the turn of the century"
5. Prof. A. I. Osipov: "An evaluation of the results of the 'Sinappi' doctrinal conversations"
6. Bishop Juha Pihkala of Tampere: "An evaluation of the Russian conversations in 1970–1999 from a thematic and dogmatic viewpoint"
7. Prof. Gunnar af Hällström, University of Joensuu: "An evaluation of the dogmatic themes"
8. Archimandrite Yannuarii: "The tradition of intercession in the Russian Orthodox Church and discussions between Christians on common prayer"
9. Y. A. Ryabykh, Department of External Church Relations,

- Patriarchate of Moscow: "The results of the doctrinal conversations from a socio-political perspective in relation to the current mission of the church in a changing society"
10. Prof. Hans-Olof Kvist, Åbo Akademi University: "The work of the churches for peace as part of the fulfilment of the God of Love's plan for the created universe"
 11. Rev. Irja Askola: "A comment on the evaluation of themes in social ethics from the viewpoint of the ecumenical movement"
 12. Rev. Vsevolod Chaplin: "The future of the doctrinal conversations"
 13. Bishop Voitto Huotari: "The future of the 'Sinappi' conversations"

The participants presented evaluations of the course of the dialogue held over more than 30 years between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the results achieved and discussed plans for developing the dialogue and priorities among the topics for future meetings. The delegations drew particular attention to the changes that have taken place in the lives of all the churches in recent years as regards theology, social thinking, ecumenical activities and the relations between church and state and between the church and society. The following issues were seen to be crucial: the sources of faith and doctrine, teachings with regard to prayer, the content of social ethics and the reception given to the results of the doctrinal conversations.

The members of the delegation gave particular credit to those who had begun the dialogue, those who had led the conversations and those who had taken an active part in them.

The delegations arrived at the following joint evaluations of the significance of the conversations and the challenges facing them in the future:

A strong awareness of our own identity has helped us to approach each other. Conversely, by getting to know the other's spiritual culture we have been able to strengthen our understanding of our own tradition.

The past decades have brought many new things into our lives. Although the shackles of state atheism have been broken in Eastern Europe, the churches there have encountered new problems. Religious freedom has given some Christian groups an opportunity to exercise increased influence of a kind that shows no respect for the local churches that have functioned in the region for centuries or their witness. This has complicated relations between Christians. At the same time secularization and spiritual nihilism continue to pose a serious challenge to Christians. We are convinced that in the 21st century, with the countries and nations of Europe becoming increasingly dependent on each other, we should attempt to solve the problems that confront us together, making use of the experiences gained from our dialogue. Mutual discussions of profound theological questions, resistance to the politics of brute force, interaction and the understanding of each others' thoughts and ways – everything that we have been doing for over 30 years – will stand us in good stead for our journey into the future.

The new century will not be an easy or cloudless time. If we are to be fully equipped to face its challenges we will have to be firmly anchored in our own traditions and able to open them up to the people of today, to undertake penetrating analyses of the problems of modern society and to bear witness to our own faith and values before those in power and before all people.

In this understanding we now wish to outline the main themes for

our dialogues in the near future. Above all we should make a joint study of the field of Christian anthropology, including the Orthodox and Lutheran views of human free will and its relation to the *oikonomia* of salvation. In order to understand our own religious and cultural traditions better, it is essential that we should examine together the question of the Holy Bible, tradition and the heritage of the church and the influence of these on the lives and beliefs of our church members.

The conversations should also deal extensively with social ethics and its impact on our lives and beliefs. People's beliefs cannot fail to affect their deeds and thereby influence society at large. In this connection we should consider how a Christian awareness should be reflected in the social work carried out by our churches. Particular attention should be paid to the nature of the world views and moral values that direct events on the integrated continent of Europe. We should continue our theological work on the question of peace in a modern, dynamically changing context in a manner that is free of all political interests, as in the earlier days of our conversations. At the same time, questions of bioethics and the family and of the relation between human rights and responsibilities should be high on the agenda.

We have experienced spiritual joy through being present at each others' church services, becoming acquainted with each others' lives of prayer and proclaiming the word of God together.

In order to intensify the dialogue between our churches we need a new form of organization which will help us to prepare for and arrange our future theological discussions.

The documents arising from the conversations were signed in the course of an official ceremony at which Metropolitan Vladimir and

Archbishop Jukka Paarma spoke.

The twelfth round of theological conversations between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church were held in a spirit of cordial Christian frankness and mutual respect.

On concluding their work, the delegations engaged in the conversations in Moscow offer their thanks to God and express their unanimous opinion that these theological meetings should continue.

Moscow, 5th October, 2002

Jukka Paarma
Archbishop of Turku and Finland

Vladimir
Metropolitan of
St. Petersburg and Ladoga

Professor A. I. Osipov

An evaluation of the results of the ‘Sinappi’ doctrinal conversations

The purpose of this paper is not to analyse all the theological questions that have arisen in the course of our conversations, but to deal with the problems that have been of fundamental importance for our dialogues and therefore also the most topical.

It may be stated at the outset that mutual understanding has been achieved on the theological issues discussed during these conversations, which is a great joy for all concerned, although understanding is not the same thing as agreement – and where agreement is concerned we have unfortunately not progressed very far. Now, after thirty years of these meetings, I feel that I can say this out aloud. Our views on all the theological questions considered have remained more or less unaltered. It is not easy to explain this; we have, after all, one Saviour, Jesus Christ, and we rely on the same Bible. What is the main reason for our ‘rigidity’? What have we failed to take into account? What have proved to be the most fundamental questions and the ones that have required more precise examination?

An analysis of our discussions in general indicates that there are two problems that define the whole core of our dialogue and all its results at the present moment. Strange though it may sound, the

first of these is our understanding of theology and its purpose in the Church. As is well known, theology can be studied in various ways, either as a process of purification of the soul through suffering and a striving towards deification, i.e. a body of practical doctrine which can serve as one of the means by which a human being may attain salvation, or else, from a quite different perspective, as a purely academic discipline separated off entirely from the actual spiritual life of a Christian – “theology for theology’s sake”. It is quite obvious that these two ways of understanding theology differ radically and that a church’s comprehension of its own mission and the dialogues that it enters into with others will be greatly influenced by which of the two it considers the more important.

The second problem is the Christian doctrine of salvation. It goes without saying that the question of a common doctrine of salvation is not merely one of the problems afflicting dialogues between Christians but is the fundamental issue from which all the other doctrinal problems stem and which in a quite essential sense is a boundary condition for agreement on all other questions. Conversely, disagreement on this matter will nullify in the last resort any solutions that are satisfactory to both sides that may be reached on matters of life or belief.

1. Theology

One of the realities of our day and age is that people no longer understand what they are living for, nor do they have the time to contemplate the purpose of their lives in greater depth. The instruments that should help us to live our lives have come to serve as ends in themselves, even though it is self-evident that substitution of the means for the end is nothing short of suicide. And one of the main reasons for such a loss of direction in the case of any Christian nation is without doubt the spiritual condition of its national church, which in turn is to no small measure dependent on the nature and orientation of its theology.

For the Church Fathers the key content of the concept of

theology (θεολογία) is the study of the knowledge of God, where knowledge refers above all to the concrete comprehension of Him. This naturally also includes a theoretical consideration of what is essential for this knowledge – a study of the prerequisites, the means by which it may be achieved, the truth criteria involved and the dangers lying in wait along the path. The theory was nevertheless only a ‘set of instructions’ of a particular kind for striving towards communion with God, rather in the manner of a system of scaffolding required when building a house. The goal remained unchanged throughout; it was the deification of the Christian, which it was possible to achieve only through the right kind of spiritual discipline. This understanding of theology may be said to have been derived directly from the purpose of the incarnation of the Word of God.

Christ went to the cross for only one purpose, the salvation of mankind, and it was for this purpose, too, that he created His Church. This provides a starting point for defining quite straightforwardly the purpose of theology; it cannot be anything other than the purpose of salvation, and as such it does not include the acquisition of the maximally large body of religious knowledge for the use of believers but simply acquisition of the knowledge necessary for strengthening their faith and the devotions that they practise in their lives. In this sense the goal of theology is in the last resort sanctification, the spiritual and moral shaping of the individual. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God” (Matt. 5:8).

This concept of theology espoused by the Early Church Fathers differs in principle from the pagan concept. In the pagan world of the Greeks and Romans θεολογία meant any kind of enquiry into the nature of the gods, and θεολόγος was anyone who wrote about the gods. The pagan culture of ancient times, and indeed that of modern times, regards theology as a branch of the humanities which studies religion quite independently of any notions of the salvation of mankind.

Unfortunately the concept of theology as propounded

by the Church Fathers has gradually slipped into oblivion in the course of the history of Christendom and the concept has come progressively closer to the pagan one. By the beginning of the second millennium, in fact, the pagan understanding of theology had become the dominant one in the Western world and divinity had reverted from being a means of teaching Christians purity of the soul and a practical knowledge of God to a distinct scholastic discipline with a purpose of its own, learning for learning's sake. Theology had in practise been diverted away from the inner demands of the soul and transformed from being an aid to the spiritual life into a self-sufficient branch of rational academic study – a separate 'agglomeration' of information that was far removed from the original purpose, namely the education of people as Christians. The breadth and diversity of knowledge became more important than people's spiritual development and for the most part established itself as the only goal of the training of theologians, in spite of the fact that, without any shadow of doubt, a very large proportion of that knowledge is quite unnecessary for the salvation of either theologians themselves or other Christians – and some of it may actually be detrimental. The basic idea of Christianity in the classical formulation of St. John Climacus, that "Perfect purity is the beginning of theology", has for practical purposes disappeared, and just as all those who wrote about the gods in the Greece of pre-Christian times (Orpheus, Hesiod, Homer etc.) were referred to as theologians, so we have taken now to regarding as theologians not those who truly approach the state of seeing God (Matt. 5:8), nor even those who teach how to approach the state of seeing God, but those who write prolifically about gods regardless of the extent to which or the manner in which their knowledge may be related to the doctrine of salvation.

This highly distorted and purely secular concept of theology which is entirely lacking in regard for whether the knowledge concerned is necessary for the salvation of believers is gaining ground all the time. One of the Early Church Fathers, Kallistos Katafigiot, uttered words that set us thinking in this respect: "The reason must

act on the basis of consciousness, so that it will not die". His idea is quite clear: reason without *restraint* (2 Thess. 2:7), or in this case self-control, without intellectual asceticism, may become bogged down to such an extent in a mire of *empty, deceitful philosophies that are grounded in traditional human concepts and primitive earthly forces rather than in Christ* (Col. 2:8) that the person may no longer be capable of pure prayer, of humility in love or of belief itself. This will lead to hardening of the heart (the principal organ of consciousness and the experiencing of God), so that the Christian is overcome by the most terrible state imaginable – that of *stony insensibility*, as St. John Climacus puts it. This is tantamount to spiritual indifference and virtual unbelief, *atheism*. One of the most highly respected ascetics in 19th-century St. Petersburg, St. Ignati (Bryantsaninov), wrote particularly powerfully and revealingly about these matters: “*The word of Christ comes true: will the Son of God find belief on the face of the earth when He returns in the last days? Sciences there will be, academies, bachelors, masters and doctors of theology... But if such a theologian were severely put to the test, it would transpire that he was not only lacking in theology but also in faith. I have met doctors of theology like that, who doubt whether Christ really walked this earth, whether it was true or just a story, something in the nature of a myth. What light can we look for in such darkness?*”

In much the same vein, St. Feodor (Pozdveyevski), head of the Spiritual Academy in Moscow, wrote at the beginning of the 20th century “*It is undoubtedly precisely because we have forgotten the finest treasures of the Holy Fathers’ theological meditations that we find ourselves in such a state of depression with regard to theological thinking. It is not difficult to guess where we will end up if we continue in this way. Once we have mislaid the criterion of truth and there is nothing left of the guidance given us by the Holy Fathers, we can wander far away in any direction at all.*”

One of the last monks of Optina, St. Varsonofi, left us with a precise description of what scholastic theology can do to those studying spiritual matters. “*Look what unbelief, nihilism and stagnation exists in our spiritual seminaries and academies. All this is*

due simply to learning by rote without any feeling or thought behind it. The Russian revolution (of 1905) started out in a seminary. A student at a seminary finds it strange and inconceivable nowadays to go to church alone, stand in a row of people, be moved by what he hears and weep a little; all this seems odd to him. High school pupils understand these things, but not those at the seminaries. Letters kill.”

These opinions uttered by influential holy men at the time when Russian academic theology had reached its peak (and many more could be found as well!) bear witness to the tragic role played by so-called scholarship in the life of the Church when theology is transformed into an isolated, rational discipline and loses sight of its only true goal, its original purpose of educating the *new man* (Eph. 4:24).”*Salt is good,”* said the Lord, “*but if salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it? Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another.*” The salt in this case is a theology that points out to man the correct path towards shedding the *old self* (Eph. 4:22), to rebirth in the way that God wishes. But if it loses its saltiness, what can be gained from dialogues that yield even the most profound of discoveries?

The most important task for our churches at the present time is to return our theology to the forgotten path of experiential knowledge of God. Only when we have done this can we hope that our theological conversations will attain a level of determination that will allow us to overcome the many difficulties of the past years and open up real prospects of development in the future.

2. On salvation

If we are to speak in concrete terms of the thematic aspect of our theological dialogue, then the principal problem is without doubt the question of salvation (redemption, deification). It is this problem that lies at the heart and origin of all the others, and for practical purposes all the other theological issues will alter in content and significance depending on how we understand this one, and the nature and productivity of the conversations will come to be

redefined accordingly.

Let me give one example. The Holy Bible and the traditions of our church tell us that the company of the saints has come to include many people who never partook in any sacrament, not even baptism. These included the bandit who was crucified on the right-hand side of Christ and those who were commanded to torture Christians and were so impressed by their bravery and the power of the grace bestowed on them that they came to believe in Christ, spoke about the fact openly and were punished for it. Similarly, the Holy Bible tells us quite unambiguously that “*even the demons believe – and shudder,*” but they remain demons (James 2:19), and that “*a person is not justified by the works of the law*” (Gal. 2:16). Likewise, St. Mark the Ascetic writes, “The Kingdom of Heaven is not a consequence of deeds but is the grace of God that is reserved for his faithful servants.” Finally, we are reminded that the sacraments are not mere magic devices and that they may not only remain without effect under some circumstances but can even lead to sickness, death and judgement for the believer. “*For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgement against themselves. For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died*” (1 Cor. 11:29-30).

Belief, deeds and the sacraments – haven’t we been concerned with precisely these in the most important of our conversations?

It would seem that a Christian, even when he believes, does good deeds and partakes in the sacraments, can be condemned and fail to achieve salvation *if* ... (and it would be essential to discuss this word *if* separately). This thought which is in the nature of a paradox sets us thinking what salvation really is and what the spiritual condition of a person actually has to be like in order for him to receive eternal life. What lies behind this *if*? What secret *merits* does a believer have to have for his belief to lead to salvation and for his good deeds and participation in the sacraments to unite him with the body of Christ?

Only a clear, unanimous answer to these critical questions for the Christian faith can create a firm foundation on which we can

together build up an unity in our house which is in accordance with God's holy plan (Eph. 3:9).

Bishop Juha Pihkala

An evaluation of the Russian conversations in 1970–1999 from a thematic and dogmatic viewpoint

1. Prologue

When I look back over the years for which I have been involved in these doctrinal discussions and the preparations for them there are two early but very powerful experiences that come to mind. They both arose in connection with the services held in St. Vladimir's Cathedral in Kiev in spring 1977, one on Good Friday and the other during the Midnight Service for Easter.

At the beginning of vespers for Good Friday we were conducted to a place to one side of the raised dais in front of the sanctuary, where we stood for the four and a half hours that the service lasted. This meant that we were almost directly beneath the main dome of the church. Below us, in the body of the church, the light was already fading, but up above us the icon of Christ the Almighty was still bathed in a glow of evening sunlight. Both the floor of the church and the balcony were crowded with people, so that one could have easily just let oneself be held up by the people around, as if by the waves on the sea. There were some elderly women

wearing shawls pressed right up against the dais. They were standing at first and then knelt, gradually bending over further and further. I soon noticed, however, that this was not a sign of tiredness but of exceedingly deeply felt, painful identification with the mystery that filled the whole building with its presence. When the protodeacon read the Gospel in a booming voice that rose step by step until it practically reached a tragic falsetto on the words “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”, I noticed one diminutive old lady who had her face pressed down against the floor of the dais so that the stone slab was quite wet with her tears. When I looked up again at the dome, it was shrouded entirely in a purple darkness, so that you couldn’t make out any facial features any longer, neither human nor divine.

I was standing in the same place for the Easter service. As midnight struck the first candles were lit in the dark cathedral, and the light spread until soon it had engulfed thousands of tapers. But the one thing that I will never forget was the Creed, the moment when the crowd of perhaps ten thousand people began to sing the ‘symbol’ of their faith, the Nicene Creed. It was as if the walls themselves were joining in, as if all the images of saints painted by Vasnetsov had come alive and were singing together with the congregation.

What touched me then and continues to touch me now was something that can be viewed on two levels. Firstly, I was impressed by the extreme power and resilience of the Holy Church of Christ in the midst of its extreme weakness. I felt in my inner self the truth of the words spoken by Jesus to Simon Peter, “the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it”. I felt there and then a deep spirituality and a touching reality of faith which no human system can destroy. Although I have taken part in numerous large ecumenical gatherings and many impressive and moving church services, none has conveyed the same profound experience of reality as the sight of that old woman’s face and the sound of the congregation of ten thousand people singing with one voice in the manner of the intimations of heaven in the Book of Revelation. When people ask me what we

were really doing there in Russia, whose guests we really were, what were our motives and aims, or the motive and aims of the other side, the first thing I see in my mind's eye is the face of that old woman and the first thing that comes to my ears is that chant of the Creed. The first answer is always to be found in the faces and hearts of the congregation engaged in prayer and praise, both there and here and throughout the world.

The other thing that moved me on that occasion and still does so today was more of a theological matter and was connected with the topic of the discussions, although my subsequent experiences have taught me that it can be generalized quite widely. I observed from those two very powerful experiences that my concept of the nature of the Orthodox spiritual life, and perhaps of its theology, too, had been very narrow and one-sided. I had been a victim of the stereotypes perpetrated in the media and the literature. I realized that the direction in which we were going in our joint preparatory seminars, albeit with difficulty and through a search for new solutions, was evidently the right one.

I realized that the Orthodox Church was not exclusively the Church of Easter as the western media continue to lead us to understand – but that it is in a very profound sense the Church of the Cross. It would be equally narrow, of course, to claim that the Lutheran faith was entirely centred on Good Friday, but at all events, I really felt in those services that the Easter of the Cross and the Easter of the Resurrection were inseparably united. Joy came to the world through the cross, as is proclaimed in the Liturgy. More observations of the same kind were to follow. I began to find in the words lying behind the quite different externals of the Orthodox services more and more things that were familiar and which united us, and my perspective began to alter.

2. Starting points of the discussions

Although historical investigations into the foundations for the discussions between our two churches are only just beginning,

something can already be said on this subject at a general level. Finland's post-war foreign policy has included a determined effort to established contacts of different kinds and at different levels in all directions. In the eyes of the government these church contacts have been and continue to be of service as means of fulfilling general national aspirations. In this sense there can scarcely have been any great difference in principle between the governments of the Soviet Union as it was at that time and of Finland, even though their ideologies and goals may have been differently oriented. The religious motives of the churches, on the other hand, cannot be identified directly with those of their governments, but rather it is clear that they involved on both sides not only universal, ecumenical goals but also genuinely patriotic feelings, although scarcely nationalistic ones. This is understandable and justifiable.

Lutherans in this country began to build up cautious contacts with the Russian Orthodox Church in the 1950s. These were purely formal in nature at first, but especially through the actions of Archbishop Simojoki and Metropolitan Nikodim they began from 1965 onwards to include presentations on ecclesiastical and theological topics. Thus they led gradually to personal friendships between the participants.

Another important influence was that of the ecumenical advances that were made in the 1960s. The Russian Orthodox Church joined the World Council of Churches in 1961, and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) began to plan theological discussions with the Vatican after the Second Vatican Council in 1963–1965 and an international dialogue with the Eastern Church at the end of the same decade. After a protracted preliminary stage, discussions within a joint commission of the LWF and the Orthodox churches were commenced in the early 1980s.

At much the same time numerous contacts were made between national churches within Europe, as the results of these were understood as being useful for promoting multi-centred international ecumenical goals, and Finland's geographical and geopolitical position led naturally to the opening of one such

discussion channel between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church. The aim was to fit the existing contacts as distinctly as possible into a theological and ecclesiastical framework, this being the inner desire of both sides given the existing atmosphere of political tension. The character of these connections was undoubtedly also influenced by the fact that Archbishop Martti Simojoki was at that time vice-president of the Lutheran World Federation.

The main lines of approach laid out at an early stage in these discussions have proved fitting and of lasting value, as the discussions themselves have proceeded undisturbed in spite of the radical changes in the political environment.

3. Goals of the discussions

Although the official documents contain relatively few references to the aims of the dialogues, sufficient has been said about them in public for an outsider to form a fairly accurate picture of them. The general statement was made in the communiqué issued at Sinappi in Turku in 1970 that:

“Thus the parties wished to contribute, with God’s help, to the progress of Christian unity.”

The form adopted in the communiqué from Zagorsk in 1971 was:

“The parties are convinced that the consideration of such important theological problems promotes mutual understanding, and by presenting ways and means for achieving Christian unity makes a significant contribution towards that end.”

Precisely the same sentence was included in the statement issued at Järvenpää in 1974, but that formulated at Kiev in 1977 was somewhat broader in its implications:

“The parties also stress the importance that bilateral theological conversations have from the point of view of the wide ecumenical movement and of theological dialogue. When future theological conversations and their themes are being planned, attention must be

paid to making use of their results in wider ecumenical cooperation.”

The common view at the Turku meeting in 1980 was that:

“Both parties are furthermore convinced that the conversations, in spite of their bilateral nature, are of importance also for other Lutheran and Orthodox Churches which are preparing for doctrinal discussions between these confessions. In addition, the participants stated that this dialogue is of great significance within the present-day ecumenical movement.”

A similar view was put forward at Leningrad in 1983, while the report from Pyhtitsa in 1989 contained a quotation from the opening speech made by Archbishop John Vikström:

“As we begin this eighth round of theological conversations between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church here at the Monastery of Pyhtitsa we are fulfilling the calling of the Church of Christ to seek unity in truth and love.”
(trans. MH)

Similarly, the first series of theses taken for discussion at Järvenpää in 1992 began with:

“1. It is our mutual conviction that the Christian faith acknowledges one truth and that, in spite of our churches’ different traditions we are attempting to express and implement the fullness of that truth in our lives. We are seeking for unanimity between our traditions, and it is this unanimity that is the ultimate goal of our doctrinal discussions. The legacy of the undivided apostolic church will serve as a foundation and criterion for us in these efforts.” (trans. MH)

Thus it can be seen that the bilateral conversations between our two churches have from the outset been construed as a part of the world-wide drive towards a common understanding among Christians, communion and in the last resort visible unity of the churches. The fact that the excellent relations fostered by the conversations have led to a revival of Lutheran church life among the Ingrians and Finnish-speaking Karelians is without doubt a significant and positive by-product, although it was never a pragmatic aim of the discussions as such.

The focus of the work has been distinctly theological, because without adequate doctrinal agreement it would be impossible to achieve unity among churches. This principle of an adequate consensus is clearly expressed in the Seventh Article of the Augsburg Confession, *ad verum unitatem ecclesiae satis est consentire de doctrina evangelium et de administratione sacramentorum*, and also corresponds in its core to the Orthodox conception of the conditions required for unity. At the same time, however, prayer and worship have formed an essential dimension of this interaction that has frequently opened up new perspectives.

As secretary to the working group headed by Professor Kauko Pirinen that directed our dialogues in Finland in the late 1970s and early 1980s, I became well acquainted with the deliberations that took place over the aims of the meetings. The essential thing was to concentrate firmly on the ecclesiastical nature of the conversations in spite of the known and acknowledged conflicting political pressures. The aim was to ensure that the theological discussions could proceed freely according their own internal logic without being excessively constrained by the ecumenical needs of the day or other more immediate goals. For this reason there was no desire to speculate over what concrete conclusions could be drawn regarding relations between our two churches in the light of any breakthrough that might be achieved in the discussions.

There has never in the history of these conversations been any thoroughgoing discussion of what might in a concrete sense constitute an adequate consensus for the achieving of communion between the churches, and this has been a very wise decision.

Kauko Pirinen was in the habit of saying that visible unity was “a distant objective” of our work. Although together with the Russians we were aware by the late 1970s at the latest that our conversations were of significance for other dialogues that were taking place, we did not want to allow these to bind our hands in any way. It is nevertheless possible to interpret events as suggesting that other ecumenical or topical themes may have had an unnecessarily powerful influence on the subjects chosen for our discussions from

the late 1980s onwards, leading to a wavering of the intentionally firm consistency and continuity from time to time. On the other hand, the fact that our discussions were not geared towards responding to the immediate challenges of the moment does not mean that the results could not or should not be of relevance to the ecumenical and ecclesiastical discussions of the day as well.

I am of the opinion, in fact, that as the discussions continue it would be useful to return to the ways of working that proved so fruitful in the 1970s and 1980s, that the themes should be defined in accordance with the theological challenges arising within the process itself, leaving the task of responding to the immediate challenges of international discussions to others. In this way we will probably be best able to serve the needs of the multi-centre network of international dialogues.

4. Themes discussed

There have been eleven rounds of doctrinal conversations to date:

- 1970 (Sinappi, Turku): The Eucharist as an expression of fellowship between believers
- 1971 (Zagorsk): The Eucharist and its sacrificial nature
- 1974 (Järvenpää): The Eucharist and the priesthood, and the Christian doctrine of salvation (in the light of the 1973 Bangkok Conference of World Mission and Evangelism)
- 1977 (Kiev): Salvation as justification and deification
- 1980 (Turku): Faith and love as elements of salvation
- 1983 (Leningrad): The nature of the Church
- 1986 (Mikkeli): Holiness, sanctification and the saints
- 1989 (Pyhtitsa): The creation (the first article of the faith)
- 1992 (Järvenpää): The apostolic faith from a biblical and doctrinal perspective
- 1995 (Kiev): The mission of the Church today
- 1998 (Lappeenranta): The freedom of a Christian, the freedom of the Church and freedom of religion

5. Methods observed

The first round of conversations, in 1970, were still very general in character and somewhat tentative. The search was still going on for appropriate working methods and useful topics for discussion. Also, the time that elapsed before the next meeting was too short, so that the general principle from 1971 onwards has been that meetings should be held at three-year intervals, which has allowed for careful, long-term preparation.

The methods observed up until 1974 conformed largely to those employed in *comparative ecclesiology* during the first half of the 20th century, in which common viewpoints were sought in the course of the discussions and problems that required further investigation were noted down for re-consideration later. This latter procedure has proved fruitful in more recent times, as it has often, although not always, introduced a clear element of thematic continuity into the discussions. It has allowed speakers to refer back to previous results and build on them anew, a process that has been mentioned with approval in numerous communiqués and summaries.

The soteriological theme that was brought up for the first time in 1974 added a new, more profound dimension to the methodology, in that a distinct problem in terms of ecumenical theology was defined in advance for consideration at the following meeting, namely the relation between the Lutheran doctrine of justification and the Orthodox concept of deification. This was something that could not be resolved by a superficial comparison of the two traditions but demanded a more thoroughgoing theological exploration on both sides – and perhaps also to some extent a re-discovery of certain treasures of the faith in one's own tradition and a re-evaluation of the true content of the other's tradition. This subsequently proved to be an extremely fruitful way of working, although it has not always been observed in the same conscientious manner over the years.

I would regard it as essential that a more determined effort

should be made to delve into central and particularly difficult problems if we really wish to move forward and avoid the dangers of our work becoming a matter of routine.

The conversations have from the outset been aimed at *saying everything together* as far as is at all possible, and the established ways of working have created good opportunities for doing this. Both sides have first presented their papers on the agreed themes and then a general discussion has been held at which indistinct points have been clarified, further explanations given and the elements that the papers have had in common have been identified as clearly as possible. After this the participants have been divided into joint Finnish-Russian groups to consider the individual themes and draft theses regarding them. These theses have then been subjected to a general discussion and accepted jointly – possibly after certain changes have been made.

The principal aim of our theological conversations in terms of both methodology and content has thus been to increase mutual understanding (consensus) between our traditions, and the means employed have lent support to that aim. At the first meeting (1970, A:1-5) the consensus theses were first recorded and then the differing opinions on them (B: 1-2), while later the structure of the theses themselves has been adjusted in the direction of recording only the points of consensus, although deviant opinions have still come to the fore from time to time.

Not once has it been said that the two sides are sharply divided on any matter, but simply that there are differences in emphasis or that more investigations are needed. One example of this might be the actual presence of Christ in the communion, on which the theses maintain that unanimity in fact exists although opinions differ between the parties regarding the manner in which this is to be interpreted (1970, B:1). Likewise, the communiqué from the Kiev meeting of 1977 contains a note before the actual statement of the theses to the effect that the prevailing notion of a sharp difference between the Orthodox and Lutheran doctrines of salvation is erroneous and that in fact “there is great unanimity”

(1977, 1, and the same is repeated in 1980). It is even stated in the preamble to one set of consensus theses that “there has been remarkable unanimity” regarding justification and deification as the most important aspects of personal salvation, as is evident from the seven theses that follow (1977, IV:1-7).

The form of our conversations has to my mind been more fruitful than that adopted in the discussions held with the Germans, as it has required a great deal of (sometimes very exhausting) work on the part of the delegates. Thus the theses are far more clearly the outcome of a joint ecclesiastical and ecumenical effort.

One factor that has interfered with the work has been that the results of the previous negotiations have not always been passed on sufficiently precisely to the new delegates. Both sides have been implicated in this problem. Even those who have been involved over many years have undoubtedly suffered from lapses of memory, and it has sometimes been necessary to return to questions on which results that are satisfactory for both parties have already been achieved. This undeniably methodological weakness has not been entirely a bad thing, however, as it has forced people to consider more seriously the continued validity of the results and has required a deepened receptivity to them.

Sometimes the re-consideration of earlier results has led to new differences in theological views between the more recent representatives of the churches on points about which the veterans of the conversations have already formulated a joint outlook. In other words, the common formulae that the participants in earlier rounds of the conversations found acceptable to both the Orthodox and the Lutheran Church have not necessarily been unreservedly approved by others. It is clear, of course, that ecumenical theological discussions do not take place only between churches but also within churches.

6. Internal theological receptivity on the two sides

Receptivity, or the adoption of the results of ecumenical discussions

as part of a church's own theological reality, is a broad issue that is difficult to define. This is partly because the negotiators inevitably form an infinitesimally small theological elite within their own church, often with relatively few opportunities to set out actively and determinedly to describe – and also interpret the consensual views agreed on at the meetings to the great majority of their own believers.

This problem was naturally obvious from the beginning and each side will have taken steps to obviate it according to the resources available at the time. I will present below a few observations based on my own experiences and from a specifically Finnish perspective.

First of all, we have to set out from the fact that the conversations have to be prepared for and conducted in the ecclesiastically and theologically most representative manner possible. The preparations and the delegation itself have always been led on the Finnish side by the archbishop of the day (Martti Simojoki in 1970–1977, Mikko Juva in 1980 and John Vikström in 1983–1998), and the delegation has included other bishops, university theologians representing various subjects and academic approaches and some parish pastors. Thus it has been a small-scale cross-section of the leadership of the church, academic theology and practical parish work, with all the perspectives that that opens up.

The preparatory seminars that have been held, involving some 30-40 persons at a time, have been structured in much the same way, and the group of participants has remained fairly constant and representative of different lines of pastoral and theological thought and different levels in the church hierarchy. This has made it possible to take numerous viewpoints into account and to spread information on the advancement of the preparation process within fairly wide circles relative to the resources available. Every effort has been made to ensure that the doctrinal and ethical views put forward to the Russians regarding each theme enjoy the widest possible acceptance within our church. We have tried to emphasize that we show the same face in all directions, as this is important for the way in which the results of the conversations are received among

the clergy and parishioners. As influential university theologians have been involved in both the preparations and the discussions themselves, the results have been of benefit to theological study and in this way have been incorporated into the knowledge and practices of young theological students preparing for the priesthood. This has been particularly true from the time of Kiev (1977) onwards.

The Finns have tried to find a good balance between continuity and renewal in the composition of both the delegation and the preparatory seminars. This has made it possible to retain a perspective based on personal experience while at the same time introducing new blood over the years. I would venture to claim that the process of preparing for the Lutheran-Orthodox conversations has provided the most significant permanent discussion forum for the various groupings within the church in Finland in recent years.

The task of evaluating the preparation process and receptivity among the church's own theologians and parishioners on the Russian side belongs to the Russians themselves, of course, but it must be said that we have become familiar with the Orthodox Church of Russia at both a general and a personal level in the course of time. The relatively superficial, monolithic picture of that church that we had at the beginning has gained all manner of nuances. Just like the Lutheran Church in Finland, the Russian Orthodox Church encompasses numerous different traditions, often with a certain amount of tension between them. Thus it has become apparent that fruitful ecumenical contacts also bring with them the need for an internal discussion process. We are more similar in this respect than we had perhaps imagined.

7. The most significant results of the dialogues

I would like to discuss first of all those results that have been seen to have an ecumenical significance beyond the boundaries of our dialogues. This should not be taken to imply that the other results are not in that calibre or that they can be passed over as being less valuable.

In 1974, when we discussed the Christian concept of salvation at the meeting in Järvenpää, the stimulus for this choice of topic was the 1973 Bangkok Conference on “Salvation Today”. Both sides regarded the documents produced by that conference as exclusively ‘horizontal’, as they interpret salvation in an immanent sense, without an adequate eschatological aspect (V, 16-17). As it has been claimed that the Lutheran and Orthodox doctrines of salvation (justification and deification) are far removed from each other, and yet our two churches have ended up with surprisingly similar statements when evaluating the Bangkok Conference, it was decided to ‘take the bull by the horns’ and tackle this exceptionally difficult subject.

The preparatory work among the Finns set out from the assumption that there must be some point at which these two notions intersect, since both our churches acknowledge an Early Christian theological (patristic) background, in addition to which the Eastern and Western forms of Christianity have granted each other full recognition for a thousand years now in spite of many cultural differences. There was nothing for it but to set to work and delve deeper into the subject than had been the custom. Above all, it was necessary to forget the constantly repeated stereotypes and study the facts themselves.

The preparations were centred on two questions above all, the first an exegetic one and the second a dogmatic one. In the first place we analysed St. Paul’s doctrine of justification and its relation to the statements in which he speaks of ‘rebirth’ and ‘the new man’, after which we compared the results with the statement in the Second Epistle of St. Peter, which is taken as the classical biblical foundation for the Orthodox doctrine of deification:

Thus he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and may become participants in the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4).

In order to interpret this utterance and relate it to the texts of St. Paul we needed to sift through a large amount of non-New Testament

material. This arduous task was undertaken by Professor Jukka Thurén. As the process advanced it became increasingly clear that St. Paul's doctrine of justification and the idea of deification presented in the Second Epistle of St. Peter could be fitted into the same overall structure. This thesis was tested in a variety of ways and appeared to withstand the test.

The second question was this: can one according to the Lutheran confession and traditions regard justification as something that impinges upon the essence of man in a real sense? Does justification bring to a human being something that he did not previously have? Or is it – as is frequently claimed in the Protestant tradition – simply a question of God's favour, which is credited to a person externally without that person as such, in his or her essential being, undergoing any kind of change (the 'forensic-imputative' concept of justification)?

Professor Tuomo Mannermaa observed in his analysis of Luther's great explication of the Epistle to the Galatians that this question can be answered in the affirmative. The 'alien justification' which can be 'credited' to a believer is according to Luther Christ himself dwelling in reality within a person who believes in Him (*in ipse fide Christus adest*). The new 'self' that a Christian takes on is Christ, and through Him the Christian comes to partake in 'the divine nature'. Justification is both a *favour* and a *gift* from God, and this gift is indeed *Christ himself*. It is through Christ himself that a believer can partake in the divine life.

This result of Mannermaa's analysis and the challenge awakened by it have given rise to numerous doctoral theses over the decades and to a programme of research that has aroused much discussion internationally. It is of considerable significance for the Lutheran Church's understanding of its own principles, and even more especially for its ecumenical relations, as it has been mirrored to a marked extent in other Lutheran-Orthodox dialogues, including the global Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue (in which the Lutherans are represented by the LWF). The same theological work has also occupied a key position in a sense in the Joint Lutheran-Catholic

Declaration on Justification.

It was indeed noted in the discussions in Kiev that the Lutheran doctrine of justification and the Orthodox concept of deification are to a great extent similar in their aims and offer prospects for further fruitful discussions. Both sides felt this discovery to be an important one from an ecumenical point of view: *Until recently there has been a predominant opinion that the Lutheran and Orthodox doctrines of salvation greatly differ from each other. In the conversations, however, it has become evident that both these important aspects of salvation – justification and deification – have a strong New Testament basis and there is great unanimity with regard to them both.*

Another aspect was also touched upon in Kiev, namely the synergy problem that arose in the course of the discussions. The Lutheran confession rejects synergism, i.e. the doctrine that God and man work together in the process of conversion. This cooperation would imply that man had free will, a notion which the Lutheran confession denies (PC, 776, 1-781, 19 and 866-912).

It has been conjectured since the Kiev meeting that the Lutheran stance on the synergism question has altered. It is the opinion of Professor A. Osipov of Moscow, for instance, that the formerly controversial *Problem der Einheit zwischen der objektiven Seite der Erlösung und der subjektiven Beteiligung des Menschen* became markedly clearer in the course of the Kiev conversations.¹ The key position in this respect is occupied by thesis 7, which reads:

Grace never does violence to a man's personal will, but exerts its influence through it and with it. Everyone has the opportunity to refuse consent to God's will or, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to consent to it.

Furthermore, the opinion of the Orthodox part is that what

1 (Der Dialog der Russischen Orthodoxen Kirche mit den evangelisch-lutherischen Kirchen (1959-1979), Stimme der Orthodoxie 8/1980. The following quotations are from F&O 4/5 1980 pp. 18 and 19).

has been said above presupposes cooperation between God's saving grace and man, i.e. freedom of will.

Referring to the beginning of the thesis, Osipov continues:

Dass man in diesen Punkten eine Übereinstimmung erreichen konnte, zeugt von einem bemerkenswerten Fortschritt in der lutherischen Theologie. Wenn hier auch nicht geradewegs eine "Synergismus anerkannt wird, so erklärt man doch deutlich genug, dass es im Prozess der Erlösung und Vervollkommnung notwendig der tätigen Initiative des Menschen bedarf - und eben dies lehrt die orthodoxe Soteriologie.

Much the same evaluation has been put forward by Dr. Karl Christian Felmy of Erlangen,² who places the thesis in an anthropological context, refers to the opening part of it in the same manner as Osipov and states that:

Damit haben die lutherischen Partner zweifellos Anliegen des orthodoxen Synergismus aufgenommen.

What has the Lutheran delegation committed itself to in approving this thesis? The answer can be found in the context of the statement itself, soteriology. The thesis is not concerned with anthropology, although it does touch upon this. The issue of free will is raised only in the Orthodox clause at the end of the quotation above: in their opinion "what has been said above presupposes cooperation between God's saving grace and man, i.e. freedom of will. The Lutheran delegation did not wish to express an opinion on this question, because they had not considered it at the level of a specific theme, nor did they regard it as following on from acceptance of the thesis itself as far as the Lutheran tradition was concerned.

The thesis is not speaking about conversion, of course, but is the last in a series of theses concerned with the subjective acceptance of salvation under the influence of God's Holy Spirit. The

2 Die orthodox-lutherischen Gespräche in Europa, ein Überblick, pp. 15-16.

act of setting out on the path leading to justification and deification is already described in theses 2-4, the fifth declares that the fruits of faith are good deeds, and the sixth that:

Any good deed, in whatever way it may be manifested (as a thought, a word or an activity) the Christian does under the influence of the grace of the Holy Spirit (Luke 18:26–27, John 6:65, 15:5, 1.Cor. 4:7). Furthermore, the influence of grace covers the whole good deed from its beginning in the thoughts of man up to its realization (Acts 17:28, Phil. 2:13).

The context thus indicates that the seventh thesis is not speaking about the cooperation that the Lutheran confession rejects as synergism. It is talking about cooperation between the will of a person who has received justification and God's Holy Spirit. This cooperation, *synergeia*, is clearly explicated in the Lutheran tradition. This is by no means something that has just been discovered, nor is it something on which the Lutheran stance has altered. This thesis regarding cooperation between God and the will of man is important to Orthodox believers – as I understand it – because it enables one to refute quietism: someone who has been granted salvation is not passive 'driftwood' in the Lutheran view, but an active subject. Such an interpretation, which Catholic theology has also sometimes ascribed to the Lutheran concept of justification, thus does not correspond to the real situation, and it is a good thing to be able to do away with it.³

One might say, therefore, that Osipov's evaluation is correct in as far as it is a question of a person who is born again and his cooperation (*synergeia*) with God. Thus far mutual understanding has increased, but the problem of human free will in connection with conversion has still not been addressed. It is at that point that a boundary has to be drawn with synergism (as defined at the beginning of this discussion).

There was insufficient time at Kiev to go into the question

3 In the Lutheran confessional books this is discussed most fully in the Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord 2, 15-26, 60-67.

of a faith that brings salvation in any depth. Archbishop Mikhail outlined the Orthodox concept of faith in his paper, maintaining that it comprises three phenomenological degrees: 1. rational faith, without emotions or exercise of the will, 2. faith involving trust and hope, and 3. faith that acts through love. Only the third of these degrees is truly a faith that brings salvation. The Lutherans involved in the discussion did not regard this phenomenological approach as the most fruitful possible, and five points were recorded which “*caused some differences of opinion or different emphases in a few questions*” so that they “*need further study and careful attention*”:

1. The relation between faith, hope and love in salvation.
2. The Christian’s hope of personal salvation.
3. The relation between God’s grace and the freedom of man’s will in salvation.
4. The Orthodox and Lutheran concepts of faith from the point of view of salvation.
5. The relation between the Law and the Gospel in salvation.

The aim in the conversations held in Turku in 1980 was to extend the foundation created at Kiev in order to explore the question of the mutual relation between faith and love in salvation that had been left open on the previous occasion. The Finnish papers on this topic were presented by Bishop Aimo T. Nikolainen (from an exegetic perspective) and Professor Tuomo Mannermaa (from a systematic perspective).

Nikolainen traced the link between faith and love throughout the New Testament tradition, starting out from Jesus’ commandment to “love God and love your neighbour as yourself” and working towards the goal of a Johannine fusion of faith and love. His principle claim was that the New Testament rejects attempts at achieving salvation through deeds required under the law but affirms that faith inseparably leads to “good deeds”, acts of love, just as a good tree will produce good fruit.

Mannermaa approached the topic on the basis of the mutual dynamics existing between faith and love in Luther’s theology,

maintaining as his background throughout the notion of the concrete and ontological presence of Christ within the believer that was discovered in Luther's thinking at the Kiev meeting (with its link to the Orthodox concept of theosis). From a Lutheran perspective, the expression *fides caritate formata*, a faith which has gained its content from love (a Western equivalent of the third degree of faith as proposed by Archbishop Mikhail in 1977), may be misleading, as love could then be construed as a property instilled in a human being. It was for this reason that Luther preferred the concept *fides Christo formata*, as the content of the faith is Christ himself, so that the love that proceeds from that faith is the love of Christ.

The proposal put forward by the Finnish delegation in Turku may thus be summarized as follows (to quote my paper presented at the Leningrad conversations):

The soteriological point of departure is this: a faith that leads to salvation involves acceptance (through the Word and the sacraments) of God's justification (an 'external justification'), which is not merely God's favour towards man but God's gift to man, the presence of Christ through faith. It is by virtue of His sufferings, death and resurrection – and His alone – that man is 'deemed justified', and at the same time he becomes – through the presence of Christ – a participant in the divine life in a real sense, a life of which one essential property is love. When faith accepts this life, it also passes it on to others in the form of acts of love. The believer treats his neighbour in precisely the same way as Christ has treated him (TA 3/1984).

On arriving in Turku the Orthodox delegation had not yet dispelled its suspicions that when Lutherans speak of a faith that leads to salvation they are referring to an intellectual knowledge of the faith, and Archbishop Mikhail set out in his very detailed presentation (of 33 pages) to demonstrate that this notion was impossible. In effect his argument contained numerous points of contact with both of the Lutheran papers on the topic, as was noted in the subsequent discussion. The problem with Mikhail's approach (from the Lutheran viewpoint) was that it continued to treat faith in a phenomenological and psychological sense, as had been done

at Kiev, whereas the Lutherans had been consistently offering a Trinitarian and Christological perspective. A corresponding difference in perspective was later observed in the Lutheran-Catholic negotiations that led to the Common Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, in that the Catholics concentrated on describing what the human being experiences and the Lutherans on what God does. Both perspectives are viable ones, but each can easily be interpreted in a one-sided manner. The common factor that can be found to unite them is the concrete presence of Christ.

It was this aspect that ran through the discussions in Turku, as asserted at the beginning of the summary:

During the previous negotiations it was stated that the central aspects of the Lutheran as well as of the Orthodox doctrines of salvation, i.e. of justification and deification, are firmly based on the New Testament, and that there is great unanimity on both these aspects. This consensus rests on the doctrine of Christ, in which the churches have a joint basis. Christ is the basis of our justification and of our deification. At the same time, it has, however, become evident that, in spite of this unanimity, there are differing views between the churches as regards the emphasis to be placed on the different aspects. The relation between faith and love in salvation is one such problem.

In referring to man's relation to God and salvation, Lutherans tend to stress faith and the life of faith, whereas the Orthodox prefer to stress love.

The words 'love' and 'faith' have many different meanings both in the Scriptures and in general usage. Therefore, whenever faith and love are discussed, it is absolutely necessary to note the precise meaning these words carry in the Biblical context where they occur.

The theological conversations now held in Turku have proved conclusively that the doctrines of both churches on faith and love in salvation are essentially similar.

8. Other points of theological reconciliation

Although international discussions have concerned above all mutual

observations on soteriological matters, considerable progress has been made in other fields as well. In the following I will gather together what I regard as the main ones amongst these and make some brief comments on them.

- The *Trinitarian nature* of the classical Christian image of God and our belief in Him is clearly recognised and acknowledged as a starting point for the beliefs of both churches. This has been quoted as the foundation of our concepts of the creation, redemption, holiness and the Church's mission in the course of numerous discussions from 1974 onwards (Järvenpää 1974, theme III, thesis I; Turku 1980, A 1; Pyhtitsa 1989, A II, 1, 2; Järvenpää 1992, A 2-5; Kiev 1995, A 1-3). The question of differences between the Eastern and Western concepts of the Trinity, including the *filioque* issue, has not been touched upon, however.
- It may be concluded from the discussions held in 1970–1974 that the Orthodox participants have understood the Lutheran concepts of *communion and holy office* as more closely related to each other than could have been predicted. It was intended to raise the possible sacramental nature of the Lutheran priesthood as a topic for discussion at a later juncture (1974, I, II, 11), but this has not so far been done. The Holy Communion was discussed further in 1977 (in a soteriological context, A, III) and 1983 (in an ecclesiological context, A 4-6), and agreement has been noted on the principle that Holy Communion is the deepest possible expression of unity and not a means of achieving unity (1970, A 5), and likewise on the notion that Christ's sacrifice on Calvary was a unique and unrepeatable occurrence. There have not, however, been discussions on any other possible differences of opinion on the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist (1971, A II, 2). The concrete nature of the sacraments would in any case seem in Orthodox eyes to be emphasized in the Lutheran Church and to possess at the same time a profile that departs from the markedly

- Reformationist tradition of Lutheranism, at least in its conventional and Nordic form.
- In *soteriology*, particularly in Kiev (1977) and Turku (1980). This phase has been discussed at length above.
 - The discussion returned to the theme of *soteriology* at Mikkeli in 1986, where many common viewpoints on *holiness and sanctification* were discovered. The drawback with these discussions was that not enough was done to explore the connections with the results achieved at Kiev and Turku. It thus proved impossible – in spite of all the good intentions - to build naturally and explicitly on the process that had so fruitfully been set in motion on those occasions.
 - On certain dimensions of *ecclesiology* as discussed in Leningrad in 1983 (principally Eucharistic ecclesiology). Isolated statements on the nature of the Church have also been made in other connections (Järvenpää 1974, I, 2, 6, III, 6-7; Kiev 1977, I, III; Mikkeli 1986, I, 8, 11-13; Järvenpää 1992, I, 3-4, 8-9; Lappeenranta 1998).
 - On the significance of the *apostolic origins and continuity* of the Church – a topic that was treated as a theme at Järvenpää in 1992 but had been raised during the previous meeting at Järvenpää (1974, I, 6). The treatment afforded to this important subject has been fairly fragmentary to date – in spite of some good jointly approved theses. One reason has been that it has not been raised for discussion on account of the dynamics of our own dialogues but on the strength of the Faith & Order programme.
 - The *theology of the creation* and the ecological conclusions to be drawn from it gave rise to some significant joint proposals, but these have not been followed up. Again the reason may be that the topic arose out of the challenges of the day and was a departure from the dynamics of the series of discussions as such. The theme could be pursued further via the image of man to consider its soteriological

connections and perhaps later to assess relations between the Church and the world.

- A common understanding has developed on both sides regarding the significance of a spirituality arising out of one's own traditions for opening up ecumenical prospects.
- As a large number of jointly accepted theses have accumulated from these meetings over the years, there is a need to make a systematic synthesis of these by theme. This would increase the transparency of the material and make it easier to recognise areas where further work is called for.

9. Topics still to be addressed

Of the list of themes requiring investigation drawn up at the Kiev meeting, there are three that have not so far been dealt with: (2) personal assurance of salvation, (3) the relation between God's granting of salvation and human free will, and (5) the relation between the Law and the Gospel in salvation. In this respect the connection between theological anthropology and soteriology would appear to occupy a crucial position – a matter that in itself remained open at Kiev and aroused a certain amount of international discussion. It would also be useful to discuss in the same context the relation between human free will and the influence of God's grace. This would be altogether a very difficult and challenging task – at least as difficult as the relation between justification and deification.

There is one promising element in this set of problems, however: namely that all the ecumenically most difficult questions as far as the Lutheran and Orthodox churches are concerned, which are therefore likely to be left until last, are ones that are not merely challenges for discussions between our two confessions but are also points of contention within the Lutheran tradition. The question of free will and the human capacity for taking part in the process leading to salvation is one of these, as well as being an extremely interesting and problematic matter in terms of the secular study of philosophy,

psychology and biology. What in general is the relationship between human freedom and determinism? To what extent are the outcomes of a person's life determined by his or her inherited characteristics or genes? Very many biologists and philosophers these days are determinists, although admittedly psychological freedom of will can be accommodated within a determinist framework. I believe that there is something essential to be found in both approaches, determinism and free will, but it may well be that it is impossible to resolve the relation between them by logical means. Maybe we simply have to accept that this is something paradoxical in the human condition.

- It would be important in any case to have the chance of extending the findings in the area of soteriology in the direction of theological anthropology at the same time as working on the reconciliation achieved in that of ecclesiology.
- Another theme which deserves a more profound treatment is the significance of baptism for the Christian church and for the individual Christian in an ecumenical context. Unlike the sacrament of the Eucharist, we have not yet sat down to evaluate this together in our dialogues. Baptism has in principle been recognised reciprocally (at least in Faith and Order circles, in the BEM process, for instance), but one problem lies in the fact that for the Orthodox it is intimately connected with the sacrament of chrismation – which in the Western tradition has been separated off as confirmation.

Professor Gunnar af Hällström

An evaluation of the dogmatic themes

1. Introduction

I understand that my part in these discussions is to comment on the dogmatic content of the conversations that have taken place so far and to put forward some ideas regarding those to take place in the future. I will do this by putting forward a few questions and proposals for consideration by those present.

I should point out straight away that as a novice in these circles I am in a quite different position from the fathers of these conversations, the veteran participants who have been present on many previous occasions and have background information which I do not have. My only *source material* consists of the various reports that have appeared in the series of *Documents of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland*, although this rather restricted body of material is all that is available to researchers in other parts of the world as well. Without background information, however, the probability of misunderstanding is very high, especially since the English translations of the minutes of these meetings are unclear in places.

I would like to explain at the outset that my daily work brings me into contact with Orthodox scholars who are strongly committed to a *Neopatristic* theology and that I have become acquainted with this through my own research as well. This Greek/Byzantine orientation may well have complicated my interpretations of the dogmatic themes of these conversations, as it appears to me that the Neopatristic points of emphasis do not always coincide with those of the Russian scholars involved here. I discussed the results of these doctrinal conversations with my Orthodox students, for instance, in 1999 and found that they could not unreservedly accept every point raised. The number of sacraments (or mysteries) that they recognised was different and other problematical points concerned the confessions that formed the basis of their dogma and their attitude towards the Apocryphal or Deuterocanonical books of the Old Testament, and also some of the anthropological statements.

2. Significance of the conversations for research

The doctrinal conversations have formed a noteworthy collection of source material for research into dogmatic theology, on a par with the *Churches' Answer to BEM* material. In other words we have here a set of authoritative and carefully considered statements on doctrinal matters that, in spite of this, are not binding on outsiders in the sense that they would bring discussion to a halt. On the contrary, the implication is that discussion should begin here, having been inspired by them. As I said, these are well-considered statements, and as such they bear comparison with other Orthodox source material. The dogmatic element in them is frequently implicit, of course, being dressed up in a liturgical or other devotional guise, so that it has to be extracted analytically. This is in fact a familiar situation, which means that in spite of the abundance of published Orthodox material, a Lutheran theologian in Finland who is working on Orthodoxy frequently has to refer back to the long-standing dogmatic works of Malinovski and Padalka in the absence of other material. It is with great pleasure, therefore, that I note

that the introduction to Orthodox dogmatic theology by Bishop Hilarion (Alfeyev) is due to appear in Finnish any day now! The Neopatristicians live in a constant fear of western rationalism, however, so that doctrinal explanations can easily be criticised for being too ‘scholastic’. Take, for example, Georges Florovsky, who comments on one old Russian dogmatic work that “In spite of all its merits, this dogma (of Makarii Bulgakov) remains a dead letter, a lifeless monument to scholarship, devoid of inspiration from the Spirit of the Church. It is yet one more typically western book.” When surrounded by such attitudes, this dogmatic theologian studying Orthodoxy is all the more delighted at both the *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* documents and the reports on the conversations between our two churches and is convinced that these will not remain “devoid of the Spirit” but will be acknowledged as well-considered doctrinal expositions. Dogmatic explicitness, i.e. clarity of diction, is of the utmost importance, because it is only this that can enable genuine communication between the two sides in such conversations. There may be some room for improvement where clarity is concerned, however, for Professor Jouko Martikainen has referred to the problem of “hiding behind” biblical quotations rather than making a clear statement of one’s own position.

3. Language of the conversations

The language used in such conversations is of decisive importance with regard to the information conveyed. It is the language that either creates communication or fails to do so, both between the two sides and within each group separately. A familiar message but expressed in strange language can give rise to alienation (“This is not intended for me”, and perhaps even opposition (“the wrong group’s terminology”), or an unintentional comic effect.

The language and style used in the conversations are flexible but authentic-sounding. The exegetists consider the significance of an apostolic origin in the accustomed manner, the systematists concentrate on their technical terms, and the church leaders present

their papers with the authority of those in responsible positions. Generally speaking, the Orthodox are Orthodox in their use of language and the Lutherans are Lutheran. But even so, the papers and communiqués connected with the conversations arouse certain *questions* as far as their use of language is concerned.

When agreement is reached to the extent that the expression or term used by one side is 'approved', what are the consequences of this approval? To take an example, is the Lutheran delegation content with the term *theosis* (for deification) as being 'correctly' understood among the negotiators present, an expression approved for use within this 'inner circle', or is the term to be 'marketed' for acceptance by the whole church that they represent, perhaps to the extent of expecting 'receptivity' on the part of the deepest ranks in the church? Are we to hope that the term *theosis* will occur in Sunday sermons in the Lutheran Church in future, or that it will be used in the Eucharistic prayers? If we are to hope for such things, we must expect a good deal of annoyance and perhaps some amusement at the idea of the church learning to speak a new language.

I will take another example. The conversations have touched upon the question of God's 'energies' and the relation of this doctrine to the logos-centred Lutheran cosmology. The report notes placidly that the two expressions denote the same thing. If this is the case, will we find people in the Orthodox Church talking of a logos cosmology in the future, or people in the Lutheran Church discussing the energies? I would find this very strange. Churches have their own terminological universes by which they express their thinking, and if a universe contains sufficient expressions for explaining the necessary meanings it is dubious whether there is any advantage to be gained from importing non-traditional elements into their official usage. It would seem sufficient, at least to begin with, for the terms used by the other side to be stripped of the suspicions and possible accusations of heresy that may be attached to them. In my understanding, it will more advantageous for the Orthodox to speak their Orthodox language and the Lutherans their Lutheran language in the future as well. There is quite enough

to be done simply in defining those universes: is 'original sin' an Orthodox expression or not, or is 'sacrament' the correct terms in a given instance or not? Let the Orthodox circles decide these matters for themselves, and so on.

4. On the subjects in general

The division of subjects into matters of dogma on the one hand and social ethics on the other has given breadth to the conversations and has in its own way served to indicate that the Christian faith is more than merely dogma. The Orthodox frequently emphasize in any case that theology should not be broken up into entirely separate academic subjects but that it should form a single entity. Theology has indeed remained a single entity in the conversations, with each branch of academic theology making a contribution of its own. Personally, I would hope that these conversations that began by being 'doctrinal' could continue to have their main emphasis on doctrine, even if the second subject on the agenda were to be a matter of Christian practise derived from a doctrinal basis, being perhaps primarily ethical in nature. The academic world offers us another possibility, however, that of working in two different ways during the same conversations. Academic theological conferences have part of their programme in the form of lectures, monologues that may be followed by discussions, but increasingly often there are also *textual seminars*, which deal with the same topics as the lectures but work with the source material itself, so that each member can read it and comment on it. The meetings that have taken place to date could have contained, for example, an opportunity to read Martin Luther's Epistle to the Galatians together and comment on it, or St. Athanasios of Alexandria's commentary on the New Testament canon or the confessions of St. Gregory the Wonderworker, all texts of major importance to the conversations.

The topics that have been considered are all central to the Christian faith. It is possible on the basis of the New Testament, the *regula fidei* and the creeds to define fairly well the principal content

of the Christian faith, even though the various churches tend to regard certain special points of emphasis of their own as major doctrinal elements. The conversations have scarcely ever become bogged down in marginal issues but have stepped out boldly to address the central points of the faith. The themes that have been discussed, such as the creation, salvation, apostolicism and the Eucharist, are obviously of central importance.

There is one critical question, however, that cannot be avoided when examining the topics, and this concerns specifically the Lutheran side. Are the Lutherans taking part in the conversations operating at the normal level of their spiritual life or have they been forced to step up to a higher spiritual level? Unless my understanding has been led astray by Pietism or some other distorting factor, one typical feature of the Lutheran Church is its emphasis on *grass-roots* Christianity. Emphasis is laid on the doctrine of *iustificatio impii*, a begging for mercy, consolation for one's affronted conscience, a daily return to the grace conferred at baptism. Even *simul iustus et peccator* is such an elevated achievement that one can be astonished at it. And what is it that has been discussed in these doctrinal conversations? Holiness, deification, the Eucharist, which (to quote) "the Church *triumphantly* celebrates" (Järvenpää 1974). These themes continue to be central ones – I have not changed my mind within the space of a few minutes – and they are justifiable ones, but I am left looking for the balance, the weight which Lutheranism is required to place on each doctrine separately. *Justification* has admittedly been well to the fore, but it has been examined from an angle that in my understanding should not qualify for the main attention.

The question of the correct theological *emphasis* is in my opinion a crucial one. It has frequently been noted in these conversations that unanimity in terms of *content* exists between the Orthodox and Lutheran delegations but there is a difference in *emphasis*. Even when we are in agreement over the content of certain doctrines we may place the emphasis differently. To take one example, the Orthodox emphasize the cosmological aspect in their theology of the creation, while the Lutherans emphasize its

relevance to the history of the salvation of mankind. But we cannot leave the matter there. It is precisely points of emphasis that make the various churches what they are, to at least the same extent as differences in actual doctrines! I would even go as far as to claim that it is of considerable significance whether we choose to emphasize the doctrine of *theosis* or *iustificatio impii*, in spite of the fact that we may accept that in principle they are complementary notions. Our whole spirituality is altered depending on whether we emphasize the impossibility of knowing God (as in apophatic theology) or our knowledge of God. 'The Great Unknown' must be worshipped in a different way from 'Our Beloved Father', and yet we are concerned with the same God; there is just a difference in emphasis. In the same way it makes a difference whether we emphasize synergy (in the case of a believer) or the overwhelming influence of God's grace, which extends to believers. Differences in emphasis are to be found in sermons, in church music, in prayers, in church art and even on the faces of Christians as they walk home from church. To put it briefly, doctrinal unanimity is an elevated goal, but the definition of the weight to be attached to given items of doctrine is also of prime importance.

5. Ad fontes

Turning our attention from the themes of these conversations in the past to those of the future, we can see many alternatives that could be on offer. There are numerous crucial Christian doctrines that would be suitable for treatment in this manner. With your permission, I would concentrate on two topics that I believe would merit attention.

5.1. Ad fontes – explication of the basis for our doctrine

Given that the basis for these ecumenical conversations is a doctrinal one (it need not necessarily be), it is of primary importance

to determine what underlies this doctrine. In this sense the conversations have begun in a very unusual manner. We have plunged in straight away, *in medias res*, to address doctrinal questions at once, with only a minimum of discussion of the criteria to be used in our argumentation. What are the authorities from which we should gather support in our discussion? This matter was dismissed in one sentence in the Leningrad 1983 report, “The Holy Bible contains the bases of the doctrine of the Church in a way that is binding upon us at all times. These have given rise to the definitions of the Church which are to be found in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed.” This is to my mind an excellent definition that provides some kind of minimum upon which we can agree: the Bible and the Nicaenum. But even this minimal basis for our doctrine calls for some additional explanation. Are the two sides agreed on what is meant by the Bible? It might be mentioned in passing that very little use has been made of the Deuterocanonical books in these conversations to date. Furthermore, is the Church to be understood as having a monopoly over the Bible as we define it, and if it has, then who is entitled to speak in the name of the Church when interpreting it? Does the Holy Spirit continue to speak to us, opening up new possibilities for bishops, laymen or church assemblies to interpret the Bible, or did these possibilities come to an end with the Church Fathers or the Ecumenical Council of 787 in Constantinople? We need here to look for the maximal amount of the doctrinal basis on which unanimity would appear not to exist: to what extent did the Church Fathers and the Ecumenical Councils serve as authorities, and what of the Lutheran confessions, which form a body of ‘church father’s’ texts from the Reformation period as far as Lutherans are concerned? These matters need to be discussed not only between the two sides in these conversations but also internally by each side separately, as neither the internal Orthodox understanding of the matter nor the consensus opinion among the Lutherans is entirely unambiguous. The world-wide Orthodox Church of our day needs to re-assess the role of the seven Ecumenical Councils of the Early Church, on account of the fact that discussions with the Oriental Orthodox

churches have altered the previous positions. As far as the Church Fathers are concerned, Professor Vladimir Mustafin pointed out at Järvenpää in 1992 that “not all the texts included in these documents are expressions of ecclesiastic or apostolic tradition.” The texts of the Early Church include material existing on various levels, even in the opinion of the Orthodox Church. This is also the general opinion among Lutherans, but in spite of this it was precisely the question of the authority of the Church Fathers, among others, that brought the discussions between the Lutherans of Tübingen and Patriarch Jeremias II of Constantinople to an impasse. Are we or are we not of the same opinion when it comes to the value of tradition, in practise that of the Church Fathers? The Lutherans will also have to consider more carefully whether Luther was a “church father” in the sense that all his writings should be taken into account, including his commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, or do the Confessions of the Lutheran Church take precedence over the works of Luther? At all events, it would be good for the doctrinal conversations to go back to the sources of the doctrines concerned and consider their nature and their interpretation.

5.2. Ad fontem – going to the baptismal font together

There may be good reason in the future to go back to the original source in another sense, *to the question of baptism*. It has been stated in the conversations that “unity in the Eucharist is the deepest manifestation of the oneness of the Church” (Sinappi 1970). This is very true, but we will never meet each other at all if we remain waiting for Eucharistic unity. The accent that has been placed on Eucharistic theology has greatly enriched the liturgical life of our churches, but it has not to my mind enriched ecumenical relations to anything like the same extent, because we are still far apart when it comes to the celebration of the Eucharist. It is for this reason that I suggest that we should take as a future topic of discussion at these meetings another sacrament/mystery which unites us rather than dividing us, namely *baptism*. We have seen as a consequence of the *Baptism, Eucharist,*

Ministry process how much content the Orthodox Church and Lutheran Church assign to baptism: childhood in the image of God and membership of the Church of Christ, in other words, precisely those things that are essential for achieving Christian communion. Our baptismal theology shows us just how much the two sides have in common, but it also gives us good reason to look more closely into other aspects that are more problematic, such as the question of receiving the Holy Spirit at baptism and/or chrismation, the faith of the individual and/or the community at the moment of baptism, and the natural state of the human being prior to baptism. I am of the opinion that baptism is the key sacrament from an ecumenical point of view and hope that we will be able to find each other there, *apud fontem sacrum*.

As in the name of impartiality I cannot really give the last word to either Orthodox or Lutheran theologians, I shall quote Pope John Paul II, who uttered the following words in Turku Cathedral on 5th June 1989:

*Who am I?
Like all of you, I am a Christian,
And I have received at baptism
The grace that unites me with Jesus Christ our Lord.
Through baptism I am your brother in Christ.*

**Y. A. Ryabykh, Department of External
Church Relations, Patriarchate of Moscow**

**The results of the doctrinal conversations from
a socio-political perspective in relation to the
current mission of the church in a changing
society**

Given that the aim of this twelfth round of Russian-Finnish theological conversations is to review the results of the conversations so far, it would seem to me that the analysis should start out from the *raison d'être* of the conversations as a whole. Both sides are obliged today to seek answers to the question “Why do we need doctrinal discussions with members of another religious organization at all?” There is a real danger that ordinary churchgoers will not be interested in such things, and an opinion is gaining momentum not only in the Russian Orthodox Church but also elsewhere that one ought to put a stop to the ecumenical movement for Christian unity as it can only lead to compromises, which would mean distortion of the Truth. It would indeed appear that unity, which was once the goal of inter-church discussions, can no longer be taken as the chief motive nowadays, and that the idea of unification among Christians has been transformed in the course of the 80 years for which the ecumenical movement has been in existence to the extent that it is no longer acceptable to a person who sincerely believes in actual

unity. But there is another force that is moving many Christians to show a renewed interest in inter-church discussions: believers are beginning to feel isolated in a changing world and are for this reason developing a desire to communicate with others. The modern world has become a global one and Christians feel that their numbers are limited and that people who wish to live according to Christ's teachings are worth their weight in gold in this world. This means that they are ready to attach considerable value to even the most modest of contacts in matters of religion and to a Christian outlook on the surrounding world. We have to recognise that where Christianity at one time encompassed whole nations and continents it has now shrunk to apply only to the Christian churches. I shall therefore set out in this paper to review the results of the 'Sinappi' conversations from the perspective of the Church's mission in this global world.

How relevant are the findings of our conversations to the doctrinal discussions taking place between Christian communities and to the task of satisfying the spiritual needs of the modern-day Christian? I would like to draw attention to two quotations that explain what I mean here by 'relevance'.

The Russian Patriarch Sergei (Starogorodsky), who was particularly interested in inter-church doctrinal discussions, pointed out in one study that it was important to realise that "western religious communities should be able to resolve their own understanding of the world within the framework of their basic world-view... Anyone who has a conscience, the power of reasoning and a pure moral sense can evaluate life. It may be that one person fails to appreciate dogmatic arguments and another is unaware of the historical evidence, but every individual should have a world-view of his or her own before his eyes."¹ In the Patriarch's opinion an understanding of the world is a combination of thought and the

1 Patriarch Sergei (Starogorodsky). *Attitudes of Orthodox people towards their own church and other churches*. Parish of St. John of Russia, Patriarchate of Moscow, 2001, p. 27.

principles of life that corresponds to the state of a person's soul when in a certain life situation.² Thus the subject of the state of a person's soul when he or she is responding to the teachings of Christ could be an important topic for discussion.

Another Russian theologian, Rev. Georges Florovsky, maintained that modern Christian theology needed an apocalyptic dimension in order to respond to the constantly changing world around it. "There is nothing neutral in the world any longer; there are no straightforward things or issues. Everything has to be questioned, everything is ambiguous, and everything has to be disputed with the anti-Christ. Everything is a matter of choice: to believe or not to believe, where the burning question is that word 'or'... The time will come when it will really be necessary to find a Christian answer to every question in life and integrate it into a synthetic weave to achieve a complete proclamation."³

The first of these quotations is based on a methodological approach to dialogue between Christian churches, and the second on the concern felt by Christians for the fate of the world. Both imply a striving on the part of Christians towards a common outlook on the world which should cover all matters of consequence from dogma to social problems.

1. A general evaluation of socio-political themes in the conversations

An opinion exists that the treatment of socio-political themes in the conversations has been somewhat fragmentary and that it was only with great effort that these came to be introduced into conversations that were otherwise purely theological.⁴ It seems to me, however,

2 Ibid. Pp. 27-28.

3 Florovsky, Georges. *Ways of Russian Theology*, Kiev 1991, p. 516.

4 Saarinen, Risto. *Faith and Holiness, Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue 1959-1994*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1997, pp. 78-79.

that the participants in the conversations have succeeded in skilfully integrating this theme into the doctrinal framework, as exemplified very well by the discussion of the Eucharist, salvation and the mission of the Church. Similarly the topics of the papers in themselves reveal that the two sides have been just as interested in social issues as in theological ones.

It should nevertheless be admitted that when analysing the subjects chosen for discussion in the dialogues from a socio-political perspective they do strike one as somewhat monotonous. Eight out of the eleven meetings to date have dealt exclusively with the theme of peace and the building of peace. The subject of peace was more of a euphemism in Soviet times, of course, and was used to lay emphasis on the broader activities of the Church within society, but in effect a great deal of discussion was entered into under the 'umbrella of peace' that could be exploited later in various areas of the social sphere. It was only in 1989 that the range of topics was extended to include ecology, human responsibility for the world created by God, proclamation of the faith in the world, nationalism, freedom, church-state relations and the social work of the Church.

Since no particular methodology existed for addressing socio-political questions in the conversations, the results must be regarded for the purposes of this analysis as the products of creative laboratory work. It may be noted, however, that some interesting directions of thought emerged, including many new perspectives traceable to participants' individual spiritual experiences. This unforeseeable process succeeded in the end in creating a picture for us of the Christian world-view.

2. Treatment of the socio-political topics

The conversations made a contribution of their own to the development of certain significant social themes, such as work for peace, justice, ecology, witness to the faith of the apostles in the modern world, the Church and nationality, and freedom. For some reason, however, blatantly insufficient value was placed on the

bilateral discussions of peace and the time spent on these discussions easily came to be regarded as time wasted.

In actual fact, church members in the 1970s and 1980s were deeply concerned about issues of war and peace, so that one cannot say that this was merely a topic imposed on the conversations by an anti-religious state. The world was poised between peace and a global nuclear war and the concern felt by Christians was a reality.

The problem of war and peace is relevant in our day, too, and for this reason the Church's mission to work for peace is beginning to be topical again. Although the threat of a global war has receded, it has been replaced by numerous local conflicts that are often in the nature of clashes between cultural or ethnic groups. At the same time we are now faced with problems of terrorism, the right of intervention on humanitarian grounds and the implementation of pre-emptive military operations. Christians are waiting for the Church to answer these questions, so that presumably it would be appropriate for us to put the topic of peace back on the agenda for our conversations.

The participants in the conversations frequently addressed the subject of working for peace, and the resulting theses may well be collected together under the general heading of 'The Church and politics'. It was stated in 1977, for example, that the Church has no direct role in politics but can influence the political climate at a given time through the actions of its believers. On the other hand, politicians are constantly calling for comments on the question of the Church's neutral attitude to peace, to the extent that I would expect our conversations to deal in more detail at some time in the future with the Church's relations to various structures, norms and manifestations of the socio-political situation. The only discussion of socio-political alliances that has taken place in the conversations to date has concerned the state and the nation.

The conversations have not set out to evaluate different forms of government – apart, that is, from the statement in 1971 to the effect that all peoples have the right to choose their own form of

social and political order.⁵ This assertion dating from the Cold War period will evidently be reassessed in the present age of globalization with the emergence of a single superpower and an intensification of trade and communication between peoples belonging to different cultures. The definition will have to be considered in greater depth in connection with any discussion of modern trends in world development.

The doctrinal conversations have demonstrated that the Church's political neutrality does not mean that it is indifferent to manifestations of good and evil within society. Above all, the Church is committed to a prophetic role, i.e. implementing its critical mission within society, a mission which is grounded in its responsibility for the fate of the secular world (1977). A second role for the Church in society is to act as an intermediary in many matters within this severely divided world.⁶

The state's role in the religious life of church members is to guarantee them freedom of action. Since 1998 the state has been called upon not only to guarantee religious freedom but also to promote its implementation.⁷

Certain norms can be found in the official documents of the doctrinal conversations that apply to relations between the state and citizens who are church members. Mention is made of the right of refusal to obey orders that are contrary to one's religion (1972), but at the same time of the commitment to obey the state authorities in all secular matters (1980) and of the freedoms enjoyed by citizens (1998).

It would seem that the problem affecting the activities of the

5 Thesis 6 on "Justice and violence", approved at Zagorsk 1971. Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii, No. 2, 1972, p. 58.

6 Thesis 10 on "The churches' work for peace in the modern world", approved in Leningrad 1983. Department of External Church Relations, Information Publication No.9, Patriarchate of Moscow, 1983, p. 22.

7 Thesis 8 on "Relations between the church, the state and society", approved at Lappeenranta 1989. Department of External Church Relations, Information Publication No.10, Patriarchate of Moscow, 1998, p. 30.

Church in the socio-political sphere (another topic that was raised in the conversations) is its relation to a power that has nothing to do with Christianity but is responsible for deciding on ethical norms. We are coming into contact with such powers more and more in the modern-day secular world, and it has been noted in many of the summaries of the conversations that the Church should support good initiatives put forward by the secular authorities, i.e. ones that are aimed at strengthening truth, justice and freedom, even though they are to be implemented by people who are not believers, because they in any case have a reason⁸ and conscience⁹ of their own, these being gifts bestowed by God on all men.

A second important political theme, taken up in the 1995 conversations, was “The Church and the Nation”,¹⁰ while the conversations at Pyhtitsa in Estonia in 1989 had raised the ethical question of man’s attitude towards his environment.¹¹ Thus the ‘Sinappi’ conversations as a whole have covered a broad spectrum of social and political topics, which it would henceforth be possible to extend still further.

3. Historical significance of the conversations

The discussions of socio-political topics carried a certain political as well as theological significance. At the outset their main political purpose was to dispel the atmosphere of hatred and mistrust that

8 Thesis 3 on “The theological foundation of the churches’ work for peace”, approved in Turku 1980. Department of External Church Relations archives, Patriarchate of Moscow, 21Zh, 1980; see also thesis 16: “The Church ought to encourage those responsible for social and economic activities to strive for justice.”

9 Thesis 4 on “The Church’s work for peace and nationalism”, approved in Kiev 1995. Information Bulletin No.15, 1995, p. 4.

10 See summary on “The Church’s work for peace and nationalism”, as discussed in Kiev 1995. Information Bulletin No.15, 1995, pp. 3-4.

11 ”The Eighth Theological Conversations between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church”. Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii, No. 11, 1990, pp. 54-61.

had existed between these two nations who had been enemies in the Second World War, and it was partly for this reason that the importance of peace between the peoples of the Soviet Union and Finland was emphasized at the meetings. It should be remembered, of course, that Finland had the special status of a neutral country within Europe during the Cold War period. It was not a member of NATO, and for this reason the Soviet Union took every opportunity to emphasize its special relationship with Finland and thus to demonstrate to other western countries that a capitalist state could still adopt a favourable attitude towards the socialist system.

There was also a good deal of interest in the conversations within political and sociological circles in Finland, as Saarinen points out,¹² especially in the 1980s, when the western countries were attempting to transform the Soviet Union from within. The aim was, within the framework of the socio-political themes, to make use of the spiritual and intellectual discussions to acquaint the participants with ideas that were typical of a western viewpoint.

What might be the socio-political consequences of these discussions today? Above all they are important in that they represent a dialogue between two Christian traditions that have influenced the world-views of numerous peoples, but also, they are important on account of the emerging processes of European integration, as they are likely to influence relations between Russia and the western countries and the formation of a whole new system of international relations. They cannot go looking for concrete political solutions, and indeed they should not be expected to, but they can make a real contribution of their own to discussions of the direction in which society is developing and arouse in Christians a sensitivity to the existential problems of modern times.

12 Saarinen, Risto. *Faith and Holiness, Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue 1959-1994*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1997, p. 80.

4. Principles governing the Church's activities in the world

The socio-political weight of the conversations is not dependent only on the degree to which they have dealt with the various topics, however. There is another important question involved, which may help us to evaluate the depth of the discussions, namely that of what principles and thought processes in the life of a Christian have been strengthened by dint of the conversations in the field of socio-political problems and how these could be made use of in connection with various social issues that might arise in a different historical era.

The basic formula regarding the motivation for a Christian's activity within society, as laid down in the theses approved at the end of the 1977 conversations, runs as follows: The social responsibility of the Christian has a two-fold basis. Above all, he performs deeds of love within the community, as these are essential to his observance of the principles of his own faith,¹³ and secondly, he is called to do as much as he can to improve the world around him, as "the forces of the Kingdom of God have already begun to act in this world."¹⁴

In the first part of the argument for the Christian's social responsibility it is noted that in addition to private and family life, the socio-political sphere is an open arena in which the believer can carry out good works as a realization of the principles of his own faith, and the same arena can also create a need for various forms of asceticism. The struggle against manifestations of evil and the

13 See also thesis 7 on "Justice and violence", approved at Zagorsk in 1971. *Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii*, No. 2, 1972, p. 58. See also thesis 3 on "The Sermon on the Mount and the work of the churches for peace in today's world", approved in Mikkeli 1986. *Information Bulletin* No. 8, 1986, p. 32.

14 Thesis 3 on "Salvation and the kingdom of peace: the object of faith and the ethical task", approved in Kiev 1977. Department of External Church Relations archives 1977.

accomplishment of good works in the name of the Lord are things that can contribute to the fulfilment of the social order.

The second part of the argument sets out from the call of Christ to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of Heaven, which has come closer to man following Christ's incarnation. In responding to this call the Church opens up an eschatological perspective, i.e. it bears witness to the final state of creation as being in accordance with God's plans. At the same time the Church depicts the future state of humanity, bearing witness to the perfection of "the new heaven and new life" and asserting that the fulfilment of the world, of justice and of freedom and happiness are still to come. On the other hand, Christians are also called to bring the Kingdom into being here on earth, in their own lives.¹⁵

One general idea that emerges from the conversations is that the achievement of a perfect society is not an end in itself but one of the consequences of human spiritual activity. In this case certain achievements in terms of social improvements can be likened to the glorification of the human soul. In this vein the participants in the 1980 conversations emphasized that the Church can influence social structures by altering people's thought patterns and their hearts.¹⁶

But having answered the question concerning the activities of Christians in society in the affirmative, we are faced with a new one: What ethical norms should Christians engaged in church life use for defining the goals of their own activity in the social sphere? Given that Christian doctrine is a generalization of a theoretical construct that exists on a higher level, it is essential to interpret it in relation to the concrete historical situation, a process that the human mind accomplishes by means of intermediate concepts that are themselves grounded in Christian doctrine and at the same time

15 See the theses on "The Christian doctrine of salvation", approved in Järvenpää 1974. Department of External Church Relations archives, Patriarchate of Moscow, Resolutions, Part 2, 22G, 1974, p.4.

16 Report on "The Fifth Theological Conversations between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church in Turku 5.-11.06.1980", p.49.

take into account regularities of their own in the functioning of the socio-political sphere. An answer to the question can then be given by generalizing from the norms alluded to by the participants in the doctrinal conversations when evaluating social issues. It is these, in fact, that form the conceptual apparatus that was used to evaluate various socio-political realities in the discussions themselves. These are love, peace, justice, freedom and unity. These are related to reality within a process determined by the historical conditions under which the Church has existed.

Since the world, being tainted by sin, is dynamic in the development of its forms and in the ways in which sin is manifested in it, the churches, as observed in one thesis agreed upon in the conversations, “are forced constantly to ask for the real meaning of, and means of attaining, peace and justice.”¹⁷ The best guarantee of ‘peace’, ‘justice’, ‘love’ and ‘freedom’ in the proper understanding of these categories in the life of society is to maintain the sacramental life of the Church.¹⁸

Discussions of the topic of the understanding of peace, justice, love and freedom in relation to the problems of our time would appear to be most fruitful, and I believe that new horizons may open up for the Christian world-view through the application of these concepts. In addition, the conversations could consider other categories within the same field, such as self-sacrifice and service to others. In this way we could find various new approaches to socio-political values that would be common to all Christians.

17 Thesis 3 on “Justice and violence”, approved at Zagorsk in 1971. *Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii*, 1972, No. 2, p. 57.

18 See thesis 3 on “Work for peace in the Christian churches today”, approved at Järvenpää 1974. Department of External Church Relations, Patriarchate of Moscow, Resolutions 21G, 1974.

5. The Church's role and ways of working in the created world

Unanimity between Orthodox and Lutheran churchmen over the fact that concepts such as 'peace', 'justice', 'freedom' and 'unity' are relevant socio-political values is not in itself a major theological achievement of the conversations, of course, and it is clear that people living in non-Christian and even non-religious ethical systems can still be faithful to ethical norms. It has therefore been, and continues to be, appropriate in the doctrinal conversations to define the mission and ways of working of the Church and of individual Christians in this secular world, as it is these that render them distinct from those of other people.

The starting point for social ethics has been seen in all the conversations to lie in Christianity's view of man. It is often claimed that the evil and dissonance to be found in society are manifestations of human sin,¹⁹ which implies that new human activity for good in the world is possible only if mankind can first be cured of this sin and be reconciled and united with God.

Although there has been no direct talk of synergy between God and man in a social sense in these conversations, it has been claimed in just this connection that God influences life on earth through the Church. The documents of the conversations contain a conclusion to the effect that love, peace, justice, freedom and harmony are gifts from the Lord to mankind, in addition to which Jesus Christ did everything within his powers to liberate the human race from sin. In response to these gifts Christians should act in the manner of the wise stewards with the gifts, or talents, bestowed on them by their master, causing them to multiply through their own efforts. It should nevertheless be remembered, as in one thesis

19 Thesis 1 on "The theological foundation of the churches' work for peace", approved in Turku 1980. Department of External Church Relations archives, Patriarchate of Moscow, Resolutions 21Zh, 1980.

arising from these conversations,²⁰ that the Church exercises its influence for peace in the secular world “in its own distinctive way”, by preaching the Word of God, by administering the sacraments²¹ and through prayer²² and acts of love.²³ In addition to all these things, Christians are expected to use their own reason in their efforts towards peace, justice and harmony. It should be noted here, of course, that these efforts are related to the Church’s own spiritual mission in the same way as good works are related to faith, which is a powerful justification for continuing to consider socio-political topics in the context of theological ones.

It can be said without a shadow of doubt that the conversations have influenced our deliberations over the ways in which prayer, the sacraments and preaching (which are purely church functions) can help people to decide on their own actions within society. This is extremely important nowadays for the social wellbeing of Christians who do not want to make a distinction between their church life and their everyday life. Also, by emphasizing the close connection between a Christian’s life in the Church and in society at large we will be able to remain in the spiritual domain in our future conversations and not stray into exclusively political matters. This would at the same time help to avoid attracting criticism of dialogues between religions, which have shown a growing tendency

20 Theses on “Work for peace in the Christian churches today”, approved at Järvenpää 1974. Department of External Church Relations, Patriarchate of Moscow, Archives 21G, 1974, p.1.

21 Communiqué of the Theological Conversations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, 20.-21.3.1980 at Sinappi, Turku, theses 1-4. Department of External Church Relations, Information Publication No.4, Patriarchate of Moscow, 1980, p. 11.

22 Thesis 4 on “Justice and violence”, approved at Zagorsk in 1971. Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii, 1972, No. 2, p. 58.

23 Thesis 2 on “Justice and violence”, approved at Zagorsk in 1971. Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii, 1972, No. 2, p. 57: “(The churches) can do this task (of witness for peace) only by being faithful to the one who sent them, and by using his message as their source.”

to concentrate on social problems in recent times.

Topics in this field of problems affecting the lives of Christians that could very well be taken up in the coming conversations might include asceticism and religious devotions, for instance.

6. Conclusions

What general conclusions can be reached on the basis of this analysis? If we set out from the aim of the conversations as mentioned at the beginning of this paper, “to allow the two parties to acquaint themselves with the other church’s overall outlook on the world”, it may be said that, even though some results have been achieved, there is still a great deal to be done.

On the other hand, in order to obtain an overall picture of an outlook on the world it is necessary to study other topics, such as science, culture and so on. In this respect the Russian Orthodox Church’s publication “Fundamentals of a Social Concept for the year 2000” would provide a good starting point. It is undeniably the case, however, that our conversations have provided us with a well-developed conceptual apparatus for discussing the world-view of Christians as far as political problems are concerned. Some of the elements in this apparatus naturally need to be worked on and developed further, but it is possible for us to use it even today to evaluate the state of our constantly changing world.

In addition, it must be said that the post-Christian world with all its dominant ideas and impressive achievements needs to be evaluated from a Christian viewpoint, i.e. in a manner that corresponds to the legacy that we have received from the great theologians of the Hellenic and Roman world of the third century A.D. This would be essential as far as Christians are concerned, and it would also be highly welcome among those non-Christians who look to the Church to spread the Living Word.

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Professor Hans-Olof Kvist

The work of the churches for peace as part of the fulfilment of the God of Love's plan for the created universe (an evaluation of 'second themes')

1. To begin with

When Archbishop Jukka Paarma, head of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, was holding discussions with Metropolitan Vladimir of St. Petersburg and Ladoga earlier this summer, the latter noted when introducing him and his entourage to members of a parish that there is more that Lutheran and Orthodox Christians have in common than separates them. The doctrinal conversations that have been taking place between our churches since 1970 confirm this claim. We have discussed through our various representatives over the last three decades the interpretation of many of the central and incontrovertible truths of the Christian faith and have expressed our agreement on numerous points in the form of theses. This has been true of every one of the themes accepted for discussion.

Our conversations have from the outset been *theological* by nature, and I would like in the present connection to underline this fact, even though it is true that the second themes chosen for

the conversations have been geared towards our churches' ethical teachings and activities. However, when we have been dealing with topics and problems in the field of social ethics our attention has not been on the ethical or socio-ethical aspects as such but rather it has been consistently focused on how these issues are related to the truths of our belief that stem from God's revelation of Himself to humanity. These conversations, which have now taken place on eleven occasions, have in my opinion *corresponded well in nature and content to the decisions made by our churches' representatives in the 1960's and 1970's to initiate discussions precisely on matters of doctrine*. As the representatives of our churches have come to know each other very well, partly by virtue of these conversations, the meetings have had a secondary effect – one might say – of promoting fruitful relations between our two churches and countries in other respects, too.

At least in Kiev in 1977, the two sides observed that the conversations had contributed to developing fraternal relations and to strengthening good neighbourly relations between the peoples of Finland and the Soviet Union (see communiqué).

Speaking on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the restoration of the Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church in 1978, Patriarch Pimen emphasized that his church had succeeded in establishing especially warm and close relations with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and mentioned in the same connection the regular meetings between representatives, theologians and students from both churches. In particular, he drew attention to the “great and profound contribution” made to the development of theological dialogue and other relations between our two churches by Archbishop Martti Simojoki. Now, more than two decades later, we can note that these good relations have continued, not least in the work of keeping justice high on the list of issues and thereby working for peace among men. For this we have been able to join together to thank and praise God. The two sides were indeed moved to turn to God as early as in the communiqué arising from the Zagorsk meeting of 1971, where “The participants gave thanks

to God for the great blessing he had bestowed in making possible this contact between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church, when important problems of Christianity were discussed in a spirit of trust. Once again the parties were able to experience how ecumenical dialogue dispels misunderstandings and helps each party to understand the attitude of the other.”

In the communiqué following the Turku negotiations in 1970, the two parties had noted that contacts between Christians are apt to reduce tensions in the world and thereby promote peace. Likewise, the ninth thesis on peace approved in Turku (cf. Järvenpää 1974, theses 8 and 9) was a joint declaration that “Peace requires justice, which includes also a state of social, economic and international justice. Because of this, Christians have continually and carefully to search to see where people are without justice, and where justice is threatened. Christians have to strive together against the exploitation of their fellow man, the degrading of the value of man, racial discrimination and all forms of discrimination, hunger, poverty, injustice, and against everything which is a threat to world peace and normal life.” Looking at the state of the world three decades later, we can say that the things mentioned in this thesis are as relevant now as they were then. Ecumenical collaboration implies work for the achievement of permanent peace (Järvenpää 1974, tenth thesis on peace).

2. Joint worship

Church services and moments of prayer conducted according to rites of either the Orthodox or the Lutheran Church have always formed part of our conversations. This practise has conformed to the deepest interests of our churches, even though we have not been able to participate in the Eucharist together. Doctrine, peace and the worship of God have gone hand in hand.

Lutheran Christians cannot really take part in Mass without giving praise to the God of peace and praying for peace on earth and

in their hearts. As Christ is our peace, the Lutheran Mass includes the proclamation of the peace of Christ. We are called to deliberate in silence on texts that speak of peace. The song of the angels is sung antiphonally at almost every Mass, and at Christmas we listen to the gospel of the Prince of Peace. When praying for all of mankind, Lutherans in Finland beseech God to grant peace on earth. The Peace of the Lord is invoked both before and in connection with participation in the Eucharist, and in the Litany used during Lent the people pray that God will protect them from all wars. Similarly the hymns to be sung during Mass contain a great deal of material on the theme of peace.

The above may be compared with the words of Archbishop Makari of Vinnitsa and Mogilev-Podolsk in the Kiev conversations of 1995: "When we talk about the Liturgy, we cannot limit its influence only to its effect on emotions. Rather, it also plays quite a significant role in Christian instruction. The main reason for this is God's word, which is read and heard in every service of worship, but important instruction is also given through ecclesiastical poetry, manifold symbolism and preaching. In this connection, it must be noted that it is traditionally characteristic of the Orthodox sermon to interpret the Holy Scriptures, especially in order to draw ethical and educational conclusions from God's word heard in the services. Peace education is a pivotal element of the modern sermon." Archimandrite Yannuarii has similarly underlined the importance of the theology of peace as expressed in the Liturgy (Leningrad 1983).

The Great Litany in the Holy Liturgy begins with an exhortation to pray to the Lord in peace, to pray for peace from on high, for the peace of the whole world and for the union of all, and continues with a supplication for peaceful times. In blessing the congregation on many occasions during the Liturgy the priest also expresses the wish for peace to be upon them. Likewise, the Litany of Fervent Supplication contains requests for peace, health and salvation, and the Second Litany of the Faithful again includes a reference to peace from on high and peace for the whole world,

while the litany that leads up to the Lord's Prayer once more makes mention of peace for the whole world and that the faithful should be able to live the remainder of their lives in peace and repentance. Members of the clergy greet each other with the kiss of peace in the sanctuary before the consecration of the Eucharist, and following the Creed those present are exhorted to present the holy offering in peace, in the mercy of peace. The prayer for the secular powers calls upon God to grant that they may govern in peace and that all people may be able to live their lives in peace. The Liturgy of St. Basil the Great also contains a specific prayer for peace for the Church and protection for human dwellings. In the same way prayers for the peace of God and the King's peace are included in Vespers and are offered up in other connections.

When evaluating earlier conversations it is good to emphasize once more the fairly self-evident fact that our two churches are united by the close association of the issue of peace with the divine services, most notably the Mass or Liturgy, i.e. the places where the heartbeats of the Church and the Christian faith are heard most distinctly. They are united in the notion that the Gospel or message of Christ is at the same time a message of peace. God is a God of love and peace (2 Cor. 13:1; 2 Thess. 3:16) and those who make peace, the heralds of God's love, are His children (Matt. 5:9). As we avowed jointly in thesis 12 on peace in the Leningrad conversations of 1983, "In every service, the Church prays for peace. In this way it calls its members to work for peace."

It is in the Mass and the Liturgy – although also elsewhere – that we find at least partial mention of *the faith and life of the one Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. It is in our church services that we join together to pray for peace for ourselves and the whole world from the Triune God whom we worship, we proclaim and listen in silence to God's word of peace, which is common to both our churches, and confess our common faith in the words of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed (with the exception of the filioque aspect).*

3. The Bible and tradition

The Nicene Creed, being based on the Bible and shaped by Christian tradition, serves as a powerful bond between our churches, and it is this that has provided them and their negotiators with a general, mutually accepted starting point for interpretation when formulating their viewpoints on questions of the theology of peace, ecology and the freedom of the Church and of human beings. In this respect our churches have employed the same foundation as was adopted later in the Apostolic Faith project set up by the Faith and Order section of the World Council of Churches, which took the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed as its point of departure as this served best to unite the Christian churches. At least the following assertions in this creed are of especial significance as justifications for the theology of peace: “We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible. We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, ... being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made, who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven ... was incarnate ... was made man ... rose again ... ascended into heaven ... and shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life ... who spoke by the prophets, and in one Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. We acknowledge one Baptism ... look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.”

We will now take a look at how this common confession of the faith has served as a background to our conversations as far as interpretations of the theses put forward on the second themes have been concerned. Although a closer analysis reveals certain theological differences of opinion connected with our separate traditions, it should nevertheless be said that our common Creed grounded in the Bible unites us to a far greater extent than it divides us (see also Järvenpää 1992, first appendix to the Communiqué, thesis 2, second appendix, thesis 2).

Kalevi Toiviainen, now Emeritus Bishop of Mikkeli, who

took part in the conversations up to 1995, has observed in an article on the arguments for a theology of peace presented in the conversations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the evangelical churches (Teologinen Aikakauskirja 6/1975, 453-466) that the representatives of the churches concerned were unanimous over the sources of the arguments. In his estimation, "Back to the original, back to the primary sources, has been the principle for both the Orthodox and Lutheran theologians, whether this meant the Gospel and/or the Bible in general or else the Church Fathers, although admittedly the principle has been applied in different ways." Although an appeal to the authority of the Bible or to the witness of Church Fathers may help to clarify the discussion and create unity between those involved in it, Toiviainen is of the opinion that distinct differences in emphasis exist between the eastern and western traditions. In its very essence the Eastern Church concentrates on liturgical matters and the mysticism of the devotional life, and since there has been very little discussion of the exegetic methods used, any assessment of the manner in which the Bible is referred to must rest on inadequate information. "It sometimes seems," he continues, "that recourse is being had to a *dicta probantia* procedure. It is evident that the faith and interpretation prevailing within the church plays a greater part in the use made of the Bible for them than it does in the evangelical church, which likewise is not ignorant of tradition when it approaches the Bible. The practise of social ethics could be an advantage in future discussions of the role of the Old Testament, the relation between the Old and New Testaments in argumentation over social ethics, the teachings of the Holy Fathers and the relations between them and on the relations between these teachings and the witness borne by the Bible, Toiviainen claims (pp. 455, 459).

It is still possible to agree with Toiviainen's assessment of 1975, and if there were anything to add it might be to emphasize that liturgical decisions are also bound up with dogmatic solutions, and that the legacy of the Holy Synods of the early centuries, which is extremely important to the Orthodox Church, contains large numbers of statements of theological opinion. Since the publication

of Toiviainen's article, the Russian Orthodox Church has emphasized the importance of doctrinal issues for its relations with the World Council of Churches. The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed is of significance not only for Lutherans but for Orthodox theologians as well as an instrument for analysing the Bible theologically, even though the Augsburg Confession and its apology, along with the other confessional books and the works of Luther are of concrete importance in shedding further light on the matter.

In spite of the many points of similarity in terms of social ethics, our churches' different historical legacies are reflected in their ways of arguing on, interpreting and discussing peace, creation and human rights *in greater theological detail* and in forming opinions on current empirical political or social phenomena based on such considerations. As is apparent from the many theses presented on the second theme in our conversations, our churches' representatives have also been united by an awareness that the theses have to reflect the ecclesiastical and theological identity that lies behind them. Neither church is functioning entirely independently of the family of churches to which it belongs, but rather both set out from the premise that they are organized in accordance with the broader connections that determine their identity. Both theologically and as far as their identity is concerned, the Orthodox churches are dependent on the doctrinal unanimity and full sacramental unity that existed in the Pentarch, whereas the identity of the Lutheran churches has been determined by the interpretation of the Bible enshrined in the own confessional tradition. They are in turn united by the concept that the character of a church shall not be influenced by individualistic aspirations, and by the fact that their tradition sets out from the fact that they are manifestations of the one Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

I have drawn attention in the above to certain fundamental matters of theological principle which are of background importance when evaluating the second themes of our conversations and for understanding and assessing the theses put forward, as they would appear to have played some part in the formulation of the theses

even in cases where they are not separately or explicitly referred to.

4. General evaluation of the theses

The papers presented by the representatives on both sides have contributed to the content of the jointly selected themes of our conversations and have provided the other side with useful information on ways of approaching and interpreting the themes, thus promoting a better mutual understanding of the factors which have influenced the formulation of the theses. The theses themselves have been the outcome of a great deal of hard work, but it has been worth the trouble, because they have been taken notice of in a wide variety of circles. One circumstance of considerable significance, of course, has been the fact that the majority churches of two historically neighbouring countries have been engaged in negotiations over how they perceive peace in a theological sense and what opportunities they can detect for its implementation in the relations between nations and individuals.

The very existence of joint theses that are of significance for people's ethical behaviour is in itself an outstanding feature and result of these conversations, for they are theses formulated through negotiation between the representatives of two quite different churches and thereby conform to the original doctrinal purpose of the conversations. The desire to construct jointly acceptable theses in this way has forced the representatives of both churches to consider their own theological standpoints and contexts very seriously in order to extract from them arguments to justify the ethical solutions proposed and the resulting recommendations for action. The theses are thus the outcome of theological and ethical deliberations and give at least limited expression to the theological thinking that is typical of both churches. One is not justified, however, in coming to any very far-reaching conclusions regarding the underlying theological standpoints adopted by the churches simply on the basis of reading these theses. They are above all theologically interesting results of negotiations between two parties,

but they do not as such provide a solid basis for any more extensive theological or ethical argumentation. Further interpretation would be needed for this. It is only when the churches' highest decision-making bodies have arrived at ecumenically binding doctrinal conclusions following a thoroughgoing process of preparation and the gathering of statements from all the affected instances that it will really be possible to rely on the authority of doctrinal assertions of this kind. And even after this the road to achieving visible communion between churches will be a long one in human terms. In spite of this, however, the parties to the conversations have been convinced that the treatment afforded to the major theological problems that have been raised represents a notable contribution to the search for pathways and methods by which true communion between Christians can be attained (Järvenpää 1974, communiqué).

It is clear that *the general theological points of departure and contexts need to be taken into account when evaluating the theses put forward regarding matters of substance*. The theses have touched upon many issues which have been felt at the time of their construction to represent concrete threats, or which have been global talking-points or matters of political, social or ecumenical importance at the time or have been judged for other reasons to be of particular interest to both churches. In Turku in 1970 our representatives were agreed that the use of nuclear weapons should not be condoned under any circumstances, in Zagorsk in 1971 the two sides laid especial emphasis on disarmament and on the Finnish proposal for a conference on security in Europe to be held in Helsinki, and in Järvenpää in 1974 (thesis 5) the focus was on the intensification of education for peace, scientific research into the promotion of peace and support for the peace initiatives of both Christian and secular organizations (the United Nations, the World Council of Churches, the Conference of European Churches, etc.). It was hoped that the negotiations already in process in Vienna for a reduction in the armed forces deployed in Europe would help to dispel tension there and throughout the world. Particular causes of anxiety at that time were events in Northern Ireland, the Middle

East, Chile, etc. It was pointed out in the conversations that peace is not simply a matter of the absence of war, but rather it inevitably includes elements of social justice and human rights and respect for basic human freedoms. In particular, care should be taken to avoid the use of the Bible to defend racial discrimination, colonialism and economic exploitation. At Kiev in 1977 (IV, 1; see also Turku 1980, thesis 17) the parties expressed joy at the signing of the Helsinki Final Act two years earlier and noted the importance of full implementation of its recommendations for the process of détente and the strengthening of peaceful coexistence. Great hopes were placed in the conference planned to take place in Belgrade, where the parties were of the opinion that the peoples of Europe were entitled to expect implementation of all the points contained in the Helsinki agreement. Alongside the World Council of Churches and the Conference of European Churches, mention was also made of the Christian peace conference Pax Christi in thesis IV,2 and of the “conference of leaders of religious communities for a lasting, stable peace, disarmament and just international relations” to be held in Moscow in June of the same year in thesis IV,3.

In Leningrad in 1983 (theses 1-3) the parties expressed concern at the current state of world affairs, noting that the process of détente had come to a halt and that efforts to promote arms inspection had not achieved the desired results. The nuclear arms race in particular had reached an unprecedentedly dangerous stage in the delegates’ opinion, and as both the arms race and nuclear war posed a threat to the whole of mankind and the world’s culture and nature, both should be regarded as crimes against humanity. Both sides expressed support for the creation of nuclear-free zones, e.g. in the Nordic region, and maintained that the spread of weapons of mass destruction should be prevented and that a freezing of these at their current levels would serve as a first step towards general nuclear disarmament (thesis 15).

At Mikkeli in 1986 an appeal was made for the development of international systems for the supervision of compliance with agreements to restrict nuclear power to peaceful uses. The churches

also spoke out against the existing trend in the development of weapons of mass destruction and the designing and testing of new weapons of this kind (thesis 9). It was particularly emphasized that the 2000th anniversary of the Birth of Christ should be celebrated as a great festival of reconciliation and peace.

The conversations held at Pyhtitsa in 1989, the themes of which were the creation and human responsibility for God's created universe, noted with approval the first drafts of the Brundtland Committee's proposals for international environmental legislation. The money previously spent on weapons of mass destruction should be directed towards the creation of the necessary conditions for protecting human life and the environment (second appendix to the communiqué, thesis 11). Scientific and technological progress was not able to guarantee human security and welfare (thesis 1), and the location of the Convent of Pyhtitsa within the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic led to the observation that many environmental problems are common to neighbouring countries and require both legislation and international cooperation on the part of governments (thesis 12). Emphasis was placed on the adoption of an ecological way of thinking, on the awakening of an overall sense of responsibility for nature, concern for the fate of future generations and the need for environmental education. Promotion of the common good was something that applied to every church member (thesis 13).

The eighth thesis on peace that emerged from the 1995 conversations in Kiev called upon the churches to make sure that they were not exploited for the advancement of selfish nationalist interests at times of war or crisis, while it was stressed at Lappeenranta in 1998 that governments should not merely passively permit freedom of religious belief but should actively promote their citizens' rights in this respect and implement those rights in practise (thesis 8). When working towards the development of church-state relations in both countries, attention should be paid to established cultural, religious and social realities. Both of our countries required the confirmation of a model of positive relations between the church and the state and between the church and society at large on the lines of those

typical of many European countries, a model in which faithfulness to the principles of religious freedom could be combined with cooperation between the state, civil society and the church (thesis 10). It would then be possible for the church and the state to open up new perspectives on the formation of the soul of the individual citizen, the soul of the nation and the soul of Europe in a creative manner. Most of all, attention should be paid to the educational role of the church in strengthening social morality (thesis 11). The CEC's Church and Society commission should be able to take advantage of the common experiences gained by our two churches in this respect. Connections between the churches and the European communities should be supported and developed, especially since the churches could bring their own, broader perspective into play over the whole of Europe (thesis 12).

Although one does not need any special *theological* knowledge to appreciate the matters discussed above, it should be noted that the vast majority of the theses concerned with peace, and of the other theses on the second themes of the conversations that could not be dealt with in detail here, are *theological by nature*. The papers and other material on *the theology of peace* and the corresponding theses produced in these conversations justify the argument that *nothing concrete or substantial can be said about the protection of peace, nature and the environment, the defending of personal rights and freedoms or the ways in which these things can be accomplished in practise until it is clear what are the principles upon which our churches base their concept of peace*. I would remind participants at this point of what our delegations observed at Järvenpää in 1992: "On the other hand, Christians are convinced that science and philosophy can also have destructive outcomes if they are driven by values other than those contained in the faith of the apostles (second appendix to the communiqué, thesis 12). The consistent concern expressed by our churches' representatives that the proposals for *concrete* theses on peace and other theses pertaining to the second theme of the conversations *should be in harmony with, although not necessarily derivable from, the theology*

of peace, the theology of the creation and the views on human freedom espoused by our churches ought in my opinion be regarded as one of the seminal ideas lying behind the role of these theses in our conversations. A decisive element of further support for this opinion is to be obtained from the theological analysis presented below.

5. The law of the God of love as a foundation for peace

The basis for the pursuit of peace was regarded in the first two theses on peace put forward at the Mikkeli conversations in 1986 as being the law of God as manifested in the Sermon on the Mount. The relation between Christ and the law was seen as existing in the fact that Christ, the Prince of Peace, was the fulfilment of the law (Matt. 5:17). By contrast, the delegates attending the 1995 conversations in Kiev referred to the statement of St. Paul in Romans 2:14-15 as one theological foundation for our work on behalf of peace, on the grounds that by writing the law into the heart of every man God has granted men an appreciation of right and wrong. The verses in question read: “When Gentiles, who do not possess the law, do instinctively what the law requires, these, though not having the law, are a law to themselves. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, to which their own conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts will accuse or perhaps excuse them.” In actual fact the law as written in men’s hearts had been discussed earlier, at Turku in 1980, but without mentioning the word “law” as such. The third thesis on peace arising from those conversations also contains a reference to the fact that the pursuit of peace concerns everybody and not only Christians, because God has created the whole world. The methods by which we seek peace and their implementation are matters for the human reason, although not in the sense that we could say that all actions of human reason are necessarily in accordance with the will of God. The approach is a strictly theological one: work on behalf of peace is a question of reason “*for reason, too, is a gift bestowed on man by God.*” Thus it was possible to state jointly that “*the Christian concepts of the*

creation and of man thus unfold the possibility for all human beings to work together for peace.” Our delegations were not negotiating over *how an interpretation of the concept of reason that maintains that reason bears no relation or connection with revelation could be used for justifying peace and working towards it, but rather over how human reason, by virtue of and constrained by the law written by God into the heart of every man, could best manifest and implement God’s good intentions for peace in the world and among men.* When deliberating over “the theological foundations for the churches’ work for peace”, the delegates were therefore reiterating their belief in *God as the creator of the world*, in accordance with the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed and the proclamations contained in the Bible. This was truly a question of “the theological foundations for the churches’ work for peace”.

In spite of the joint formulation, it may be apposite to ask whether the concept of the law instilled in the heart was precisely the same in content for the Lutheran as for the Orthodox delegation. Lutherans prefer to speak of a *theologically understood natural law* or *natural justice*, whereupon it coincides in content equally well with the created law, the Decalogue, the golden rule, the Sermon on the Mount or the commandment to love God and love one’s neighbour as oneself. Natural law is a manifestation to human beings of the belief that God expects of them – so that belief should not be grounded solely in socio-ethical criteria – and in that context also of what constitutes justice and of the natural rights of man. The content of this natural law is love in accordance with the will of God. Christ is the fulfilment of this law, and through their faith Christians come to partake in this fulfilment, or love (cf. Mikkeli 1986, second thesis on peace). The Orthodox Church takes a cosmic view of the law written into the human heart as representing the *universal* law of God that permeates the whole world created by Him, given that man is a rational being that forms part of that world (Turku 1980, third thesis on peace).

This interpretation is supported by the paper presented by Bishop Philaret of Dmitrov at the Turku conversations in 1970, in

which he considered the passage in Luke 13:4-5, “Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them – do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.” He maintained that our Saviour’s words “reveal the great law of God’s justice, which applies to the world of men at all times and in both earthly and cosmic nature...[1. Cor. 14:33: “for God is a God not of disorder but of peace.”], conferring wisdom on mankind and denoting the value of human beings, who have been created in the image of God.” In his interpretation “the inevitability of destruction in war” (p. 7 of his paper) is a consequence of infringement of the law of God’s righteousness, i.e. the law of the Ten Commandments (Ex. ch. 20). Although the law of God’s righteousness, being a cosmic law and thereby part of the nature of every human being, is binding on us all, Christians have a special responsibility for the fate of mankind in this respect because they have a knowledge of God’s will (p. 8). Later, Archbishop Makari (Kiev 1995, p. 4 of his paper) emphasized the significance of the “ethical law” discussed in Rom. 2:14-15 in combating the detrimental effects of sin on human nature. Here again, the law is interpreted in the last resort in a cosmic sense: it is an instrument of war to be deployed against all the forces of evil in the world, as it is significant in certain socio-politically defined world situations and in the resolving of crises.

Living people and the world belong closely together in the Orthodox view. The world is created by God just as the people active in it, whom God has created in His own image. Archbishop Makari began his paper with the words “We are all living people. We live in the world, and both we and the world are God’s creations. Both the world in which we live and we ourselves are the fruits of God’s love: ‘God saw everything that He had made, and indeed, it was very good.’ (Gen. 1:3). When God created man ‘in His image, in the image of God’ (Gen. 1:27), when He placed this beautiful world in human hands, He taught that man how to preserve the world in all its beauty, magnificence and wisdom (Ps. 104:24). He blessed the man and woman and said, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the

earth and subdue it...’ (Gen. 1:28), and thus He gave the world to them ‘to till it and keep it’ (Gen. 2:15). However tainted with sin the image of God that abides in man may be, the exhortation to till and keep the world continues to ring out in our innermost being even today.” As the image of God, human beings everywhere continue to satisfy needs of this kind, perceiving the purpose of their lives as connected with work, the family, the raising of children and the creation of the foundations of life: in the privilege of being close to God and to a person whom they love, in delight at a child’s first words and smiles and in satisfaction with the work of their hands (p. 1). It is clear that God’s exhortation also bestows certain rights on human beings (those that we know as ‘human rights’), which are manifestations of the law of God’s righteousness.

I may perhaps be permitted in connection with comments of this kind to refer to an idea put forward by Metropolitan Nikodim, who did much to initiate these conversations of ours, and which was taken up later by Bishop Toiviainen in an undated manuscript lodged in the archives of the Department for International Relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (pp. 2-3). It is concerned with the notion of *logoi spermatikoi*, *logoi* that occur in the form of seeds, as it appears in the works of the apologists and of Clemens of Alexandria (and also in the philosophy of the Stoics and Philonilla). Referring to the *civitas Dei – civitas terrena* distinction put forward by St. Augustine, Nikodim noted (translated from the Finnish of Bishop Toiviainen) that “A constant renewal of the world takes place outside the City of God as truth and good are sown under the influence of *logoi spermatikoi* and grow in the ‘earthly city.’” Nikodim subscribes to the notion that “many features of the eternal image of God and an innate striving for good have persisted even after the Fall.” In Toiviainen’s interpretation, the *lógos spermatikós* doctrine offers us a framework within which to comprehend and perceive God’s work in the secular world in the context of the pursuit of peace. It would also serve as a point of contact between the Lutheran idea of natural justice and a possibility for dialogue with Lutheran social ethics.

It should also be mentioned in connection with the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed that the Augsburg Confession also emphasizes the Triune God as the creator and upholder of all things visible and invisible. One of the main things taught at Lutheran confirmation classes has been, and still is, that God has created all men and all other creatures and maintains everything that belongs to them. Similarly, the Catechism approved by the General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland in 1999 teaches us that God's good work in creation is not limited to the first moments of the world and life. "Creation is not in the hands of some form of blind fate, but is in the constant custody of God. The preservation of life, the implementation of justice and friendship between people are all examples of the fact that God is active in creation and loves everything that He has created" (p. 36). In this sense the Lutheran view of the world and creation also has a certain cosmic dimension to it (see also Pyhtitsa 1989, appendix to the first communiqué, thesis 5). The Decalogue (especially commandments 4–10) is also clearly allowed for as a basis for external actions within society in the principal confession of the Lutheran churches and in other confessions in the Book of Concord that seek to explicate it (see Augsburg Confession XVI, XX; Apol. IV,7–8,22–24, 34 etc.; the Catechisms of Luther). On the other hand, the idea of man being the image of God does not entitle Luther to speak of an innate human striving for perfection (see Augsburg Confession II; Apol. II,4–32; Schmalkalden Articles III,1,1–11; Solida declaratio I, 11–12; II, 7). The Apology links the idea of the creation of man in God's image and likeness to man's original righteousness which he lost in the Fall (Apol. II, 15-2). The Triune God then granted mankind the gift of righteousness in the form of Christ, to be received in faith (see 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 4:24; Col. 1:15; Hebr. 1:3). Since we have jointly avowed that the image of God in man has been distorted by sin (Pyhtitsa 1989, thesis 10) and that God's purpose in creating man has been implemented only in as far as he comes to partake of Christ, who is 'the image of the invisible God' (Pyhtitsa 1989, thesis 1), *it is necessary to take other theological interpretative elements and perspectives into*

account in order to render the statement understandable as far as the particular emphases required by the two parties are concerned.

6. The Gospel of Christ as a prerequisite for peace

It can be claimed on the basis of the above that the views of both churches regarding peace are firmly anchored in crucial interpretations that arise out of their joint beliefs but entail differences of emphasis that are attributable to their distinct traditions. This applies to the law created and communicated by God as a theological argument for peace, but equally well to the Gospel.

The theses on the theme of peace approved in our conversations provide numerous examples of the latter. In the fifth thesis arising from the meeting in Turku in 1980, for instance, the delegates stated jointly that “As citizens of the Kingdom of God, the followers of Christ are summoned to be workers for peace in the world. They are able to follow this call only if they are at peace with God. Where this has happened, there exists a new basis for confidence and service between men. In this sense the Gospel, too, is a basis for the work for peace carried out by the churches.” This thesis builds upon the second thesis on peace accepted at the Järvenpää conversations in 1974, which asserted that “The Holy Gospel itself encourages us to work for peace. Christ is our peace, and through the very proclamation of this fact the Church is working for peace in its own distinctive ways”.

Thus being at peace with God is a prerequisite for Christians’ efforts on behalf of world peace, as was indeed stated quite clearly in the fifth thesis arising from the Turku conversations in 1970. The work of the churches for peace is grounded in God’s act of redemption through Jesus Christ (Zagorsk 1971, theses 1-2). The significance of the Church and the Gospel of Christ was emphasized in a slightly different manner in Leningrad in 1983 (thesis 12): “The fact that the Church serves people means that it already works for peace. The Church serves the cause of peace by preaching the Gospel. It wants to attract attention to Christ, whom the Bible describes as

‘our peace’ (Eph. 2:14).’

Also of relevance in this connection are the jointly approved theses that refer to the Prince of Peace and the teachings and examples of Christ (Zagorsk 1971, thesis 4 on peace; Kiev 1977, thesis III on peace; Mikkeli 1986, thesis 1 on peace). Although Lutherans prefer to regard the Sermon on the Mount as *one manifestation of the natural law created by God*, with special importance placed on the ‘golden rule,’ “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you” (Matt. 7:12), *they do emphasize at the same time the love of Christ as proclaimed in that sermon*. In the Orthodox understanding, the Sermon on the Mount is *an expression of Christ’s state of mind, an ethical philosophy that supplements the law*. For the Orthodox side in our conversations in particular, the Sermon on the Mount is to be understood through the Gospel. Although these differences are no longer in evidence in the theses approved in Mikkeli in 1986, we were still able to rejoice on that occasion over the first three theses on peace based on our common faith.

It is reasonable to ask, however, what, in precise terms, our churches understand by the proposition in the thesis accepted in Turku in 1970 that peace with God is a prerequisite for efforts towards world peace. At that first meeting in our series of conversations Bishop Philaret stressed that Christians are to bear witness within the framework of *the order laid down by God’s Church to peace as a natural and essential human need. Again the points of departure are that we confess Christ to be our God and our Saviour, that God is a God of peace and that Christ is the Lord of Peace* (1 Cor. 14:33; 2 Thess. 3:16). Peace is a spiritual and ethical state of being of the human soul which is achieved by observance of Christ’s commandments, repentance and opening oneself up to the revitalizing grace of God. Peace and Christian love are inseparable, and the source of that love is the Prince of Peace. Peace may be gained through an active struggle against evil and wrongdoing, and by *forcing oneself to live in accordance with the Gospel*. In Bishop Philaret’s opinion the peace that ensues from purity of heart is a powerful motive for loving one’s neighbour – as shown by the references to salt and light in the

Sermon on the Mount and the parable of the Good Samaritan (Matt. 5:13-14; Luke 10:30-37). The Orthodox delegates (e.g. Hieromonk Alexiy, Leningrad 1983) have been eager to quote in this connection the well-known dictum of St. Seraphim of Sarov, "Gain the spirit of peace and thousands around you will be saved."

The Lutheran participants appreciate that peace with God is a prerequisite for the efforts made by Christians on behalf of world peace in the sense that by justification and the forgiveness of sins through the redemption brought about by Christ, God has freed them from striving for a righteousness that is acceptable to God on the strength of their own deeds and efforts. For Christians the Gospel carries the good news that through faith they are at peace with God and their relationship with him has been fully restored. As we cannot attain righteousness before God by our own deeds, the Gospel of Christ frees believers from their human condition and gives them both a motive and the strength to act for the good of their fellow men and on behalf of peace.

7. The Church, mankind and the world

As Christ is our peace, our churches are responsible for keeping the issue of peace to the fore in various ways, *through their worship, their preaching of the Gospel and the prayers that we offer up for one another and for the secular authorities*, and for making every effort to preserve peace by *acting as churches and maintaining ecumenical relations*. The Orthodox delegation has emphasized that "peace" is *ontologically* characteristic of a church, as was evident from the paper presented by Bishop Philaret at the Turku meeting in 1970, for example, in which he based his argument on the status of the Church as the body of Christ and on the parable of the vine and its branches (pp. 2-3). The dictum of St. Seraphim of Sarov does not apply only to Christians as individuals but is of significance for mankind in general and the whole world. It is also evident from papers presented by various Orthodox participants (Bishop Philaret, Hieromonk Feofan, Archbishop Vladimir, Professor A. I.

Osipov and Dean Vitali Borovoi) that the peace of Christ is regarded as yeast that leavens the churches, whole societies, the human race and the whole external world. As Borovoi noted in his paper at Kiev in 1977, peace is a force that can change the world: the kingdom of the world is to become the Kingdom of God. This is a matter of the transfiguration of the world (Philaret 1970). The peace of Christ is a prerequisite for the leavening of the cosmos when God sets out to glorify it, and it is also a part of the role of the Gospel as a prerequisite for peace that the peace of Christ is firmly anchored in the Church when it is to be communicated to the world. *When evaluating the theological contributions made by these conversations to date, attention definitely needs to be paid to the fact that in the view of Orthodox Christians, the concept of peace – along with certain other concepts – lies at the centre of Orthodox theology.*

Further support for this assertion may be obtained from the paper presented by Hieromonk Feofan at the 1980 conversations in Turku, when he proposed that the Church accomplishes its mission under the influence of two forces, a divine force, the grace of the Holy Spirit, and a human force, the proclamation of the Gospel and the ethical norms contained in it that are manifested in human life. The Church is the Kingdom of God on earth, but this kingdom encompasses far more than just the life of the Church, for it includes truth and goodness in all the forms in which they appear in human life. Feofan emphasized that the world outside the gates of the Church is renewing itself constantly for good, although by no means in a mystical way or one that manifests the grace of God. This is possible because *even after the Fall human nature possesses many features of the everlasting image of God that combine to express the innate human striving for fulfilment* (p. 13). Even though the Kingdom of God encompasses much in the way of truth and goodness that lies outside the life of the Church, the transfiguration of the world is essentially connected with personal salvation. Love for God, expressed in the form of meditation and Christian acts, is involved in the transfiguration of the world, a process in which man, in accordance with God's purposes, acts in collaboration with Him.

The purpose of the incarnation that took place in the person of Jesus Christ is to link the reality of man to the reality of God (pp. 2, 4, 7).

The above is also connected in terms of substance with the distinction made by Bishop Philaret in Turku in 1970 between the *church organism* and the *human church organism* and his statement regarding the spiritual and moral missions of the Church in the latter sense. The innate human capacity for good works can, in his opinion, be interpreted in the light of the *lógos spermatikós* doctrine as being consistent with an influence radiating out into the world from the Church of Christ. The Church must take note of everything that leads to divisions within the world and act in order to eliminate everything that is evil from humanity (cf. Kiev 1995, thesis 6 on peace: there is no room for national conflicts in the Church).

In his paper at the 1974 conversations at Järvenpää, Archbishop Vladimir pursued the same lines of thought. The sad facts in the history of mankind serve as reminders of the human responsibilities for peace, cosmic order and the universe. Quoting Vladimir Lossky, he emphasizes that the universe cannot save man but the universe can be saved through man's intervention. The world follows mankind, because it is human in nature, as it were, acquiring its hypostatic significance in man. Anthropocosmic unity is achieved when the image of man is united with its archetype, the image of God. Christians constitute the word, the *lógos*, by which the world expresses itself, and it is precisely in this capacity that Christians become responsible for whether that *lógos* is to utter prayers or blasphemies (pp. 2-3). Christians' responsibility for the world is defined in terms of the above anthropocosmic understanding of reality. The prerequisites are Christ and the Church, the Body of Christ, and it is a question of how well Christians succeed in leavening the world. In the last resort the *logos spermatikós* doctrine is also implicated: the *lógos* is manifested in the innate strivings for good that are undertaken by man, created as he is in the image of God. In this sense observance of the question of peace is deeply rooted in the fundamental truths of the Orthodox Church regarding faith and reality. Peace is a profoundly theological issue as far as the

Church is concerned – as was indeed acknowledged at the outset in our conversations.

The view of the relation between the Church and the world espoused by the Lutheran delegates similarly gains its orientation from the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, i.e. from God's purposes with regard to creation, the world, the salvation of man and the Church. God has created the world, and those who believe in Christ await His second coming, the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. There is one Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, but in the Lutheran view God rules the world and the Church in different ways: we speak of an earthly regimen and a spiritual regimen. Legal earthly rulers are in the service of God's government of the world, while the spiritual regimen, the (united) Church, is the instrument by which God governs mankind, through the word and the sacraments. The Church prays for the earthly powers and obeys them and their laws, provided they do not lead to sinful acts (Augsburg Confession XVI,6-7).

8. The Church, the State and men of good will

Given that *in the Orthodox understanding* the *lógos*, in the form of seeds, is to be encountered outside the Church and the image of God is manifested in man's strivings for good, all things in the world that are consistent with the Church's leavening mission are to be regarded as good. It has been emphasized in these conversations in various connections, papers and theses (e.g. the eighth thesis approved at Turku in 1970) that it is necessary to collaborate with people of good will whether active in society in general or in government. The Church should be allowed to exercise influence so that justice and other things that are conducive to peace within society come to occupy the place that they deserve in the government of the state, as elsewhere. Religious freedom should be guaranteed, and human rights that are in accordance with the beliefs and identity of the Orthodox Church and are based on the notion of man as created in the image of God are to be protected. Love for one's fatherland

should be supported, but excessive patriotism should be restrained. The state and society have different functions from the Church, the state being based on a certain national and cultural identity, whereas the Church is universal, having a mission that is global in character. The power that rests with the authorities in a state is derived from God, and anyone who opposes those authorities is rebelling against the order established by God (Rom. 13:1-2). As the purpose of the state is different from that of the Church, it cannot usurp duties that belong to the Church of Christ for itself. The State and the Church act *symphonically*, in concert, in the world order prescribed by the Triune God. The expression *Pantocrator*, 'the Almighty', is frequently used of God and of Christ (e.g. Rev. 1:4,8; 21:22) and it is said of Christ in particular that he rules over the kings of this earth in power and glory now and for ever (Rev. 1:5-6). This implies that a state cannot arbitrarily restrict the Church's actions for purposes that serve the ends of this *symphony*.

In the Lutheran understanding, which emphasizes the Decalogue and the natural law written into the heart of man by God, the state has duties prescribed to it in parallel with the Church; it is required, for instance, to ensure that the Church possesses the freedom to act in according with its confession and that human rights that are consistent with God's fundamental purpose for mankind and with natural law and the Decalogue, such as freedom of religion, are protected. The Church requires external freedom in order to accomplish its mission of proclaiming the Gospel, and it has a prophetic task of drawing attention to matters that affect the implementation of justice and peace in the world and in every individual state and society. God is the Almighty for Lutherans as well, with power over the earthly and spiritual domains mediated by the law that He has laid down and the word and sacraments disseminated by the Church. Christ has been given all power in heaven and on earth, over everything visible and invisible (Matt. 28:18).

In spite of the above differences in emphasis arising from our churches' traditions, we have, *in accordance with the principles*

that made it possible for us to have the Bible and the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed in common, been able to approve the following theses as outcomes of our theological discussions:

“The work for the promoting of peace originates in the Holy Bible. God created the world, which was meant to be one and in which people were meant to be brothers and sisters. In becoming man, Christ gave his followers the task of demonstrating love and brotherhood (John 13:34-35). Therefore the work for the promoting of peace means the defence of justice and human dignity” (Leningrad 1983, thesis on peace 11).

“It is the Church’s task to contribute to a growth in understanding between different opinions, generations and peoples. In doing this, the Church turns to its own members and also to those who in cooperation with the Church seek the same goals for mankind” (Leningrad 1983, thesis on peace 13).

“From the very beginning, the Church has understood itself as God’s people, which consists of several nations. All nations are called to join the people of God in Christ. Christianity has crossed, and still crosses, ethnic, cultural and politico-social boundaries. Therefore, it is not in the nature of the Church to support hostility or patriotism of any kind” (Kiev 1995, thesis on peace 3).

“The Church invites all nations to participate in the realization of love and justice that are in accordance with God’s will. One part of this is the abandonment of selfish interests, and the willingness to act towards other nations and ethnic groups according to the ‘do to others as you would have them do to you’ principle (Matt. 7:12). In wartime and during other crises, the Church is called on to be particularly watchful, so that it cannot be used as an instrument of self-serving nationalistic aspirations by anyone (Kiev 1995, thesis on peace 8).

“Churches, religious communities and the state have points of contact in all societies and political systems, and they have common interests relevant to citizens. When the state enacts human rights in a civil society, it must not only passively allow freedom of religion (“negative religious freedom”) but also actively promote

the rights of citizens to exercise their religion (“positive religious freedom”) and put these rights into practice. In this sense laws on religious freedom have a dual purpose: to ensure opportunities to practice religion and at the same time to prevent the abuse of religious freedom (Lappeenranta 1998, thesis 8).

The church lives in a constant condition of eschatological tension (Rom. 8:24-27; 1 Cor. 13:12; 2 Cor. 5:7) that characterizes its relationship with the state and society. The church and the state are different by nature, and this means they have different tasks. The church fulfils God’s will in the world, bound to time and place, always in a specific state and society. It has a spiritual task, but its message has important social implications as well. Despite its social dimension, however, the church must not participate in political activities that contradict its spiritual task. In fulfilling its task the church is on the one hand subject to the governing authorities (Rom. 13:1-2) and constantly praying that they will act according to God’s will (1 Tim. 2:1-4), but on the other it always has a duty to be critical of the authorities and of society (Acts 4:19, 5:29) (Lappeenranta 1998, thesis 9).

In arranging church-state relations in both countries it is necessary to take into account the established cultural, religious and social realities in each... The parties to these theological discussions express their conviction that the model of positive relations between the church and the state and its society that is typical of many European countries must be strengthened in our own countries. This model combines loyalty to the principles of religious freedom with broad cooperation between the state, society and the churches (Lappeenranta 1998, thesis 10).

9. The Church and Creation

The parties to the conversations in Turku in 1980 stated jointly in their Communiqué that “The participants in the conversations have again humbly and with thankfulness been able to feel that the Holy Spirit through his presence has guided the course of the

conversations. The delegates concluded their work by thanking God in a spirit of faith, hope and love” (see also the final paragraphs of the communiqués from Järvenpää 1992 and Lappeenranta 1998). At the third meeting, in Järvenpää in 1974, the delegates could not part without recording in their Communiqué that “The participants in the conversations concluded their work with prayer and thanksgiving to the Lord and Saviour, the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ,” in spite of the fact that they had noted immediately before that “Participants in the conversations offer thanks to God for His great love, which made possible this fraternal and warm-hearted meeting, and furthermore, that He blessed our common work.”

It is evident from these examples that peace is *a crucial theological issue* in the statements of opinion made by both of our churches, and that the question of peace and creation cannot be approached without placing it in the context of the fundamental truths lying behind our confessions. These are proclaimed in the Bible when it says “God is love” (1 John 4:8).

Our joint Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed giving expression to the acts of the Triune God begins with the words “We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.” The relation between God and the world, like that between God and man is always one between the Triune God and the whole of creation, the world and the human race, since the world and the human race are created by God. Our representatives at the Pyhtitsa conversations had this to say in the first appendix to their communiqué: “The created world is the outcome of a joint and indivisible act by the three persons of God ... The whole work of creation is a demonstration of God’s unbounded love and goodness (Ps. 8, Ps. 19, Ps. 74:12-17, Ps. 104; theses 1-2). God created man in His own image, but the biblical account of Paradise (Gen. 3:1-24) reminds us that the image of God that was in man came to be distorted by sin (thesis 10). Our Lord Jesus Christ nevertheless “came down from heaven for us men and for our salvation” (Nicene Creed) and gave the one Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church the mission of baptising and teaching (Matt.

28:18-20; Kiev 1995, first thesis on missions). The purpose of the Triune God is to ensure the salvation of the world, mankind and the whole of creation (Kiev 1995, third thesis on missions). One of the best-loved passages in the Bible for our negotiators has been Romans 8, particularly verses 18-25 (see Turku 1980, first thesis on peace; Pyhtitsa 1989, first appendix to the communiqué, thesis 12; Lappeenranta 1998, theses 4 and 9), which is concerned with the hope that creation will be set free from the slavery of mortality to enjoy the glory and freedom of the children of God. The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed reminds us of the resurrection of the dead, the life of the world to come and the Kingdom of Christ which shall have no end. On that matter we share the same views and the same hope. We are looking forward to the life of the world to come, when Christ will return in glory and make everything new (Rev. ch. 21-22). God's original ideas in creation will come true and the world will attain its final fulfilment as His plans are realised (Turku 1980, theses 1 and 2 on peace).

God has created mankind out of one ancestor to inhabit the whole earth. The peoples will have a role of their own in God's plan for the world (Acts 17:26; Turku 1980, thesis 10 on peace), but there will be no room for conflicts between the nations within the Church, the body of Christ (Kiev 1995, 6). Among the people of God, in Christ and His Church (Kiev 1995, thesis 2 on missions), all will be one (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11; Kiev 1995, thesis 2 on peace). The fact that it is catholic (universal) means that the Church is called to be a symbol of the unity of mankind (Turku 1980, thesis 6 on peace).

The Church is in a crucial position as the world moves towards its eschatological goal (Lappeenranta 1998, thesis 4). Amidst the reality of sin and in the prevailing atmosphere of greed and self-interest, the Church on earth will continue its struggle on behalf of nature and the created world until Christ's second coming, by proclaiming the Gospel and the law of God (Pyhtitsa 1989, second appendix to the communiqué, thesis 7).

On the question of the transformation of man and the world, *the Orthodox delegations* represent a view that involves a

gradual process of *theosis* (deification) and a transfiguration of the world, while *the Lutherans' view* stresses a single realization of God's will that creates everything anew. The difference is again one of emphasis, as both parties are of the opinion that the Triune God is constantly working to transform man and the world in accordance with His will.

10. Final evaluation

We have stated emphatically in numerous communiqués from Turku 1970 onwards that our conversations are *useful because they provide us with a better understanding of each other's views*. Evaluated from this perspective they may be said *to have fulfilled their purpose as far as the themes selected up to now are concerned*. Although the theological context to which we have applied them may have yielded some differences, the principal frameworks of our discussions, the Bible and the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, have shown the second themes to have been *consistently agreed upon by both sides*. *Our thoughts have run in very much the same directions* as far as the basic theological approaches to the matters under discussion have been concerned. Our representatives at Järvenpää in 1974 were also of the opinion that the conversations that had taken place up to that point had brought our churches and peoples closer together in a manner that was likely to promote work for peace, and later meetings have confirmed this trend. On the strength of being churches and being engaged in these conversations in an ecumenical spirit, *we have learned not only to appreciate each other's arguments regarding the theology of peace but also to promote the achievement of peace*. *In addition, we have created favourable conditions for continued close interaction between our two churches*.

It is indeed the case, as Metropolitan Vladimir emphasized, that there is more that we have in common than that divides us. With the continuation of our conversations in mind, more attention should perhaps be paid to the following topics than has been the case in connection with the second themes chosen so far:

- the relation between the Old and New Testaments in socio-ethical argumentation,
- the significance of the Eucharist for the practical activities of the Church,
- the market economy and neoliberalism as socio-ethical challenges
- tomorrow's welfare state as an ethical issue, and
- the ethical challenges associated with modern biotechnology.

Rev. Irja Askola

A comment on the evaluation of themes in social ethics from the viewpoint of the ecumenical movement

In his evaluation of the work of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) over the period of nearly forty years of its existence presented at its general assembly in 1992, Patriarch Alexy placed especial emphasis on the significance of the ecumenical movement in connection with all the post-war reconstruction work undertaken in Europe and reiterated the commitment of his own church to ecumenical collaboration: "It is the duty of the ecumenical movement and every individual church to see as their principal objective the strengthening of communion between Christians and participation in solving the common problems afflicting our continent on the basis of common Christian witness and mutual solidarity." It is interesting that both sides in the present conversations, the Russian Orthodox Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, have been actively engaged in CEC activities and are listed in the category of 'active member churches'. It is thus understandable that the themes in the field of social ethics that are raised in these bilateral discussions should reflect the pan-European ecumenical agenda. According to Patriarch Alexy's detailed review, all the

themes raised in these bilateral Russian-Finnish conversations have been to the fore in the work of the CEC, while conversely, of course, it can be concluded that the CEC's ecumenical agenda has reflected the realities of its member churches and not the 'perspectives of the central office in Geneva'.

The doctrinal conversations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland are very well known in ecumenical circles and are usually noted with a degree of approbation. Those interested in social ethics perceive in them a symbolic value that speaks out for peace and collaboration: two neighbouring countries with a recent history of bitter warfare sitting down together at the negotiating table, joining in a common programme of church services, confronting each other in a spirit of gracious hospitality and reporting their findings in the form of public communiqués. In the terms of our ecumenical vocabulary these conversations are not consigned to the category of 'silent diplomacy', even though there will almost certainly have been some elements of this unofficially.

Concerning the manner in which the negotiations have been carried through, it is possible to distinguish a number of features of a successful ecumenical dialogue. They operate over an extended time-scale and they have an accepted place in the structure of each of the participating churches, so that they have not come to an end with changes in the leadership or occupants of high offices in the churches, for example, even though personality has often been of importance (e.g. the Russians' use of the term *starets* ('father confessor') for Archbishop Simojoki). In this respect, too, the familiar tension that exists in the ecumenical movement is in evidence here, in that the charisma attached to individual people and the bearing capacity of the official structures can yield results when both are present in the right balance. Another familiar feature of ecumenical relations that has also become a part of these conversations is abundant hospitality. This is an element that has gained a new emphasis within the ecumenical movement as the younger generation has begun to question it, since new defenders

of the sharing of food and drink together have emerged who lay emphasis on the spiritual dimension of this custom and thereby on the impossibility of abandoning it in the context of ecumenical encounters. It is true that efficiency in management and the culture of a constantly busy life have presented a certain threat to this ancient ecumenical tradition, but it is still quite evident that shared worship is an integral part of inter-church encounters, for it is in this way that the parties involved grow into a single community. Common worship is often mentioned as an important success factor in ecumenical negotiations.

The comments put forward by the ecumenical movement naturally tell us something of the challenge facing it at the present moment, that of the methodology of ecumenical encounters. The language skills and other multicultural assets that the younger generation possesses, information technology and the strengthened and liberated communication possibilities available in a changed Europe have brought ecumenical meetings face to face with serious and mutually incompatible needs for revising their methods. This means that the analysis of “successful” ecumenical dialogues has increased greatly in importance.

The compositions of the delegations to these Russian-Finnish doctrinal conversations convey a fairly precise impression of the value assigned to them by the two parties. It has been perceived within the ecumenical movement that both churches assign priority to these discussions and are prepared to use them as an instrument both for inter-church communication and for communication with their state authorities. Theology is seen as possessing a social dimension, above all through its themes that touch upon social ethics, and it is in connection with these themes that discussion has turned to the independence and integrity of the churches. The predominant opinion within the ecumenical movement nowadays is that the personalities who have made intercourse and ecumenical participation all over Europe possible during the post-war era have achieved something highly significant, and the Russian-Finnish conversations clearly come into that category.

In a more critical vein, one may be justified in pointing out that the commitment of the Lutheran Church in the 1970s to the struggle for justice, the promotion of peace and solidarity and the creation of a Nordic nuclear-free zone in collaboration with other citizens' organizations must have remained a very distant objective in the minds of many members of the church. On the other hand, the inclusion of these objectives in the theological negotiations may be seen as having laid the foundation for the Week of Responsibility and various statements made by bishops on matters of social ethics. In this sense the conversations have had a direct impact on the church's public image in Finland and on activities at the parish level. In the early days the conversations also had youth gatherings with theological seminars, student visits and mutual exchanges of observers attached to them, although admittedly as separate events, and this was again a matter of some ecumenical significance. For the Russians it was a unique opportunity for contacts with Lutheran young people in a western country and for the Finns it was an experience that helped to transform the image of enmity formed by the previous generation into genuine interaction between representatives of the new generation. It is also a matter of some note that the Roman Catholic Church has been represented by its bishop in these conversations, a fact that has been interpreted within the ecumenical organization as another example of personal charisma, as Bishop Verschuren was renowned for his ecumenical skills even at the time when relations between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches were by no means easy on a global level. The role of the Finnish Ecumenical Council in these conversations seems to have diminished in more recent times, however.

A great deal of effort has been put into preparing for the conversations, partly as a means of ensuring that the theological dialogue between the two churches carries undeniable weight. In the case of social ethics the treatment of the themes bears the stamp of the times in each instance, but if this arouses criticism, then it should also be borne in mind that themes in the sphere of social ethics always arise in a certain context and it is only in that context that they

can be discussed. In this sense the ecumenical movement has had to repent for the hindsight that it demonstrated in the early 1990s. In the case of the more recent preparatory discussions, however, one might very well ask – in so far as we accept the importance of social context for themes within social ethics – whether it would not be useful to include the social sciences and foreign policy as additional perspectives in the preparation process. It should also be noted that the Orthodox Church of Finland is not officially a party to these preparatory discussions. Negotiations in Finland between the Lutheran and Orthodox churches follow a quite distinct pattern of their own, and the Finnish-Russian conversations are carried on specifically between representatives of the majority churches.

The themes in the field of social ethics and the points of emphasis that emerge in their treatment reflect to a great extent the priorities assigned by the Conference of European Churches, except that the theme of peace, defined in a positive sense as security and justice and not merely as the absence of war, gains its place within a CSCE frame of reference. The CEC general assembly of 1967 had drawn attention to the need for a pan-European summit conference, and consequently there was a desire to support the Helsinki Declaration in various ways. The next general assembly, in 1979, then established a special ‘church human rights’ programme which was linked to support for the CSCE Helsinki accord. The human rights initiatives of both the CEC and the Russian-Finnish conversations have emphasized a collective approach rather than arguing for individual rights. They have condemned the arms race and nuclear war, employing a vocabulary that is common to the CEC, CSCE and the Russian-Finnish conversations, and they have looked on peace studies and education for peace as part of the churches’ mission, laying emphasis on cooperation with both ecumenical and secular actors. The Orle process inaugurated at the First Ecumenical Assembly in Basel in 1989 also placed ecological issues on the ecumenical agenda, and responsibility for the created world was among the themes of the conversations held at Pyhtitsa in the same year. Positive evaluations of the work of the ‘Brundtland

Committee' were put forward, at the same time as Gro Harlem Brundtland herself became a sought-after speaker in ecumenical circles, including Basel. The conversations during the 1990s reflect in a concrete form the work which the ecumenical organizations, particularly the CEC and the churches of Eastern Europe, were able to do (or were obliged to do) within a politically altered Europe. The legal status of churches and religious organizations had to be defined anew in many cases, laws on religious freedom had to be drawn up and terms, models and theological principles had to be sought for church-state relations. Specific mention was made of the CEC's social commission in the 1998 conversations. By this time the Brussels age had become a reality for the conversations, and the theme of reconciliation had been present in various forms in the Second European Ecumenical Assembly in 1997, to the extent that the healing of memories from the past and the strengthening of interactions in Europe in all ways and at all levels united the participants and left the EU representatives astonished at such a concrete experience of 'the Europe of the people'. This theme as such has not been reflected in the Russian-Finnish conversations following the Graz assembly, although some warnings have been issued regarding the risk of religion acting as a catalyst for nationalism. Is this theme of the Graz assembly still too close at hand as far as our peoples and relations with our neighbours are concerned?

Another thing that attracts one's attention when reviewing the socio-ethical themes in the doctrinal conversations in the light of the ecumenical movement is what topics or points of emphasis are missing. The Church's social work, the ethical principles behind aid work and the whole question of the Church's input into the construction of a civil society have been among the major themes in European ecumenical discussions since the early 1990s, and they have also been to the fore in Finnish Orthodox-Lutheran doctrinal discussions, and in the field of human rights the death penalty, abortion, a civilian alternative to military service and the rights of sexual minorities have proved extremely difficult topics to deal with,

even for the Council of Europe and the ecumenical organizations, but it is precisely in the confidential atmosphere of ecumenical discussions that results have been achieved that satisfy all parties. These questions have also required the formulation of concrete solutions when refining the legislation governing church-state relations and developing the role of the churches in upholding moral values in society. Minority rights and ethnic conflicts have not been mentioned at a concrete level in the conversations, even though, as well as appearing on the ecumenical agenda, they are familiar social realities for both of the churches concerned. Similarly the dialogue between religions is something that is awaiting discussion and becoming more urgent as time goes by, as it clearly belongs to the operating environment of both churches, and indeed to that of all the European churches. One powerful theme in the ecumenical movement over the period 1988–1998 was the position of women in society and related socio-ethical questions. Family violence, the abuse of women and the prostitution practised by Finnish men in the large cities of Russia are matters of practical concern for society and its members in both countries. The representatives on both sides have played an active role in looking for ways of approaching these difficult topics within the ecumenical movement, and the next social topic to be taken up in the Finnish Orthodox-Lutheran doctrinal discussions will be family violence.

Ecumenical dialogue is a part of the very existence of the churches, and is certainly not an activity that can be assigned different priorities according to the fluctuating needs of the day. A methodology has to be developed for such purposes, however, so that the discussions will retain their original significance and bear fruit. All actions that provide concrete examples and experiences regarding the destruction of images of enmity and the open recognition of differences are apt to promote peace within society and help the churches to take responsibility for the created world and all of its people. As Patriarch Alexy pointed out at the Second Ecumenical Assembly in 1997, precisely because the word 'ecumenical' had come to mean for many majority Christians a

dangerous form of activity that had to be opposed, we should not preach the gospel of reconciliation only between nations but for the sake of credibility we should practise peace and accommodation among all Christians.

Bishop Voitto Huotari

The future of the doctrinal conversations

1. Bilateral goals of our dialogue

The papers presented here and the related discussions have given a fairly comprehensive picture of the dialogues held between our two sides over more than 30 years, and it has become clear that both the religious and the social situations in our two countries are quite different now from what they were initially. Our churches have large numbers of bilateral contacts of various kinds, involving church leaders, bishops, other workers and parishioners, international contacts between churches have increased greatly in many directions, and water is flowing in abundance in the ecumenical channel. This situation in which our conversations are by no means unique in the field of inter-church relations gives us an opportunity to re-examine their goals. We must bear in mind, however, that if there were to be a shortage of water in the channel of doctrinal discussions in the future, this would be to the detriment of the ecumenical stream and would mean impoverishment of the other interaction channels as well.

Our mutual understanding in the fields of the life and doctrines of the Church has increased as a result of the work we

have already accomplished, but it is clear that we need to go on learning from each other. It is only by increasing our mutual understanding that we can advance on the road towards unanimity. Patriarch Pimen once said that the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland “is Orthodox in character”, which may be taken to refer to its open-handed desire for cooperation and the understanding that it has gained through these encounters. Our Lutheranism will not diminish even though we may learn more about Orthodoxy, but we may come to see Jesus Christ and His will as the common foundation of our faith and our own special characteristics in a clearer light.

The existence of multi-centred dialogues does not render bilateral dialogues unnecessary, as these latter provide opportunities for going more deeply into issues of content. Also, with the constant increase in encounters with others, we are being called upon repeatedly to express our own beliefs, a situation for which we have received good training through the present series of dialogues.

We have become accustomed in this way to practising the theology of the Church in a spirit of prayer, and this has added an important dimension to our academic theological tradition. Theological research in our country and world-wide has gained a fairly extensive and diverse body of content by virtue of these conversations, and there is no reason why we should not continue to work together to search for and provide new material and inspiration for theology.

Encounters between Orthodox and Lutheran Christians are still complicated by prejudices, and when church leaders and theologians meet together to look for a better mutual understanding, forgetting their prejudices, it encourages the members of our churches to do the same, and it also helps to dispel the prejudices that exist between our nations. This has been the case earlier as a result of our negotiations, and the same goal continues to be relevant today.

2. A broader ecumenical significance

These conversations are part of the ecumenical movement, the eventual goal of which is visible unity. In fact, we have already been able to contribute to that movement, as our findings and experiences have been made use of in other dialogues and multi-centre encounters. Among other things, they have helped to give rise to an international Orthodox-Lutheran dialogue, national dialogues have arisen on the same model, and we have provided an example of open, direct encounter between Eastern and Western churches. Since history has dictated that we should be neighbours, our task is to acquire more and more experiences of encounters between our churches and pass them on to others. At a time when the ecumenical movement is faced with problems and difficulties, we who have achieved a good ecumenical process in the midst of difficulties may be able to help and encourage the ecumenical movement by telling about this process, continuing it and revising it. It is badly in need of encouraging examples at the present time.

Our conversations have sometimes dealt with subjects that have been topical in the World Council of Churches at the time, and we can continue to do this if we wish, but it would be even better if we were to choose our own subjects, issues that we feel to be important, rather than simply providing additional support from the sidelines for what is going on elsewhere.

3. Doctrinal questions

Archbishop Martti Simojoki mentioned at one point that he had suggested doctrinal discussions between our two churches so that the meetings would not become a diplomatic forum concentrating on church politics. His hope was that our churches should discuss “the secrets of our holy faith”. It may be possible in the future to concentrate still more clearly on theological, i.e. doctrinal discussions, and thereby strengthen the faith of our churches in a

spirit of prayer.

Both the Russian Orthodox Church and the Lutheran Church of Finland have laid emphasis on the importance of 'Faith and Order' and doctrinal issues in general for the ecumenical movement. In order to be convincing, we have, therefore, to give pride of place to doctrinal questions in our own discussions. The many topical issues that exist tend nowadays to leave too little room for considering the content of our faith, so that these conversations have a significant role in ensuring that such matters are kept to the fore.

Numerous topics for future discussion have been put forward in earlier papers presented here, and these should all be borne in mind. I will pick out a few such subjects according to my own predilections.

- Baptism. This is the crucial sacrament as far as ecumenical contacts are concerned. We all accept the notion of baptism in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit according to Jesus' commandment, but what implications does it have for us? How is baptism related to the other gifts required for our salvation? Another topic that is bound up with baptism is proselytism.
- The grace of God and human free will. Synergism has been seen as a bone of contention between the Lutheran and Orthodox churches. Would it be possible to reach unanimity in this matter?
- Prayer. This is a topic that brings us to the heart of human communion with God and the spiritual life of the Church. How do our churches understand it and what forms do our traditions see in it? Common prayer is something that is still seeking forms of its own within the ecumenical movement. What experiences have arisen out of our encounters that shed light on collective prayer and the way in which we should understand it?

Our way of working has been a search for convergence, so that the

result in each instance is a statement of the common ground in our doctrines. As a consequence of a thousand years of separation, it is often the case that linguistic expressions and thought patterns are different even when the actual substance is the same, and thus phrasing things in a common language can help us to understand them. Basically, however, it is differences in emphasis that have made our churches what they are, and it should be our task to search for unanimity rather than underlining differences.

The intention in the case of this meeting is to build up our future discussions on the foundation laid in the earlier ones. It is the ensuring of continuity that makes it rational and useful to continue. Therefore, since we have jointly accepted the Bible and the Nicene Creed as common bases for our argumentation, we do not need to go to the lengths of rediscovering these.

4. The field of social ethics

Although peace was a general heading in our discussions regarding social ethics at an early stage in the dialogues, such themes have otherwise been dealt with in a somewhat fragmentary manner, largely in response to topical issues of the day. We cannot evade discussions of topic social and ethical themes in the future, either, especially since the implementation of Christian values in our modern society is a matter of concern for all of us, and since it is advantageous for their discussion that the contemporary situation should be allowed to exercise more influence than in the case of doctrinal matters, it will be necessary to accept a certain degree of fragmentation.

Again bearing in mind suggestions put forward earlier, I would venture to mention here just a few choices of my own:

- **The principles of social ethics.** One particular purpose of our dialogues is to employ reciprocal comparisons to construct a theological basis for our churches' teachings with regard to social ethics and the influence that they are able to exercise within society at large.

- **Social work.** Our Saviour instructed His followers to take care of the poor at all times. How do we understand the social mission of the Church today?
- **The family.** Many of the topics involved in our churches' ethical teachings and many of the problems afflicting our modern society are reflected at the level of the family. This should lead us to examine issues such as marriage, sexual questions, the religious and educational roles of the family, the social significance of the family etc.
- **Bioethics.** How do our churches reconcile the opportunities offered by our modern societies with their respect for human life?

5. Developing the form of our dialogues

- 1) The cycle of church services and prayer is the context in which we operate, implementing these according to our distinct traditions but at the same time providing room for each other's prayers.
- 2) As there are other openings for meetings and contacts between our churches, the formalities of our conversations could be eased somewhat and greater depth could be given to the theological aspects.
- 3) The content of our doctrines should form the nucleus and principal focus of our discussions.
- 4) Questions of social ethics should be approached from the perspective of their theological foundations.
- 5) The dialogues should also include brief considerations of current issues affecting our two churches.
- 6) A secretariat should be set up to take responsibility for ongoing work in the intervals between meetings, including the preparation of the coming themes on both sides, so that we have material ready at the beginning of a meeting that has been prepared in the interim and we can start

discussing it straight away. The secretariat should consist of two members from each church.

- 7) Information on the dialogues and their findings should be circulated by means of publications in Finnish and Russian and efforts should be made to communicate them to other churches, ecumenical bodies and researchers through international contacts.
- 8) More emphasis should be placed on the reception afforded to the results of the dialogues within the Russian Orthodox Church and the Lutheran Church of Finland and steps should be taken to improve the conditions and frameworks for this.

