Kouvola 1996 & Joensuu 1999

The Fifth and Sixth Theological Discussions
between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
and the Orthodox Church of Finland

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Foreword

Bilateral theological dialogue between the two folk churches of Finland, the Evangelical Lutheran and the Orthodox Church, began in 1989 following the initiative of Archbishop John Vikström (b. 1931).[1] Metropolitan Johannes (1923-2010), who was the Orthodox chair

1 Further information regarding these dialogues is available in the theological bulletin Reseptio 1/2009 of the department for international relations of the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, in the articles of Pekka Metso: *Evaluation on the Dialogue between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Orthodox Church of Finland* (p. 188-200) and Kalevi Toiviainen: *The Discussions between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Finnish Orthodox Church, 1989-2007*. The bulletin is available in pdf form on the website:
http://sakasti.evl.fi/sakasti.nsf/0/10FE7C6FC73BEDC2C22576F2004102B3/$FILE/Reseptio1_2009.pdf

of the dialogue 1989-2001, was also an important figure in the beginning. Before this dialogue, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland had already undertaken theological discussions with the Russian Orthodox Church since 1970.

The national Finnish dialogue takes place in a context where two churches live in the same society but in different ecclesiological traditions. However, they have been mutually enriched during the thousand years of coexistence of the Eastern and Western Church tradition in Finland. An especially cordial ecumenical relationship between these churches has developed after the Second World War. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland is a majority church with 78 % of the population as its members and the Orthodox Church a minority church with its members comprising 1,1 % of the population.

The theological dialogue between these two churches has been characterized by three aims: 1) to deepen mutual knowledge and learn from the other tradition, 2) to eliminate misunderstandings and 3) to support fellowship and unity.

The most important results of the dialogue are firstly in the pastoral sphere, dealing with intermarriage and the practical solutions suggested to support ecumenical marriages. Secondly, the two churches have also promoted common witness on contemporary domestic issues. Thirdly, regarding Lutheran-Orthodox ecumenism and ecumenical theology in general, an interesting dialogue meeting took place in 2001 concerning the prerequisites for achieving visible unity of the Church and the one

Eucharist as the goal of the ecumenical movement.

In the discussions in 1996 the themes were "The universal priesthood" and "Work, unemployment and human dignity". Addressing universal priesthood serves the understanding of the Church as community of believers with their vocations in the service of the body of Christ and the essential interaction between the universal priesthood and the ministry of the clergy within the church. The social-ethical theme of "Work, unemployment and human dignity" has as its background the deep recession suffered in Finland in the beginning of the 1990's and the pastoral, ethical and theological means of coping with the situation. The basis of personal dignity is understood by both churches as the creation of human beings in the image of God. In times of rapid change the churches can give communally-oriented support to people.

In the 1999 discussions the topics were "Sacraments and sacred rites" and "Churches – hope of the world". The Orthodox Church is especially famous for its mysteries and sacramental orientation, but the sacraments have a fundamental role in the Lutheran tradition as well. Parallels in the understanding of faith can be found between the Orthodox concept *theosis* and the Lutheran notion of Christ's real presence in faith. The "churches as hope of the world" is a theme which arose from the contemporary experience of powerlessness, alienation and exclusion at the threshold of the new millennium. The faith in the goodness of God as Creator of the universe and the message of eternity, which has implications also for the present day, is shared by both churches. The discussions have helped to strengthen their fellowship and

the aim of Christian unity and supported them so that they might better carry out Christian witness with word and deed and meet the everyday reality of people today.

Tomi Karttunen
Executive Secretary for Theology
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Kouvola 1996

The Fifth Theological Discussions between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Orthodox Church of Finland, 1996

Communiqué

The Fifth Theological Discussions between delegations from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Orthodox Church of Finland were held at Puhjonranta in Kouvola on 12th-13th March 1996, hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. The Lut-

heran delegation was led by the Rt. Rev. Voitto Huotari, Bishop of Mikkeli, and the other members were Rev. Dr. Juhani Forsberg, Executive Secretary for Theology to the Church Council's Department for International Relations, Rev. Canon Matti Järveläinen, Rev. Dr. Hannu T. Kamppuri and Acting Professor Dr. Eeva Martikainen. The head of the Orthodox delegation was Archbishop Johannes and the other members were Bishop Ambrosius of Joensuu, Fr. Jarmo Hakkarainen, senior assistant in theology at the University of Joensuu, Fr. Heikki Huttunen, and Fr. Olavi Merras. Also present as observers were Fr. Teemu Sippo of the Roman Catholic Church in Finland and Jan Edström of Finlands Svenska Baptistmission, General Secretary of the Finnish Ecumenical Council.

The speakers at the opening session were Bishop Huotari and Archbishop John. Bishop Huotari reminded delegates that the aim of the discussions, as indeed of the ecumenical movement as a whole, could be summed up in the Greek word *koinonia*, meaning 'community, unity, participation, sharing, partnership and solidarity'. The churches were engaged in an attempt to deepen and broaden their unity by meeting to discuss doctrinal topics of mutual interest and to pray together. In his reply, Archbishop John noted that the fashionable word 'new' no longer necessarily meant anything that was more advanced or better than before. We are living in an age when people are searching for something more permanent and for the values that have been left behind. The church should delve deeper into its own tradition and be ready to present the values that it regards as important clearly and simply for the benefit of others.

In the course of the meeting the delegates took part in an ecumenical evening held at the Lutheran Church in Kouvola and attended Matins at the city's Orthodox Church. The actual discussions centred upon two topics: **Universal Priesthood**, the subject of papers presented by Archbishop Johannes[2] and Rev. Juhani Forsberg, and **Work, Unemployment and Human Dignity**, on which papers were presented by Rev. Heikki Huttunen and Rev. Canon Matti Järveläinen.

Universal Priesthood

The churches share the view that all those who are baptized into the church of Christ and believe in Him are members of the 'royal priesthood' (1 Peter 2:5,9). The Orthodox Church has the added requirement of chrismation. For God's people this priesthood implies participation in the body of Christ and in his triune priestly, royal and prophetic ministry.

Universal priesthood means offering oneself up as 'a sacrifice acceptable to God' (Rom. 12:1). Participation in the Eucharist calls us to make a sacrifice of thanksgiving which is expressed in practical deeds and acts of service to others performed in a spirit of love, while membership of the priesthood of Christ should lead us to pray for each other and engage in spiritual teaching and mutual pastoral care. The churches also wish to emphasize the significance of the universal priesthood in Christians' everyday lives, family life and social duties.

2 The paper of Archbishop Johannes is missing from the archive.

At this time of ideological and social change one function of the universal priesthood should be to lay emphasis on justice and equality. Faced as we are with integration and the decline in the importance of national states within Europe on the one hand and the rise of new national states on the other, Christians have a particular responsibility for ensuring that values that protect human life remain to the fore among society's priorities.

Although all Christians share in the universal priesthood, i.e. in the word and the sacraments, not everyone can serve the church in the ministry of priest. This is not a question of a difference in essence between universal priesthood and the ministry of priest but of a difference in functions. There should be constant interaction between the universal priesthood and the ministry of the clergy within the church.

The churches regard it as one of their common tasks to intensify their teaching of the content and aims of universal priesthood to their members.

Work, Unemployment and Human Dignity

The churches are agreed on the principle that man was created in the image of God, and thus all human beings have an inherent value or dignity that they retain regardless of their achievements or external successes or failures in their lives. This notion of human dignity grounded in the act of creation is part of the essence of the church itself. The church is a 'place for being', where people are not assessed on the basis of their achieve-

ments. It is a place for meeting with and praising God, and people should have the opportunity there to find rest, renewal and new creative inspiration.

The churches are able to provide people with this kind of community support at a time when socioeconomic structures and those that determine the nature of people's work are undergoing change. People's personalities, creativity and sense of initiative are severely tested at times of alteration in the traditional community structures, but the churches can support the creation of new community structures that will be of help to people when they have to resort to temporary jobs and find themselves permanently out of work.

Although the churches cannot have a political programme of their own for resolving problems connected with work and unemployment, they can require that emphasis should be laid on achieving a more even distribution of work and on the fact that work is only one aspect of realizing oneself as a person. People should not be valued in terms of the economic benefit generated by their work, but instead greater depth should be given to the discussion of the aims of the nation's economy by taking the issue of human life and the natural world, and the connection between the two, more seriously.

It is essential to achieve some alteration in the rigid structures that control people's working lives. People should have the opportunity to give up some of their excessive work and additional benefits in favour of others who cannot make ends meet. It is only then that it will be possible to understand work more as a manifestation of creativity and service to others. Understood in a po-

sitive sense, work implies the paying of attention to each individual as 'a whole person'.

It was decided to continue the discussions in winter 1998, on the topics of **The Sacraments and Divine Services** and **The Churches – the Hope of the World**.

Kouvola, 14.3.1996

Rev. Dr. Juhani Forsberg

The Universal Priesthood

1. Terminology

The second topic chosen for our discussions, the Universal Priesthood, refers to the traditional concept known in Latin as *sacerdotium universale* (Germ. *allgemeines Priestertum*). This can easily give the impression, however, that the priesthood is in some way universal to all human beings by virtue of their creation, which is not the case, but rather it is universal to all members of the Church by virtue of their baptism. Thus a preferable expression would be 'the universal/general/ common priesthood of the faithful' (*sacerdotium universale/commune fidelium*). This is also recommended usage in the Roman Catholic Church following the Second Vatican Council, although it had still not become firmly establis-

hed when preparations were being made for the council or during the council itself (Thea Aulo, *Signum Dei vivi.* STKS 96. Helsinki 1975, pp. 43-53).

This common priesthood is by nature a sacrificial priesthood (*sacerdotium*) as distinct from a priesthood of ministry (*ministerium*, or as the Second Vatican Council puts it, *sacerdotium ministeriale seu hierarchicum*). Although it is difficult in our vernacular languages to differentiate terminologically between the common priesthood of the faithful and the priesthood as a specific ecclesiastical office, the distinction in Latin between *sacerdotium* and *ministerium* is a reasonably clear and applicable one from a Lutheran viewpoint.

A further term that is used side by side with the common priesthood and partly overlapping with it is that of a layman (Gk. *laikos*, Lat. *laicus*), but fortunately it is not necessary to fall back on this easily misinterpreted term in order to capture the content of the common priesthood as such.

2. The biblical priesthood: a common sacrificial priesthood

The Old Testament depicts the people with whom God made his covenant as a priestly nation: "Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:5-6). The same idea is repeated in the New Testament, but it has now gained a new content: "Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to

offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ … But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:5,9).

The sacrificial priesthood of the Old Testament reached fulfilment in the role of Jesus Christ as the "great high priest" (Hebr. 4:14-15; 8:1-6; 9:1-28). The new covenant had no need for priests who offered up sacrifices in propitiation for the sins of the people, nor could there be such priests any longer, as Christ had redeemed humankind once and for all with His own sacrifice (Hebr. 7:27). The common priesthood can be a sacerdotal priesthood only in some other sense than that of rendering propitiatory sacrifices. The church indeed has a "ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18), but this exists only in relation to Christ's definitive act of redemption.

The common priesthood is a sacerdotal priesthood in the sense described by the Apostle Paul when he states, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship" (Rom. 12:1). The sacrifice implied by the common priesthood is the offering up of oneself to God, in an act of thanks to Him (Hebr. 13:15) and in fulfilment of one's duty of service and witness with respect to the church and the world (Rom. 12:4-21).

The New Testament contains many other metaphors, too, which describe the nature of the common priesthood of the faithful, above all those alluding to the church as God's people, His family and His temple (1

Cor. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:19-22).

3. A dichotomous priesthood

Although the Early Church already had various forms of holy office, there were not yet – at least to the extent that came to exist later – any factors that categorically distinguished these forms of priesthood one from another. This was a distinction that began to emerge as a consequence of various factors that affected the church, leading to a greater emphasis on the distinction between the clergy (*clerus*) and laity (*laici*) on the grounds of differences in nature, rank and degree. This meant that, especially when emphasis came to be placed (e.g. by St. John Chrysostom) on the functional link between a bishop celebrating the Eucharist and Christ in His heavenly role of high priest, the sacrificial priesthood (*sacerdotium*) became embodied more firmly than ever in a separate ecclesiastical office.

This dichotomy was emphasized further during Medieval times, a development which restricted the common priesthood to a more passive role than ever. It was only with the Reformation that a new emphasis was laid on this aspect, as manifested in the central position afforded to justification, the use of the vernacular in church services, the distribution of the Eucharistic gifts to the laity in both forms and the emphasis laid on the priesthood as a calling and on matrimony and the family. Luther placed particular stress on a common priesthood in his theology, but the notion was not as such incorporated into the Confessions of the Lutheran faith.

Developments within the Lutheran and other reformed churches in fact rapidly led to a new dichotomy, between the teachers (priests) and those who were taught (the people, laymen). It was Pietism that first raised the issue of a "spiritual priesthood" (Spener), or a "universal priesthood" devoted to home missions (Wichern; Hans-Martin Barth, *Einander Priester sein. Allgemeines Priestertum in ökumenischer Perspektive.* Göttingen 1990, pp. 54-103). Thus the notion of a common priesthood began to carry more weight in the Protestant churches by the latter half of the 19th century, partly under the influence of the revivalist movements, certain liturgical movements, the activities of Christian associations, missionary work and general trends within society.

The broadest and theologically most highly developed programme on behalf of a common priesthood of the faithful to date has been that launched by the Roman Catholic Church at the Second Vatican Council, in its decrees *Lumen gentium* and *Apostolicam actuositatem*. This has meant that the "basic communities" which have arisen within the Roman Catholic Church in the spirit of Liberation Theology have laid particular emphasis on the common priesthood.

4. Baptism and confirmation as the foundations of the common priesthood

The common priesthood is not a universal priesthood in the sense that it encompasses all human beings by virtue of their creation, but rather each individual is in-

ducted into it when joined to Christ and His church in baptism. Thus the common priesthood is a sacramental reality, so that the tasks of missionary work and service that belong to it cannot be separated from the participation in Christ that is conferred at baptism but rather are concrete manifestations of that participation (Baptism and the Church as Communion. A Study Paper of the Institute for Ecumenical Research, Strasbourg, 1995, unpublished, p. 6).

Confirmation is not a sacrament in the Lutheran Church, nor does it in any essential sense add anything new to the gift received at baptism, but it does serve in its own way to strengthen the meaning of baptism as an induction to the common priesthood. Indeed, we should be more prepared than ever to acknowledge that part of the significance of confirmation lies in the fact that it should help those who have been baptised and confirmed to consciously accept the notion of a common priesthood.

The vital nerve of this common priesthood and its source of growth is nevertheless the communion that binds the person who has been baptised to Jesus Christ and His church, since its "field of operation" includes both the church and the world.

The bond with Christ that forms at baptism implies participation in the triune nature of Christ as prophet, king and high priest, so that the common priesthood becomes a matter of identification with the three "areas" of this triple nature as expressed at the Third General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in New Delhi in 1961: witness, service and unity.

5. The common priesthood as a means of building the church

It is impossible to make a clear distinction between the church and the world as parts of the "field of operation" of the common priesthood, but one can nevertheless examine them separately. The common priesthood is manifested within the church above all in its worship, for the whole nature of that priesthood would be incomplete without the congregation meeting together for services of worship. It is precisely in these divine services that the members of the church are transformed into living stones that make up the building of God's church. The common priesthood is realized in the act of listening to and receiving the Gospel, which should not be understood only as a passive matter of being taught something, in prayer and thanksgiving, which are perhaps the most important forms of common priesthood of all, and in the offering up of oneself and one's resources on behalf of the life of the world. All of these things are parts of the sacrifice implied by the common priesthood. To what extent one can in terms of the Lutheran faith understand the congregation as performing a joint act of sacrifice when participating in the Eucharist is a problem that is connected not so much with the common priesthood as such as with whether one can in general speak of the Eucharist as a sacrifice in any sense other than that of a thank-offering.

The principal purpose of the common priesthood both in divine worship and more especially in the other activities for which a congregation may gather is a pastoral one, chiefly taking the form of "brotherly (or sisterly) consolation", although also extending to the hearing of a

confession and the pronouncing of an absolution where necessary.

The common priesthood can assume numerous concrete forms within the church and require participation in a wide variety of acts of service, all of which have increased greatly within the Lutheran Church in recent years. The community aspect of common worship has found a clearer means of expression than ever before through the medium of such service, which has thereby removed the unjustified polarization between the "laity" and the "clergy". It would be wrong, however, to think that the faithful can achieve a common priesthood within the church only through these forms of activity, for such a way of thinking would be based on the assumption that the common priesthood is something that "just falls short" of the ordained ministry.

One especially important function of the common priesthood is to give expression to acceptance by the church at large of decisions and reforms affecting its life and doctrines. It is only when the body of believers pronounces its "Amen" that reforms can really take effect in the church and become living parts of it. Acceptance in this sense cannot be merely automatic "rubber-stamp" approval, as it must leave the way open for the rejection of inappropriate innovations. It should be possible within the scope of the common priesthood for unsound dogma propounded by ministers of the church to be condemned and rejected if they are contrary to the word of God, but this can only happen as a joint action arising out of the notion of a common priesthood and not as an exercise of power by a single individual.

6. Calling and the concept of the common priesthood

The common priesthood cannot be realized by copying the actions of those ordained priests to the maximum extent possible, but rather as the fulfilment of a calling felt by lay members of the church. Each task in the everyday life of a Christian is a calling from God that represents a manifestation of the common priesthood in so far as it is received and acted upon in faith. Thus the common priesthood is in itself the fulfilment of an earthly calling and not just some kind of extraneous activity. This does not, of course, exclude the possibility that the obligation of witness to Christ may be discharged in the most natural manner precisely through the work that the individual feels to be his or her own calling.

One fundamental form of realization of one's calling in life is the family and its membership. Although in actual fact increasingly large numbers of people are living in smaller units than the traditional family, or even entirely alone, every person has been born into a family and thus belongs to some form of larger social entity. The Lutheran tradition lays emphasis on the calling to act as father of a family as one manifestation of the common priesthood, but this can equally well be achieved by other family members.

7. The common priesthood and church missions

The missionary obligations of the church mean crossing

the borders between belief and unbelief and between love and lovelessness near and far. It is precisely by participating in Christ's triple office of prophet, king and high priest that believers can contribute to the Church's missions in the world (*Church and Justification.* Lutheran/Roman Catholic Joint Commission. Geneva, 1994, pp. 123-124). Missionary work in this sense is not the exclusive responsibility of preachers or ordained priests but belongs to all members of the Church.

In the case of "overseas missions" this has meant that for a long time the majority of field missionaries have been people other than priests, but the common priesthood has a still greater significance for church missions in a broader sense. The spreading of the Gospel over the boundary between belief and unbelief can succeed best in situations where everyday work provides natural channels for crossing that boundary. In particular, spanning the border between love and lovelessness frequently calls for a wide range of "professional skills" nowadays.

8. The common priesthood and the grace of God

The common priesthood is not realized only in a calling to act in certain capacities or "offices" but is also manifested in various gifts of grace. St. Paul describes these gifts in his epistles, but the Holy Spirit is lending new forms to them all the time. The most important thing regarding their use is that they should be directed towards the strengthening of the church and the increasing of love. The strengthening of the church also implies an

emphasis on its missionary obligations, to the extent that the ability to spread the Gospel over the borders between cultures can in effect be regarded as one of God's gifts of grace.

Another especially significant gift is that of using the prophetic voice of the Church to expose wrongs and injustices in society. Neither a theological education nor a specific calling to service within the church can in itself be sufficient for this, but rather it needs to grow up out of a capacity for analysing social issues and a sensitivity to the Christian calling incorporated in the common priesthood.

9. Conclusions: the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministry

The relationship between the ordained clergy and the common priesthood has been defined in various ways and according to various models in the course of history and up to the present day. In early times and in the medieval church this was a question of delimitation. The ordained priesthood was not grounded in the notion of a common priesthood and the two had different functions and purposes. Particularly in the early stages of the Reformation, Luther emphasized the common priesthood as the basis of all church offices, although later he laid greater stress on the nature of the ordained clergy as being something that could not be derived exclusively from the notion of a common priesthood. There are some Protestant churches, however, in which the mi-

nistry is regarded simply as a function of the common priesthood, so that it exists within these communities only "for the sake of order". There are even some communities that have no ordained clergy whatsoever, e.g. the Quakers.

Perhaps the most significant ecumenical document dealing with the status of the clergy, that entitled "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" (BEM), has this to say about the relation between the common priesthood of the faithful and the ordination of priests:

"All members of the believing community, ordained and lay, are interrelated. … On the other hand, the ordained ministry has no existence apart from the community. Ordained ministers can fulfil their calling only in and for the community. They cannot dispense with the recognition, the support and the encouragement of the community (12). … Since ordination is essentially a setting apart with prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit, the authority of the ordained ministry is not to be understood as the possession of the ordained person but as a gift for the continuing edification of the body in and for which the minister has been ordained (15). … Ordained ministers are related, as are all Christians, both to the priesthood of Christ, and to the priesthood of the Church. But they may appropriately be called priests because they fulfil a particular priestly service by strengthening and building up the royal and prophetic priesthood of the faithful through word and sacraments, through their prayers of intercession, and through their pastoral guidance of the community."

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland has in recent times adopted an interpretation of its Confessions in which the ministry is regarded not merely as a form of the common priesthood but a ministry of the word and sacraments ordained by God (*iure divino*). Even so it has not been able to lay down a rigorous definition of the relationship between the ministry and the common priesthood. The present author will therefore conclude with a set of theses that represent the views that he has acquired on the subject:

1. There is within the church only one sacrificial priesthood of Christ, in which all believers who are baptised participate.

2. God has ordained a specific ministry of the word and sacraments for the church, a ministry that is not in itself a sacrament in the sense that it carries with it any particular promise of grace.

3. The ministry of the church and the common priesthood of the faithful are related to each other in the following ways:

The common priesthood of the faithful is an absolute requirement for the ministry.

It is the duty of an ordained priest to serve the common

priesthood.

The ordained ministry is not superior to the common priesthood but rather exists among its representatives. There are no distinctions of rank or degree within the ministry.

Ordination does not confer any qualitative distinction on the holder with respect to the common priesthood.

The ministry is grounded in God's commands, statutes and authority, but it can be exercised only by someone who experiences a calling to the common priesthood.

The ministry entails exercise of the power granted by the word of God within the congregation, but this is not a power conferred by ordination alone, nor does ordination "guarantee" that the holder will remain faithful to the truth. The common priesthood collectively has the right to reject teaching that is contrary to the word of God.

Fr. Heikki Huttunen

Work, Unemployment and Human Dignity – some thoughts for discussion

"But Jesus answered them, 'My Father is still working, and I also am working'." (John 5:17)

Human dignity

The Eastern Church's teachings on man are grounded in the notion of 'the image of God' as expressed in the account of the creation. Man as the icon of God is the true principle behind human dignity. Every human being is of divine origin, and that fact is ever-present as a part of every one of us.

"…you alone are a reflection of the eternal beauty, a treasury of blessedness, an image of the true light, and if you look upon Him, you will become what He is, in accordance with Him who radiates within you and whose glory is depicted in your purity" (St. Gregory of Nyssa).

The concept of human dignity in the Orthodox tradition is expressed very well in the service for the burial of the dead, where the respect paid to the deceased is directed at the image of God that is a reality in every human being. The human person is looked on as an entity composed of body and spirit, and respect is thus being paid in this instance to the body of the deceased, from which the soul has now been separated. The deceased lies there, dressed as for a ceremonial occasion, with a baptismal cross around his or her neck and a wreath around the temples, in a white coffin (the colour of a baptismal robe) surrounded by flowers and candles, and is censed by the priest in the same way as he senses the altar.

"Thou who hast of old brought me into existence and to the glory of thy divine image and for my trespasses against thy commandments hast returned me to the earth from whence I came, raise me once again, I beseech thee, to my former beauty" (from the service for the Burial of the Dead).

In Orthodox theology the image of God in man is understood in a dynamic sense as a task or calling. The words "in the image of God" in the story of the creation are taken to refer to the possibility of growth, the calling to actualize the divinity that lies in man. The task of protecting and cultivating the Garden of Eden reflects

the fact that humankind was set on the right road and was given the calling to grow in the tasks that God had assigned. St. Eirenaos of Lyon speaks of 'spiritual evolution', progress on the path towards a likeness to God. Creativity, the ability to do work and to derive pleasure and satisfaction from it, is looked on as one of the main features of the icon of God to be found in man. Paradise gave men the opportunity to be fellow workers with God.

One extreme manifestation of human sin in our own day would appear to be our relationship with the rest of creation. The theologians who represent the neo-patristic synthesis and Eucharistic movement of our own century have spoken a great deal about man as the priest of the created world, *Homo adorans*, whose original relation with that world was a sacramental or Eucharistic one. The created world is God's gift to us, a duty and opportunity to join in God's work of creation, in life itself. Human beings obtain their food from their surroundings, and the whole of creation becomes a part of their lives, and for this they offer thanks to the Giver, the representative of the whole of creation. This is a Eucharist in which their own strivings towards the Creator, their abilities to do work and create things are assimilated with God's work and creativity – the human race finds its calling in synergy with God. As humans themselves belong to the created world, they become a bridge between it and its Creator as a consequence of this Eucharist, each individual becomes a microcosmos in which the whole of life is present, as nourishment, as an object of interaction and as a part of the person's consciousness.

Free will is an essential feature of the image of God in

the Orthodox way of thinking, but it can also be a way by which sin intrudes into human life. In reply to the clever people who ask whether Almighty God could ever create a rock so large that He himself would be unable to lift it, we could well reply that he has already done so: he has created man. God's gift of life and His love and respect for mankind are so great that man has the freedom to say "no" to his Creator. Evil has no existence in itself; it is merely the denial or absence of good. It is through our evil will or evil desires that we give it an existence, so that it becomes the words in our mouth or the deeds of our hands.

According to the Church Fathers, sin is not inherited, but the consequences of sin are. The tendency towards evil, the fact that it is easier to do evil than to do good, shackles us, but it does not alter our fundamental nature. Free will is one condition for salvation, sharing in the life of Christ and in His kingdom, and working together in harmony with God is one aspect of salvation.

Work

Sin tears us away from communion with the Creator and the whole created world. We come to see ourselves as the purpose of life; we perceive human values in terms of immediate gain rather than in relation to the original nature of man. Our attitude towards nature becomes one of exploitation, so that the created natural world that was given us as a source of food is no longer at one with its Creator but at one with death. The Devil has alienated the created from their Creator and from

their fellow men. Human labour has become a judgement and a pain, a precondition for life that has been distorted by the descent into sin. Man's original beauty has been tainted by evil, wrong-doing and sufferings. Human value has come to be measured in violent terms as the survival of the fittest. Creative work has been transformed into onerous slavery and exploitation of the weakest among us.

The Church Fathers were severely critical of worldly possessions, and in fact of everything that nowadays forms part of our economic system: private ownership, the inheritance of means of production and the exploitation of natural resources. Working for one's living, the arduousness of this work and the wages paid for it, as indeed the whole construct of the relations between workers and their employers, belong to the world order that has resulted from the Fall, and the Church Fathers were deeply suspicious of the fairness of it all. For them it was necessary to make a choice between God or mammon.

"The impoverished workers brought up gold from the mines, but they were not allowed to keep it for themselves. They were forced to work for something that they themselves could not possess" (St. Ambrose of Milan).

"The bread in your basket belongs to those who are hungry, the unworn coat in your wardrobe belongs to him who needs it, the shoes lying around in your cupboard belong to those who cannot afford shoes, and the money in your bank account belongs to the poor" (St. Basil the Great).

"All property belongs in the final instance to God, our

Father and the Father of all things on earth. We are one family; we are all brothers together. And it is best that brothers share their inheritance equally" (St. Gregory of Nyssa).

On the other hand, one cannot find any alternative economic system in the writings of the Church Fathers. They do not set out any formula for a 'Christian society'. Their aim is rather to advocate fairness and justice here and now, under conditions that every one of us has the power to influence. Poverty is not something to be admired in an abstract sense, nor is wealth regarded as an evil in itself, but rather judgement is passed on the use that we make of our resources. We should learn to see Christ in every one of our neighbours and to act accordingly. The question of fairness and justice in work and economic matters is for the Church Fathers a question of our partaking in the kingdom of Christ, which is a kingdom of light and hope for all. Our membership of the church of Christ opens our eyes to see life in terms of the presence of Christ and His example, and we then set out with faltering steps to follow this path and perhaps to reflect a little on His will in our own lives.

Christ opens up a new relation between us and the reality that surrounds us. He invites us to step out of ourselves and to find ourselves anew in our relations with the Other – with God, our neighbour and the whole of God's creation. We have the ability, with the powers of our spirit and soul, to dive to the depths of existence, and the more we open ourselves up to the reality of the Other, the more we are able to find ourselves and to accept God's gift to us.

Christ's incarnation, death and resurrection offer us an opportunity to regain our original human nature, to rediscover the image of God under the layers of grime. It is God's humanity that makes it possible for man to achieve divinity. Indeed, it is through encounters with our fellow men that we are able to encounter God: a helping hand, assistance , an expression of sympathy, solidarity or love, can make an encounter with a human "you" into an act of coming facing to face with the absolute and divine "You".

The starting point of Christian ethics lies in self-transcendence, an empathic reaching out towards others and opening up to things beyond one's self, which implies a constant striving to achieve communion and unity, *koinonia*. This is a calling to which there are no limits; the possibilities for human growth are infinite and eternal. Our response to God's advances, synergy with His will and His energies, is the Christian way of life, in which love and communion dominate our relations with our neighbour and with the whole of creation, so that our whole lives, all our good deeds and initiatives, are inspired to reflect the reality of the kingdom of God. The new life given to us in baptism challenges us to adopt a new attitude towards everything we do, so that we are able to see our relationship to our work, to society and to its economic system – and to unemployment as one part of that system – in this light.

Unemployment

In the words of the early twentieth-century economist

and theologian Sergei Bulgakov, economics is a heterogeneous science, since it does not in itself predicate any values that direct economic activities. The values come from outside, from the ideology which a particular economy seeks to implement. This idea seems somewhat remote from the economic policy discussions taking place nowadays in our own country, for it is almost as if our national economy has no values or goals at all. With the gradual decline in liberal developmental optimism and the sudden collapse of communism, it is as if our society no longer had any ideals. Its 'monetary economy' gives the impression of transferring money back and forth without any real content to what we are doing. Can mere transactions dictate goals that have no real ideological values behind them? It is the duty of the churches and of all Christians to ask this question.

Our society is approaching the last hurdle. We are an industrial country in which production and the standard of living have inexorably distorted relations between people to the utmost extreme and exploited the natural created world with irreparable consequences. What thoughts come to mind when we realize that the ozone layer in the atmosphere above us is unprecedentedly thin? We are told this, but we put the matter to the back of our minds as soon as we have collectively noted the fact. One universal task for the churches is to encourage people to face up to one of the common realities that affect the whole human race: it is impossible to increase the material standard of living and the production that sustains this any further. Given the present ways of operating, the environment will not tolerate the raising of standards of living for any more than the inhabitants of the twenty or so richest nations in the world. What ideas

does this bring to our minds regarding work, productivity and the ethical bases for these?

The present world economic system based on exploitation of those countries engaged in producing raw materials will soon generate a migration of the hungry of such proportions that no citadel will be able to prevent it from impinging on Europe as well as other parts of the world. And a similar gulf appears to be opening up within the industrialized countries, in that the rich are becoming richer and those who have been alienated from the mainstream of the economy are finding themselves out of work and poor. A division of society into successful A-class citizens, unemployed, poverty-stricken B-class citizens and entirely alienated C-class citizens is beginning to be a reality in many European countries.

Are there any alternatives to the monetary economy and permanent mass unemployment? Does the answer to the constant streamlining of the welfare state lie in the green concept of a civil society or in a brave new era of market-driven prosperity in which some crumbs are left over for the poor as well? It would seem at the moment that society is merely scaling down its social services in any case, without there even being any discussion of goals or alternatives. Does this inspire the churches to take over these functions on the lines of the subsidiarity principle that exists in Southern Europe? Is the answer to adapt our society to unemployment figures of around 20% and dutifully pass on responsibility for these things to the churches and citizens' organizations? Is it simply unfashionable to speak of structural evil – in a word, sin? Have we any idea of the goals that an economic policy could be directed towards, perhaps that of human

dignity?

It is necessary to re-evaluate the concepts of work and unemployment as ethical questions in the light of the global economy and the current situation in Europe and in our own country. The Christian concept of human dignity and the brotherhood of man challenges us to consider the issues of employment and its distribution among the working-age population in an entirely new way. After all, there is any amount of work waiting to be done... Should we try to arrange the relationship between work and incomes in a new way? And do the economic decisions taken by the parishes of our two national churches reflect a sense of responsibility for employees and their jobs?

The people employed in our parishes know that we can see the consequences of indifference with regard to human dignity all around us. Everyday occurrences such as mindless violence within families, homicidal crimes committed by adolescents and adult men engaged in war games in motor cycle clubs tell us of the consequences of mass unemployment and cuts in expenditure on social services. The drug problem in this country is a great deal worse than any of us would ever imagine. I would venture to claim, in fact, that every teenager is within the reach of drug traffickers, even secondary school pupils in the smallest and most remote municipalities. But how are we to approach the causes lying behind this: families' uncertainty about the future, the general sense of insecurity that affects most people and the sense of emptiness and hopelessness felt by many young people?

Human dignity is the key to our relationship to work

and its redistribution. The icon of God that is within each human being is the foundation for the hope experienced by Christians. It is this that should be brought to the fore and afforded the respect that it deserves. It is this that is the source of human dignity. Christ is calling us to join Him in the work of salvation; it is work on behalf of humanity, and work that will bear eternal fruit. And it is work that is close at hand and can provide a content for all the work we do and all the creativíty that we show. It begins with encounter, with a gaze into a neighbour's eyes and the microcosmos that they open up. It is there that we will find human dignity. It is there that we will encounter God in His temple.

"No one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid: that foundation is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw – the work of each builder will become visible ... Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? " (1 Cor. 3:11-13,16)

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Rev. Canon Matti Järveläinen

Work, Unemployment and Human Dignity

One of the most characteristic dreams for many people is to be unique and be treated as such. It is a dream that transcends the human personality, and turns human beings into a problem for themselves – the only creatures to find themselves in such a position.

The human personality always has something of the afterworld about it. We can see this in the very word 'person', Lat. *per-sonare*, to 'sound through': the human being is a musical composition which in the end it is someone else who 'plays'.

"He who spits towards heaven ends up before long in sullying his own face." In his description of the crisis of our times Archbishop John Vikström picked out as one

essential feature the fact that we are in the process of losing touch with the rationality behind life and the experience of holiness, and in order to dispel the resulting sense of emptiness we have begun to create an ideology out of consumption. In his view we are not only consumers of material commodities and of nature but also, to an increasing extent, of emotions and experiences. Indeed, human relationships and even ideological trends can be transformed into 'consumer goods' in the same way. The outcome of this massive consumption, however, is frequently an experience in which people who have acquired all-pervasive power come to realize, to their astonishment, that this is 'all' that they have. "Gone is the rationality of life itself, the depth dimension in it, the experience of holiness and inevitability" (Vikström).

One of the underlying themes of sociological discussion in recent years has been unemployment, to the extent that its elimination has become one of the leading social policy issues. Also connected with this discussion has been the significant observation that questions of moral values form an essential part of the range of measures available for seeking a solution to such problems. There have been demands for a discussion of moral values – and such discussions have indeed taken place. Only the future will tell what part moral values have actually played in the attempts to find solutions.

One thing is nevertheless clear, that there are certain moral assumptions to be found in the background to the unemployment problem, even though they may so far be instinctively rather than systematically perceived. Simply the unanimity with which unemployment is regarded as a personal tragedy and its elimination or

reduction as a virtue leads us to conclude that one of these background moral assumptions is that of the unique value of the human being.

The postulate of the unique and morally incontrovertible value of the human being forms part of the 'meta-reality' of social policy that is in part sharply opposed to the empirically observable reality. It would certainly appear empirically that people really do differ in their value. Life itself is not egalitarian but profoundly unequal. Yet at the same time it is quite likely that when defining economic or social policy goals it may be recognised that every human being is irreplaceable.

The role of issues connected with human value among the range of measures systematically proposed in recent years for setting out Finland's strategy for economic survival (e.g. export-driven economic growth, stimulation of the economy through intervention in interest rates, or structural changes in working life) is a highly problematical question, but it is clear that the direction in which current affairs are leading entails numerous moral dilemmas. The structural changes that have taken place in working life have been geared towards free competition, which it is assumed will prove in the end to be to the advantage of all concerned. The assumption is that maximization of the freedom of market forces to pursue their own goals will lead, by way of a violent and painful process of change, to an increase in affluence, profitable production and new jobs.

This notion of the 'common good' nevertheless raises certain difficult questions as far as social morality is concerned. What is the role of the state in building up

and fostering the 'common good'? Can civil society take over the social obligations of the state? What does this strategy based on the 'common good' mean for the human dignity of the alienated, the sick and the poor? Do their dreams have any moral impact or carry any weight in terms of social policy?

Created to tend and cultivate

From the point of view of the Christian faith the notion of the creation as the source of human dignity is the key to the whole interpretation of human life. It is from this concept of man as a created being that stems both the uniqueness of human life and its rationality. It is the life of a created being that is acted out within creation, within this world in which every individual has a 'right of residence' precisely on the grounds of the creation. This is truly a fundamental right, that we have done nothing to earn. Each individual is in a sense a 'gift' to the created world, and each individual has within him or herself a calling to be respected, loved and treated justly which is binding on everyone else.

Man is "a being in relation to God" (Karl Jaspers); he "needs God in order to be a man" (Friedrich Gogarten). His main purpose in life is "to give praise to God and to take pleasure in Him eternally" (Thomas Carlyle). These citations provide just a few intimations of the overall contribution of the Christian faith to the notion of the Holy and Triune God as the creator of all things. Man is created in the image of God (*imago Dei*) and in his likeness (*similitudo Dei*), and for this reason one aspect

of the nature of every human being is his or her relationship with God. Various concepts have nevertheless existed during the life of the church regarding the conclusions that can be drawn from this essential characteristic of man relative to the created world. It is possible to conceive, for instance, that the fullness of a relationship with God that is based on creation and restored through redemption would relegate the reality of our life in society and the community to second place to a sufficient extent that the issues of our mortal lives would become virtually meaningless relative to those of our relations with God and the salvation of our souls.

From the point of view of a belief in creation, however, the location in which human life takes place is the created world. At the same time as we reject both the anthropocentric and the cosmocentric approach, we should observe that "responsibility for the created world" as a task for mankind is entirely dependent on the purpose of creation itself. Thus a mutual dependence exists between man's relation to the created world and his dependence on the Creator.

Prof. Timo Veijola, alluding to Georg Picht, expounds in an interesting way on this dependence relationship and the consequences of disturbing it, stating, for instance, that "In the preindustrial society religion spoke about what was 'holy', metaphysics about what was 'true' and ethics about what was 'good'. When we came to the industrial society, however, all these things began to be regarded as commodities that could be bought and sold, as it were, and they became subject to the law of supply and demand. Moral truths became 'values' that followed certain fashions and were constantly being reassessed

on the stock exchange of public opinion."

Veijola takes an example from the ecological crisis and attempts to demonstrate that human beings cannot go on forever interpreting the 'sacred' values of the purpose of creation in a relative sense. "Man is bound to nature and he cannot break free from it entirely. He is a part of a certain order in life even though he may not wish to recognise the fact, and this order inevitably implies certain rules and behavioural norms that he must be prepared to subordinate himself to if he wishes to remain alive. ... He is capable, of course, of adapting himself and his values to new situations to a substantial extent, but the more violently the ecosystem is disturbed, the more difficult it will be to adapt to it and the more people there will be who fail to do so and fall ill as a consequence. ... Environmental destruction has already advanced so far in the industrial countries that the adaptation mechanisms no long function properly." Once we take account of this ecological implication of ethical values, we have no right any longer to give ourselves over to the delusion that man has limitless freedom to determine his own 'values'.

An anthropocentric view of this kind can nevertheless be perceived behind the way of thinking that ignores the fact that God, who has revealed Himself to us and created everything with His word, is the supreme lord of life. God is not the answer to what man asks or dreams about; it would be more accurate to say that God is the question that hangs over the whole of human life.

The Lutheran ethics of the Christian calling

It is typical of the Lutheran way of thinking to refrain from attempting to dictate models and norms derived directly from the Gospels for regulating the life of society, even though it is still maintained that righteousness, faith and love, together with what is said in the Law of God and in the Gospels, are not divorced from the social realities of human life, and life within society is closely connected with the worship of God, prayer, the sacraments and the whole proclamation of the Gospel. Justification is not understood as a single once-and-for-all event, but as a continuous process and a lifelong daily act of returning to the grace granted in baptism.

Lutheran social ethics places emphasis on the purpose of the creation (natural law), the golden rule (do as you would be done by) and moderation in all things (*suum quique*, to each in his measure), which are regarded as the preconditions for the achievement of justice and human dignity. People can understand the correctness of these simply with their own reason, so that they can be regarded as forming the content of people's individual and collective calling in terms of values, at the same time as they form the basis of the Christian life, which in the light of creation has a general human aspect to it.

The close interaction between a person's relationship with God and with his neighbour implies above all that the horizon for a Christian's good deeds is the whole world, although at the same time it forces Christians to enter into a dialogue with society at large, to expose the sin that disrupts communal life, to oppose false gods, to liberate other people from unjust demands and to bind

people's consciences to a recognition of the truth.

All work, including paid employment, may be understood from the perspective of a human calling, for there is no distinction in principle between a calling, work and paid employment. There has been much talk about the fact that it has been especially difficult to overcome the influence of unemployment because Lutheran doctrine in particular has assigned too central and too exclusive a position to work within our scheme of values. There has been talk of a 'Lutheran work mania'.

This is partly a matter of barking up the wrong tree, of course. The sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920) in particular advanced the theory that western capitalism gained momentum from the views of the reformer John Calvin. By contrast to Lutheranism, Calvinism emphasized predestination, and Calvin maintained that salvation became evident in a person's success in life, including economic success, a view which naturally was of encouragement to businessmen. Work was construed as an expression of obedience to God.

This idea is utterly foreign to Lutheranism, the views of which emphasize the importance of 'good deeds' addressed to the world in general and more particularly to one's neighbour. "God does not for His own part require any deeds from us, but merely our faith, through Christ. This is sufficient for Him, and in this way we glorify Him as a God who is merciful, compassionate, wise and the true God. After that do not think of anything else except doing for your neighbour what Christ did for you. Let all your work and your whole life be directed towards your neighbour" (Luther). Our calling is to ser-

ve our neighbour and seek the common good, and it is not the attainment of salvation that sets this in motion but the law of God, which requires us to love our neighbours as ourselves.

It is often difficult in practice in our modern society to reconcile our calling with our paid employment. Our work has to a great extent become only a contribution to a process which as a whole is to a great extent beyond our control, and it is coming to be regarded more than ever before as a means of enabling us to live our own lives in our free time.

This brings us back to the central theme of our market economy, consumption, and the attempts to increase this by creating new needs all the time by dint of advertising. This means that the concept of 'our daily bread' as that which is 'necessary' for us has become something of a problem. One means of overcoming this has been to create a hierarchy of basic human needs, so that the targets of moderation and mutual sharing can be seen to be achieved at least in an approximate fashion.

The problematic nature of the satisfying of basic human needs has come to the fore as the demands for efficiency brought about by competition in the field of consumption have been intensified so that more and more basic services have to be produced with less and less labour. Management by results has forced its way into local authority social and health services nowadays, with the consequence that jobs have to be shed constantly in the name of free competition, results and efficiency, leading, of course, to a public sector productivity crisis. An insoluble equation has arisen in which the desire of emp-

loyees to maintain the conditions of work that they have achieved is matched against rising costs, which prevent any increase in the number of employees. Particular mention should be made of unemployment among young people, which is for many people the most serious social and socio-ethical problem of our day, the consequences of which may prove highly unpredictable.

Although there is nothing in the content of the church's beliefs that enable it to lay down any social or economic programme that will help to remove unemployment, it should be prepared to lend its support to all those who are looking for solutions. The 'chemically purified self-interest' of the market forces and the right of every individual to be heard and respected as a unique being cannot both be activated simultaneously, and it will perhaps be necessary for us to promote a redistribution of work, to encourage strong branches of the economy to show greater solidarity with those that are struggling, to perceive the employment possibilities in the field of environmental questions and to attempt to find sources of livelihood consistent with human dignity in areas other than paid employment.

Perhaps it should not be so much a matter of a redistribution of work as of a redefinition of work, given a new situation. There are many people nowadays who are doing work although they are not in paid employment, e.g. work in the home, looking after a relative at home etc.

Jeonsuu 1999

The Sixth Theological Discussions between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Orthodox Church of Finland, 1999

Communiqué

The Sixth Theological Consultations between delegations from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Orthodox Church of Finland were held on the premises of the Orthodox Parish of Joensuu on 19th-20th April 1999. The Lutheran delegation was led by the Rt. Rev. Voitto Huotari, Bishop of Mikkeli, and the other members were Rev. Dr. Juhani Forsberg, Executi-

ve Secretary for Theology to the Church Council's Department for International Relations, Rev. Canon Matti Järveläinen, Rev. Dr. Hannu T. Kamppuri, Professor Dr. Eeva Martikainen and Rev. Dr. Antti Raunio. The Orthodox delegation was led by Archbishop John and the other members were Metropolitan Ambrosius, Fr. Olavi Merras, Fr. Heikki Huttunen and Fr. Jarmo Hakkarainen. Also present as observers were Fr. Zdzislaw Huber of the Roman Catholic Church in Finland and Jan Edström of Finlands Svenska Baptistmission, General Secretary of the Finnish Ecumenical Council. The secretaries at the meeting were Kimmo Kallinen, secretary to the Archbishop of the Orthodox Church of Finland, and Kari M. Räntilä, Public Relations Officer in the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland.

The speakers at the opening session were Bishop Huotari and Archbishop Johannes. Bishop Huotari reminded delegates that the meetings between the Orthodox and Lutheran churches in Finland had had a practical influence on the lives of both. In fact, ecumenical contacts between the two churches had become a part of the regional identity of Eastern Finland, giving this area a character of its own which it was of utmost importance to foster as Finland sought to take its place in a more international Europe. In reply, Archbishop John emphasized that one of the most important achievements of these negotiations had been the creation of an atmosphere of openness and mutual trust in which the representatives of both churches were able to meet together.

The opening prayers in the Orthodox Church of St. Nicholas were also an act of remembrance for the victims of the recent coach accident in Heinola and of in-

tercession for their families. The evening service was held in the Church of St. John the Theologian at the Orthodox Priests' Seminary, and prayers on the second morning of the meeting took place according to the Lutheran tradition.

The Sacraments and Divine Services

The introductory papers on the first day's topic of the sacraments and divine services were presented by Rev. Dr. Juhani Forsberg and Fr. Olavi Merras. It was noted in these papers and in the discussions that followed that both churches regard the sacraments and divine services as an essential part of church life. The principal point, however, is that they are part of the process of salvation and sanctification which the Orthodox Church approaches through the concept of *theosis* and the Lutheran Church through the notion of Christ's real presence in faith.

The sacraments and divine services derive their force from the Word of God. Lutherans lay emphasis on the fact that the sacraments were ordained by Christ and that there is an essential connection between them and the promises made in the word of God, while the principal concept for the Orthodox is that of the Church as a mystery, a sacrament in itself, the most profound manifestation of which is the Eucharist. In the Orthodox interpretation the sacraments were instituted through Christ or His church.

The Churches – the Hope of the World.

The introductory papers on the topic for the second day of the meeting, the Churches – the hope of the world, were presented by Metropolitan Ambrosius of Oulu and Rev. Dr. Antti Raunio.

In the Lutheran view, lying behind the sense of hopelessness and lack of courage that is experienced at the present time is a series of phenomena related to alienation, powerlessness and exclusion. Alienation refers to the non-acceptance of the common aims and objectives of society and failure to identify with those communities and institutions devoted to pursuing such aims, while the inverse of this phenomenon may be a concentration on one's own personal goals and association with a small circle of acquaintances. A sense of powerlessness can arise from people's perception of a decline in or disappearance of opportunities to influence the course of their own lives, so that they feel that they are at the mercy of greater forces. Patient hope and expectation and the postponement of the satisfaction of one's own needs in order to take others into account are virtues that are seldom valued nowadays and are perhaps no longer even recognised.

The hopes vested by mankind in better times to come, in greater justice within society, in peace between the nations and in the wellbeing of the whole of creation are natural and essential parts of human life, and they are certainly not at variance with Christian hope directed towards God, nor are they secondary or irrelevant to it. They are contained within Christian hope and the expectations incorporated in them should be visible in in-

tentions and efforts to achieve such goals. The Church of Christ wishes to take the distress and misfortune of the world upon itself and treat these things as its own. In this way it can reveal Christ's love, righteousness, peace, purity and freedom in the world.

The Orthodox approach to this question sets out from the notion of the Eucharist as lying at the heart of the church's life. The task and calling in life for all people is to bring themselves, the whole of creation and everything that exists before God to be sanctified. Repentance implies a return from self-centredness and self-satisfaction to identification with the Eucharistic community, a community that prays not only for the salvation of souls but also for the sanctification of body and soul, for fair seasons and the fruits of the earth, and for the peace and union of the whole world. This is a message of hope that this life and its material reality may be transfigured through the synergic forces of human spiritual efforts and God's mercy. The bread and wine of the communion provide a foretaste of the transformation and transfiguration that will take place at the end of time.

The Christian faith embodies a certain tension between history and the Kingdom of God. This is not a matter of dualism but rather of a longing for change, for deification. The time in which we live is a fragile one, and one in which evil is at work, but even so Christ's work of salvation and sanctification is present in it, and we encounter that work in a unique manner in the Church, which is the Body of Christ. In this sense the Church is indeed the hope of the world.

The work of the church and its members is work for the

transfiguration of the world from one liturgy to the next. It is the work of putting the Sermon on the Mount into practise to a far greater extent that our present-day welfare state might call for; it is a form of sharing that goes to the very core of our existence.

It was observed in the discussion that followed that one thing the churches have in common is a Christian faith in God as the creator. This means that the original good is present in mankind through our creation in the image of God and in the whole created universe as the work of God. But what is the relation of the church's own spiritual growth to its mission of witness and service in the world? Which is the greatest danger to the church's proclamation, triumphalism or politicization? The churches carry a message of the presence of eternity, of a hope that has real meaning for people at the present time.

Continuation of the discussions

It was decided to continue the discussions in the year 2001, on the topics of **Preconditions for the Unity of the Church** and **The Role of the Church's Charitable Work in Society**.

Fr. Olavi Merras

The Sacraments and Divine Services

The Orthodox Church has never really defined what the church is, what the sacraments are or how many sacraments there are, or, indeed, what constitutes a divine service. The only statement that exists officially is that found in the Creed: "I believe in One Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church and in one baptism for the remission of sins." The Church Fathers were not interested in defining or characterizing the church; when they spoke of it they would begin by stating that it was the body of Christ and temple of the Spirit. The church was not an object of speculation in their day but rather a living meeting point for the whole of their theology. Everything happened within the church, and everything led to the church, the community in which salvation was to be found. The church was a fact, God's truth, and therefore something that was in no need of definition. Nowadays this is not so obvious. The various Christian

groups involved in the ecumenical movement understand the nature and identity of the church in different ways, and even in an Orthodox context the church and its theology have sometimes been separated from each other. It is also possible to perceive one weakness in the thinking of Orthodox scholars as lying in their custom of dismissing the sources of their information with the words "the church says that…" or "the Holy Fathers say that…". It is for this reason that our church's understanding of salvation, for example, has not achieved the disposition or precision that would be required of it by western standards.

The point of departure for considering salvation is the love of God for mankind: "God so loved the world that he gave His only Son" (John 3:16). God became man so that man should become like God. This *theosis* of man is the work of the Holy Spirit, a process in which human nature is purified, in order to encounter that which is divine. Theosis takes place within the church, and it is both a process and a goal. The grace of the Holy Spirit works only within the church, for the Church is at the same time an icon of the Holy Trinity, the people of God, the body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit. All these perspectives are required in order to describe the fullness of the nature of the church. The Church itself is an immense sacrament of salvation, a holy mystery implanted in the world by Christ. It is the Ark of Salvation and the visible Kingdom of God. Its unity is not dependent on schisms or aberrations, nor can its holiness be tainted by sin or its truth tarnished by wrongdoing. Having been built on the foundation laid by the teaching of the Apostles, it continues to fulfil the missionary command given to them and occupies

an apostolic role as a pillar of truth in the world. The church's spiritual task is to ensure the salvation of God's people, its members.

When teaching the truth about Christ, the One Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church leads people to salvation in Him and sanctifies the world, through the grace of God's Holy Spirit and its manifestations, that is through the sacraments and the divine services. In this sense it is also a new Ark of Salvation (Gen. 6), serving as a basis for salvation in Christ. The sacraments, the visible signs of the kingdom of God, bring the grace of Christ to its members through the medium of the actions of God's Holy Spirit. The Church as an institution and the acts of sanctification that take place within it are not mutually exclusive things but complement each other.

From a Christological perspective the Church, as the body of Christ and the basis for an organized sacramental life, is a sanctified institution, while from a pneumatological point of view, as the temple of the Holy Spirit and the field of operation of the Spirit of God, it is an eternal Pentecost in which experiences of that event and the gifts of the Holy Spirit are bestowed in a manner in which "the wind blows where it chooses" (John 3:8). These two aspects are inseparable and entirely dependent on each other.

The doctrine of the sacraments thus has as its centre point the church and its view of salvation as stemming from Christ, the Son of God made flesh, who renews the covenant between God and man. It is in this covenant that humanity is sanctified and regenerated *in the process of theosis*. The essence of salvation in Christ lies

in communion with the glorified body of Christ who is risen from the dead; that is, participation in the work of God through sanctification by the divine energies so that one's human nature can return to its original state "O Lord, manifest thyself in this water, and grant that he who is baptized therein may be transformed; that he may put away from him the old man and may be clothed with the new man and renewed after the image of Him who created him" (from the prayer for the blessing of the water in the service of Holy Baptism). Salvation is possible only within the church, where the sacraments, the symbols of the kingdom of God, and especially the Holy Eucharist, are at the centre of all. As Nicholas Cabasilas observes in his commentary on the Holy Liturgy, "The whole purpose of the church is realized in the sacraments, for they are the essence of the church. The Church is at one and the same time the body of Christ and most especially the fulfilment of its members." The church does not understand the sacraments as symbols but as the true heart of the members of Christ's body, or as the true vine, the body or vine of whom they are the members or branches.

The sacraments

The sacraments occupy a central place in the church's life of prayer and divine services. The word sacrament (Lat. *sacramentum*, an oath or military vow of allegiance) is as such somewhat foreign to the Orthodox way of thinking, which is better expressed by the Greek word μυστεριον or its equivalent in Church Slavonic, тайна, "mystery" or "secret". As St. John Chrysostom wrote

regarding the Eucharist, "It is referred to as a mystery because what we believe in is not the same as what we see, for we see one thing and believe another. … When I hear the words 'the body of Christ' I understand what they mean in a particular sense, whereas a person who is not a believer will understand them in a different sense (Homily on 1. Corinthians). This dual nature, at the same time internal and external, is a conspicuous feature of sacraments. Like the church itself, they are both visible and invisible. Every sacrament is a combination of an externally visible sign and an internal, invisible act of grace. In baptism Christians submit to an external act of cleansing in water and at the same time are cleansed internally of their sins, while in the Eucharist they receive bread and wine in a visible form, while in their internal reality they are the body and blood of Christ.

In many of its sacraments the church makes use of visible substances such as water, bread, wine, or oil, making these into instruments of the Spirit. In this way the sacraments allude to the incarnation, in which Christ took on the physical nature of a man and thereby made it into an instrument of the Spirit. The sacraments also allude to the future, i.e. they have an eschatological aspect, as they foresee the coming *apokatastasis* and the final salvation of all things at the last day. As a foretaste of this eschatological fulfilment, the kingdom of heaven is attainable in our time in the form of the body of Christ, and this opportunity for being in Christ, for participating in the life of God, which is the natural state of mankind, is realised best in the holy sacraments, or mysteries, of the church. As the contemporary Orthodox theologian Georges Florovsky put it in his memorable statement, "Man does not gain salvation alone, but together with

the whole visible creation." The church teaches that we do not merely bless the bread and wine in the Eucharist but also the work that has gone into producing these things, the grain and grapes and the fields in which they have grown. The sacraments also have a cosmic aspect to them as well, and the Orthodox Church is quick to reject all attempts to belittle the significance of material things in relation to the sacraments.

In his book *The Life in Christ*, Nicholas Cabasilas describes how it is possible for the saints (= Christian believers) not only to be worthy of eternal life and prepare themselves for it within the present world but even to live and act in accordance with this in their earthy lives. It is for this reason that a human being must be looked on as a single entity in which the soul and body are inseparable. In the same way individuals should participate in the celebration and reception of the sacraments with their whole body and soul. Baptism should take place by immersion, and the Eucharistic gifts of bread and wine should be consumed in their entirety. In the sacrament of confession the priest does not pronounce the words of absolution from a distance but lays his hands on the penitent's head. Likewise at the burial of the dead the coffin is usually open and those who come to bid their last farewell do so by kissing the headband of the deceased and the icon on his or her breast. The body should be an object of love for us even when dead, and not an object of fear.

The Orthodox Church usually speaks of seven sacraments: 1) baptism, 2) chrismation, 3) the Eucharist, 4) confession, 5) the ordination of priests, 6) holy matrimony, and 7) holy unction, or the anointing of the sick.

On the other hand, it makes no firm distinction between the sacraments and other divine (or sacramental) services, nor does it attempt to place them in any order of importance. All of them serve the purpose of sanctification and salvation. In the same vein, the church does not precisely define the number of sacraments, for from a patristic viewpoint the whole world is God's sacrament. There was no technical term in existence in those days that referred to the sacraments as an exclusive category of church services, and even the term mystery was used primarily to denote the mystery of salvation in the broad sense of the word.

The enumeration of seven sacraments is generally regarded as a medieval loan from the Catholic Church, and it may be that the concept emerged at the stage where Orthodox Christians began to regard the sacraments as a specific type of church service or even as private services, a term which in itself is utterly absurd to the Orthodox way of thinking. All the offices of the church belong to its life of worship and are part of the whole concept of salvation. Statements regarding the number of sacraments have varied throughout the history of the church, so that where even the early Nestorian and Monophysitic churches recognised seven sacraments, St. John of Damascus mentions only two, St. Dionysios the Areopagite six, St. Theodore the Studite (in the 9th century) six, the 13th-century Church Fathers as many as 24, and Ioasaf, Metropolitan of Ephesus wrote in the 15th century about ten sacraments. It is interesting that the doctrine of seven sacraments came to the fore for the first time in the assurance of faith that Pope Clemens IV demanded of the Emperor Michael Palaeologos in 1267, but then the wording of the document would inevitably

have been drafted by Roman theologians. On the other hand, the figure seven may be connected with the Byzantine preoccupation with the symbolism of numbers, in which the number seven aroused associations with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit as mentioned in Isaiah 11:2-4. The same ideas are also to be found in the order of service for Epiphany. The following, at least, have been mentioned as sacraments in the course of time: holy illumination, or baptism, synaxis, or the Eucharist, chrismation, the ordination of a priest, the consecration of a monk, and burial of the dead. Other offices that have been ranked alongside these include the consecration of a church and even the blessing of the waters at Epiphany.

Sacraments are always personal matters, as through them the grace of God comes to each Christian personally. Thus it is the case in most of the sacraments in the Orthodox Church that the priest utters the name of each participant separately as that person partakes in the sacrament: "*The servant of God, (*name*), partaketh of the precious and holy body and blood of our Lord and God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, unto the remission of his/her sins and unto life everlasting.*" Similarly, when anointing a sick person the priest says, "*O Holy Father, physician of souls and bodies, … heal thou also thy servant (*name*) from the ills of body and soul which do hinder him/her and quicken him/her by the grace of thy Christ…*", and when ordaining a priest the bishop says, "*The grace divine, which always healeth that which is infirm and completeth that which is wanting, elevateth through the laying on of hands, the most devout deacon (*name*) to be a priest. Wherefore let us pray for him, that the grace of the all-holy Spirit may come upon him.*" It should be noted that the priest officiating never uses the first person (*I*

baptise…, I anoint…, and I elevate…) in this connection. The sacraments, or mysteries, are not something that we perform in church but they are acts of God, so that the true celebrant is always Christ himself. As St. John Chrysostom points out, the priest merely lends his tongue and allows his hands to be used for the purpose.

Baptism

In the Eastern Church baptism and chrismation normally take place together, so that immediately after being baptised the candidate is anointed with myrrh oil blessed by the bishop. This means that a child, too, becomes a full member of the church and allowed to receive communion from that time onwards. In this way the person – whether a child or an adult – begins a new life through participation in baptism, chrismation and the Eucharist. St. Simeon of Thessaloniki reminds us that initiation into the Christian life is a single, unique and indivisible act: "Unless the person joining the church is able to take part in chrismation he has not yet been fully baptised." The Holy Fathers' doctrine of salvation is not based on the notion of a guilt inherited from Adam. Rather, a human being inherits at birth an incomplete form of life from "the old Adam", a life that is enchained by death, which is inescapably sinful and lacking in true freedom from the powers of the prince of this world. The alternative to this fallen state is life in Christ, which is the true and natural life of man, a gift from God that is given through the mystery of the Church. As Nicholas Cabasilas writes, "Baptism means in an essential sense birth in Christ and the reception of what is our true na-

ture and being." The idea of projecting a child as guilty in the eyes of God so that baptism is required to atone for that guilt is alien to the Orthodox Church, whose interpretation is that people are in need of re-birth at every stage in life, even in childhood. In other words, they need to begin a new, eternal life in Christ. It is this that allows them to recover the purpose for which God created them. As St. Theodoret of Cyrus (d. 466) expresses it, "If the only significance of baptism were atonement for sin, why would we baptise newborn infants, who have not yet tasted sin? The mystery of baptism does not stop there, as it is a promise of still greater and fuller gifts. It includes the promise of joys to come; it is a model for future resurrection, a link to the sufferings of Our Lord, an act of participation in His Resurrection from the Dead, a cloak of salvation and a robe of glory."

The sacrament of chrismation that is normally celebrated in conjunction with baptism is performed separately only for persons who have been baptised into the heretical or schismatic branches of the church as listed in Canon 95 of the Council in Trullo. In this case the purpose of chrismation is to confirm through "the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit" a Christian baptism that has taken place in exceptional circumstances, i.e. beyond the bounds of the church.

Confession and unction

In the sacrament of confession a person is restored to communion with the church, having repented of the sins he or she has committed since baptism. The sacrament

was originally regarded as a renewal of the covenant entered into at baptism when, on account of certain sins, e.g. denial of God, murder or adultery, a person was regarded as having infringed that covenant and had been excommunicated. The process of returning to the fold of the church was a long, public progression through four stages: association with 1) the group of those who weep, 2) the group of those who listen, 3) the group of those who repent, i.e. bow down to the ground, and 4) the group of those who stand in church services. One way of avoiding this process was to retire altogether to a monastery or convent. Gradually, from the 4th century onwards, confession altered in nature to become a private office that ended with the priest pronouncing a prayer of absolution, and later still it became almost exclusively an adjunct to spiritual guidance, in which form it has become especially common in monastic communities.

It is interesting to look at the way in which the Orthodox Church has expressed doubts over the position of confession among its mysteries, so that at one time it was often coupled with the consecration of a monk or the anointing of the sick. By the 15th century, however, the confession of one's sins before a priest, who subsequently pronounced an absolution, had become a generally accepted practise amongst the laity, with confession before a lay monk at a monastery as a possible alternative or complementary act. The use of a specific formula proclaiming absolution, "I, His unworthy priest, … do forgive and absolve thee …", would appear to have entered the church's liturgical tradition at the time of the general Latinizing of the Byzantine rites, contrasting with the wording of the old, traditional prayer, "May God grant you forgiveness … and reconcile you with

His Holy Church…". It is the former wording that has remained in use in the Slavic tradition and the latter, older form in the Greek tradition.

The Orthodox Church has not given in to the temptation to reduce sin to a matter of juridical crimes or infringements for which a sentence is passed and the deed is either punished or forgiven. Above all, sin is looked on as a disease of the soul, an inner state in a person. Thus confession and repentance imply a new sense of inner freedom and return to health for one's whole being without the stigma of a judgement.

Holy Unction in the Orthodox Church is not a last rite administered to those who are preparing to depart this life, but rather the sacrament harks back to the words of the Epistle of St. James 5.14. It should be performed by a number of priests, usually seven, because the passage in question speaks of "the elders of the church" in the plural, although it is possible for one priest to officiate. The service consists of readings from the Bible, prayers for recovery and blessing of the oil to be used in the anointing. The intercessions are not directed at recovery as such, however, but at repentance and spiritual salvation. Whatever the outcome of the illness may prove to be, the anointing is a sign of God's forgiveness and of release from the vicious circle of sin, suffering and death that has imprisoned mankind since the Fall. Through the prayers of its priests, the Church pleads for relief for those of its members who are sick and in this way expresses its pity for human suffering. The service of Holy Unction ends in an impressive manner, with an open Book of the Gospels being placed on the head of the person to be anointed as prayers are offered up that

God's healing power may be present in His word and that the sick person may be granted forgiveness of his/her sins and restored to health.

Matrimony

I have presented a paper on the subject of the sacrament of Holy Matrimony earlier in this series of discussions, in the meeting at the Monastery of Valamo in 1990, and I will not return to the question of its sacramental nature here. There are nevertheless certain points regarding this sacramental nature that require further attention. In a Byzantine context the status of matrimony as a sacrament was based on the permanence of the first and only marriage between persons who were members of the Church and communicants. The Church as such did not condemn second or third marriages, and civil marriage was an acceptable form of family life in society at large even though it did not always enjoy the "blessing" of the church. Although there were often bitter disputes between the church leadership and the state, no one actually opposed the divorce legislation. The Church Fathers regarded divorce as an inevitable feature of human life in a sinful world in which people are free to choose whether to accept or reject the gift of grace. It is a world in which sin is inevitable but repentance is always within people's grasp. In such a world it is not the church's part to compromise on the Gospel message, but it is obliged to show pity and mercy where human weaknesses are concerned.

The Eastern Church preserved this attitude for as long

as a clear distinction existed between its own principal purpose (to bring about the kingdom of God on earth) and that of the state (to govern a worldly society by choosing the lesser evil among the alternatives available in each situation and preserving order by means of a code of law). In the question of matrimony this essential separation ceased to exist in practise when the Emperor Leo VI (d. 912) published his compendium of imperial decrees known as Novella 89, in which the church was officially obliged by law to ratify all marriages. At this point civil marriage was abolished as a legal option open to free citizens, and a church solemnization of marriage was required by law even for slaves.

One may say that these imperial decrees gave the church in principle the power to regulate the marriages of all citizens. This meant in turn that it was to take responsibility for all the inevitable compromise situations that had previously been resolved by resorting to the possibilities of divorce and civil marriage. In addition, the church even lost the opportunity to impose its earlier demand of repentance.

Thus, since the church was responsible from that time onwards for legalizing every marriage, it also took on the task of resolving all the legal problems that this new responsibility brought with it. It therefore began itself to grant the divorces that had previously been issued only by the secular courts, and to permit new marriages to be solemnized in church. If it had not done so, second and third marriages would never have been valid in law. Although the church did succeed in declaring a fourth marriage illegal, it had to yield to compromises on many other matters.

In spite of all its juridical obligations, the church made a serious attempt to preserve the distinction between first marriages and any subsequent marriages, partly by introducing a separate order of service for re-marriage that contained an element of repentance and was not to be combined with the Eucharist. It was thus taken for granted that a second or third marriage was not in accordance with the accepted norms of the church and consequently fell short of recognition as a true sacrament.

The Eucharist and the ordination of priests

Orthodox theology has always stressed the fact that the Holy Eucharist is essentially a meal that one partakes in by eating and drinking, because God had himself taken on the fullness of our humanity. The Eucharist is fundamentally a mystery which is received in the form of food and drink, a mystery in which a covenant is made between God and man which is similar in kind to that which God made with the people of Israel on Mount Sinai, which was sealed with a joint meal. As far as the salvation of the world is concerned, the Orthodox Church is convinced that the glorified humanity of Christ is present in the Holy Eucharist and that the Holy Spirit indicates that the bread is indeed the body of Christ and the wine the blood of Christ. Thus the church holds fast to the view that the transformation of the Eucharistic gifts is brought about by epiclesis, the invocation of the Holy Spirit. It is this epiclesis that represents the eschatological character of the Eucharist, for the Holy Spirit will come on the last, great day, the day of Pentecost, to reveal the

world that is to come and proclaim the kingdom of God. He will take us into the hereafter, into the dimension of the kingdom of God. Being in the Spirit implies being in heaven, as the kingdom of God is a realm of joy and peace in the Holy Spirit. It is He who seals and confirms our personal ascension into heaven in the Eucharist, just as it is He who transforms the Church into the body of Christ and in this way shows the material gifts that we sacrifice to have become an instrument of communion through the Holy Spirit.

The mystery of the Church as it is realised to perfection in the Holy Eucharist overrides the tensions that exist between prayer and the answering of our prayers, nature and grace, the divine and the human, because it is precisely the Church, as the body of Christ, that is the true communion between God and man. God is present and active in this communion, but at the same time mankind is rendered entirely acceptable to God in it, achieving conformity with God's original plan. The eschatological nature of the mystery of the Holy Eucharist emphasizes that the church becomes fully God's Church and that the Eucharist is the ultimate criterion and seal for the other sacraments.

The ministry of bishop, which is the essential focal point of the reality referred to above, has a dual nature, comprising obligations, on the one hand, to guide and teach his flock (*episkopos*), and on the other hand, to serve as the central pastoral figure in the celebration of the sacraments. The philosophies of three prominent theologians of the Early Church regarding this holy office may be summarized as follows: for St. Ignatios of Antioch the ministry of bishop is a geometrically defined point: the

bishop stands at the centre of the communion that binds the local Eucharistic community, while for St. Eirenaos of Lyon the office may be represented by a vertical line, as a bond between the Apostolic Church and its local church, and for St. Cyprian of Carthage it is a horizontal line, as he views it from the perspective of the college of bishops, who have spread out all over the world and demonstrate their unity by gathering together for the ecumenical church councils. Thus a bishop is simultaneously 1) a centre of communion in the local church, 2) a bond between the local church and the Apostolic Church, and 3) a bond between the local church and all other local churches.

The sacrament of ordination to holy order in the church is in the Orthodox view an objective guarantee of Christ's continued presence in the midst of his people. Christ is present in His Church now, forever and to all eternity. The sacramental clergy – bishops, priests and deacons – receive the gift of the Holy Spirit in order to make Christ visible to all men in the Holy Spirit. It is through His chosen priests that Christ fulfils the mission entrusted exclusively to Him as the great High Priest, constantly offering Himself to the Father as the perfect sacrifice on behalf of humanity, His brothers and sisters. It is also through His clergy that Christ acts as a teacher in the church and proclaims the divine words of the Father to all people. In this way He continues to be the good shepherd tending His flock and at the same time works as a forgiver of people's sins and a healer their sicknesses, whether of the body, soul or spirit. As a bishop He is engaged in supervising the church that He has gathered around Himself (1 Peter 2:25), and as a deacon He alone is the suffering Servant of the Father who came into the

world to serve and not to be served and to give his life as a ransom for many.

The sacrament of the ordination of priests is a matter of the holy order of things. Bishops, priests (*presbyteros*) and deacons create order within the church and are the guarantee of its continuity and unity at all times and in all places from the era of Christ and the Apostles until the day when Christ shall come again in glory. It is essential when considering the concept of holy order, however, to see the mission and nature of the office holders as people. On this matter the views of the Orthodox Church and of the Protestant churches are a considerable distance apart in spite of the numerous theological discussions held between them. Also related to this problem, of course, are the discussions over the ordination of women, which involve a concept of holy orders that would appear to be unacceptable to 99% of people within the Orthodox Church. The remaining 1% must evidently be attributed to the Orthodox scholar Elisabeth Behr-Sigel and Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia, who apparently have kept up a certain amount of discussion on this topic. From an Orthodox point of view one should begin such a discussion by considering how the church answers such questions as what a human being is, who God is and how these two can encounter each other, and also how God takes care of the world He has created, acting within mankind.

The essential questions in this respect are all highly comprehensive ones, and we can scarcely make any changes to the details of this system without a danger that the whole construct will collapse. If we are to ask why there should not be women priests, we must first ask what es-

sential things we would have to lay aside in order to accept their ordination. One aspect that would have to be added to all the previous discussion would be the many problems concerning the nature of men and women.

When a *presbyteros* is appointed to lead a parish he is taking on the same responsibilities as the father of a family: he is required to care for the believers who make up his congregation in the same way as a father cares for his family, just as God does in the words of the New Testament. A mother has her own duties within a family, those which are natural for a mother. If we define the duties that are appropriate for a father in such a way that a mother could fulfil them as well or perhaps better, we are taking something away from the father and giving it to the mother. A trend in this direction is indeed taking place throughout the world. People are growing up with the idea that fathers and mothers are not really needed for anything other than earning money for the family. The church does not encourage us to overturn the family roles of father and mother, in spite of the fact that they have led to the subjugation of women. Perhaps it is time we looked for the true role of the father, both in the family and in the church as a reflection of this.

Given that the Church has treated the psychological and physical nature of human beings in the same manner for very nearly two thousand years, should it alter its view in order to respond better to people's needs? The church is a different kind of community from our secular society, where it is quite natural for women to be in leading positions in all walks of life. But then we are talking of their functions and not of the essence of their nature, which is what the church represents and what gives expression to

the fundamental dimensions of humanity.

Divine services

The church has a large range of services of a sacramental nature, involving blessing or sanctification, including the blessing of water and the use of this holy water for the blessing of food, plants and indeed everything that is necessary for human life (cattle, fields etc.) and the products of human creativity such as works of art and technology. It is through these services that the church returns the main elements in human life to their original, proper position in relation to God and to man as created in the image of God. The prayer used in the Great Blessing of the Waters at Epiphany (or Theophany), the Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord Jesus Christ, reminds us of the powers of evil that prevail in the world and proclaims and praises God's supremacy over the universe, thus confirming that man is no longer a slave to the cosmic powers of evil: "All the powers endowed with reason tremble before thee. The Sun singeth thy praises, and the Moon glorifieth thee; the Stars, also, stand before thy presence. The Light obeyeth thee. The deeps shudder with awe before thee; the springs of water do thy bidding. Thou hast spread out the heavens like a curtain … For thou couldst not endue, O Master, because of thy tender-hearted mercy, to behold the children of men tormented by the devil; but thou didst come and didst save us. … Thou hast set at liberty the generations of our race; by thy birth thou hast sanctified a Virgin's womb. All creation singeth praises unto thee, who didst reveal thyself … Wherefore do thou, O King who lovest

mankind, come down now also through the descent of thy Holy Spirit, and sanctify this water. Impart unto it the grace of redemption, the blessing of Jordan. Make it a fountain of immortality, a gift of sanctification, a remission of sins … filled with angelic might. And may it be unto all those who shall draw it and shall partake of it unto the purification of their souls and bodies, unto the healing of their passions, unto the sanctification of their houses, and unto every expedient service."

Thus the blessing of nature implies the stripping away of its mysticism. For the Christian the powers of nature cannot be any more divine than things that are subject to any other natural laws. By breaking the laws of nature, the Resurrection of Christ liberated the nature of man from slavery and called him to fulfil his task as the lord over nature in the name of God. Thus every one of the divine services offered up by the church, whether it be a matter of prayer or the blessings of things that are necessary for human life, invites us all to join with the choirs of angels (see, for example, the prayers offered up at the Eucharist) and in that way to regain our original communion with God.

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The Sacraments and Divine Services

The Lutheran Church's concept of the sacraments and divine services may be understood historically as one part of the spiritual legacy of western Christianity, so that the broad outlines of its relationship to the tradition and doctrine of the mainstream of western Christianity, the Roman Catholic Church, and the nature of its deviations from this, are well known. I may assume, therefore, that it is unnecessary to go into the details of this historical split and development on this occasion.

Although the Lutheran understanding of the sacraments and divine services is grounded in the Holy Bible and the Lutheran Confessions that serve as commentaries to the Bible, the statement of this origin is not yet sufficient to explain exhaustively what the Lutheran churches teach nowadays as their theology of the sacraments or how they put this teaching into practise. In addition, certain

changes have taken place in their theology of the sacraments as a consequence of ecumenical developments, partly because these contacts have stimulated a deeper understanding of the churches' own tradition and partly because of new stimuli received through such contacts. Among these sources of stimuli, particular mention should be made of the more recent Finnish research into the Reformation and the document "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry", one of the most significant ecumenical pronouncements of recent times. Meanwhile, such major steps forward have occurred as far as divine services are concerned that the situation in the Lutheran Church may be said to be quite different now from what it was a few decades ago.

My aim here will be to present the Lutheran concepts of a sacrament and of the sacraments and divine services and attempt to cast some light on what they have in common and how they may possibly differ.

In the Lutheran view God does not (only) speak directly to the human heart but he also speaks and acts in the world and in His Church through observers (visionaries) and instruments, which we are called upon to regard as *instruments of His grace*, as their purpose is to communicate the message of salvation to sinful people and strengthen them in their striving towards sanctification to the point of achieving the fullness of salvation. These instruments of grace are God's word and the sacraments. In spite of the fact that various later interpretations arose within Lutheranism in which the word and the sacraments were linked together in a manner that gave precedence to the word over the sacraments or in some other way interpreted the sacraments exclusively

in terms of the word, the relationship between the two in the sense intended in the Reformation should be expressed in a rather different way, so that the measure of reciprocity in their relation should be understood correctly. The sacraments are dependent on God's word in the sense that without the word there would be no sacraments, but at the same time it must be recognised that God's word is not just an oral or written message about something to which it merely refers but is a "living and active" word (Hebr. 4:12), so that "it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose" (Is. 55:11). The word of God contains within it that to which it refers and brings into being that for which God uttered it. This applies to the acts of God in the creation of the world and His acts of salvation. In other words, the sacraments cannot exist without the word of God, but the word of God also has a sacramental reality.

This reciprocal relation is manifested in various ways in Lutheran theology. A sacrament is "an embodiment of the word", or "the word made visible", but the word is by nature a sacramental *image*.[3]

3 Luther's notions of the word as an image and the sacramentality of the word were analysed by Tuomo Mannermaa in his paper *Sana ja kuva, eleet ja riitti. Kasualiat julistavina toimituksina* (Word and image, gestures and rites. The occasional services as proclamations of the faith), Finnish Journal of Theology 3/1996, pp. 204-207. See also Martin Luther (WA 9, 440, 2-5, 7-12).
Mannermaa analyses Luther's concept of the word as an image in the following way: "Luther puts forward his interpretation of the sacramentality of the word when explaining an image, that of Mary with the Child Jesus in her arms. This image is a sacrament, which has the effect that what the image speaks about actually happens in the onlooker him or herself… The image of Mary with the Child Jesus demonstrates that while the image in the Gospel is verbal, the word in the Gospel is pictorial. The word of God is in itself an image."

Apart from the word, the sacraments also involve *matter* or an *element*, which need not necessarily imply a *material* substance. This is closely connected with a definition that is central to Lutheran sacramental theology, an assertion put forward by St. Augustine and frequently repeated in the Lutheran Confessions, that "The word is imbued in an element and this gives rise to a sacrament" (*Accedit verbum ad elementum et fit sacramentum*).

More important than the formal definitions of a sacrament, however, is the fact that the administering of such is a fulfilment of God's command (*mandatum*) and carries with it a promise of God's grace. The primacy of this definition over the formal definition of a sacrament becomes evident in the fact that, especially in the early stages of the Lutheran Reformation, absolution, or the forgiveness of sins, was included among the sacraments even though it did not involve any material element as did baptism or Holy Communion.[4] In order to be a sacrament, a service thus had to have been instituted by Christ, it had to imply a promise of salvation and it had

Luther's concept of the pictorial and sacramental nature of the word of God was overlooked in later Lutheranism, chiefly under the influence, of course, of the orthodox Lutheran doctrine that the members of the congregation are listeners who are to be instructed by the priest through the medium of the word, written and preached. This trend was then reinforced by Pietism and by the Enlightenment, each in its own way.

4 Luther clearly regarded absolution as a sacrament in the early stages of the Reformation, and Melanchthon's Augsburg Confession and its Defence do the same. In his book "On the Babylonish Captivity of the Church" he nevertheless restricted the sacraments to two, Baptism and Holy Communion, but in his lectures on Genesis delivered later in life (1535–1545) he practically always mentioned absolution alongside these.

to involve a sacramental sign of some kind.[5]

It is precisely because a sacrament in the true sense of the word implied the presence and influence of God and His promise of salvation that the Lutheran Church cannot regard the ordination of priests as a sacrament in the same way as baptism or Holy Communion, i.e. it does not confer any special promise of salvation on the recipient. This is the case, however, only if one looks at the situation from the viewpoint of the individual. If we consider ordination from the perspective of the church and the office of priest as a commitment to service in the whole church of Christ, we can note in the first place that the ordination of priests is an essential for proclaiming the Gospel and for administering the sacraments, so that it is in a sense also a office which conveys the promise of salvation, and thereby it, too, has a sacramental dimension. It should also be remembered that ordination in the Evangelical Lutheran Church has a certain "once and for all" nature about it, in that persons who have resigned or been dismissed from the office of priest are not re-ordained if they request or otherwise gain re-admission to it, although admittedly the Finnish Lutheran Church has no precisely worded doctrinal definitions on this matter.

As a sacrament always contains a promise of salvation,

5 In my opinion it is not of any importance in this connection what word is used of a service recognized as a sacrament. The Latin-based word "sacrament" as such is used by the Lutheran Church in accordance with western tradition, but there is in principle no reason why we should not use the term "mystery", derived from New Testament Greek. The ecumenical movement also makes abundant use of the classical expression "effective sign", as opposed to the word "sign" alone, which merely refers to something that "signifies".

it is by nature a gift from God. Although a sacrament is always administered by a human agent and received by a human person, that person has not done anything to deserve salvation. In this sense a sacrament differs from a prayer, for example, in the Lutheran way of thinking, as the latter is typically a form of co-operation between God and man. Prayer is not only a question of the action of the Holy Spirit but also of a sacrifice offered up by man,[6] which of course also applies to the sacrament of Holy Communion insofar as it is understood as the Eucharist, a sacrifice of thanksgiving.

The sacraments and faith belong together, although faith is not necessary in order to make the sacraments valid, as their validity depends solely on God's command and promise. Baptism is not falsified if the person being baptized does not believe, nor does Holy Communion turn into an ordinary meal for a non-believer. The sacraments are valid *ex opere operato*, but the recipient is able to participate in their "influence" and "benefit" only through faith.

Up to now we have spoken mainly about the sacraments in the true meaning of the word, but as already mentioned, this did not originally mean for Lutherans a strict limitation to the two principal sacraments. The early Lutheran literature regards confession as a sacrament and the possibility of ordination and matrimony among the sacraments is not excluded either. This vacillation re-

6 Juhani Forsberg, *Rukous tekona, uhrina ja jumalanpalveluksena* (Prayer as an act, a sacrifice and a form of worship). In Tapio Lampinen (ed.), *Rukous ja jumalanpalveluselämä* (Prayer and the Life of Worship). Finnish Theological Literature Society 162, Helsinki 1988, pp. 29-41.

sults from the fact that the definition of a sacrament was not precisely laid down during the Reformation. This emerges still more clearly in Luther's *Von den Konziliis und Kirchen*, in which he says that prayer and the cross (i.e. the sufferings of a Christian) can be sacraments, depending on how a sacrament is defined.[7] It is clear, however, that the Lutheran Church was not willing to commit itself to the seven sacraments as defined by the Roman Catholic Church and ratified by the Councils of Florence (1439) and Trent (1545–1563).

The concept of sacrament has been extended in ecumenical discussions in recent decades to become a foundation for the Christian faith itself. Thus the notion of the Church as a "basic sacrament" evolved in the Roman Catholic Church during the Second World War, after which research based on the Bible and the theology of the Early Church went still further and claimed that "The real initial sacrament or initial mystery is taken to be the God Incarnate, Jesus Christ, whose act of salvation performed once and for all is rendered actual in the sacraments, where it constantly focuses on new individuals. This has also meant a break away from the exclusively individualistic understanding of the sacraments, in that they are seen as applying not to the individual but to the whole congregation, creating and sanctifying it. Thus the Church itself is in a sense the basic sacrament that alludes to the Original Sacrament or Original Mystery (Jesus Christ) and it is the various celebrations of the sacraments that make up the life of the Church."[8]

7 See Martin Luther, *Von den Konziliis und Kirchen*. Studienausgabe Bd 5, Leipzig 1992, pp. 605-606.

8 Riitta & Seppo Teinonen, *Ajasta ylösnousemukseen* (From Time

Although the idea is becoming more common nowadays that it is unnecessary to attempt to define sacraments formally and precisely so that all other forms of divine service are excluded, they do have certain characteristics in the Lutheran understanding that other services do not have.

Some views connected with this have already been presented above, but one difference between the sacraments and other services is particularly important. The sacraments (baptism, Holy Communion and absolution) are "effective signs" and contain within them an absolutely certain promise of salvation. That is to say that the sacraments themselves exercise an influence within the recipient with their redeeming grace, so that the Christian may trust implicitly in the promise that they incorporate, and although the other divine services, as instances of verbal proclamation, prayer and symbolic activity, also communicate a promise of God's grace which the people can receive in faith and which strengthens them in their strivings towards God and sanctification, they are not in the same sense "certain" or "effective" signs as the sacraments are.[9]

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to the Resurrection), Helsinki 1976, p. 250). Although the concept of the Church as the basic sacrament has become a central theme in the Roman Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council, it is not inconsistent with the Lutheran view, provided it is firmly anchored in Christology.

9 This distinction is based on Simo Peura's paper *Kasualiat luterilaisen luomisteologian näkökulmasta*, Finnish Journal of Theology 3/1996, pp. 209-221. It should be noted that the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland does not possess any normative or otherwise officially approved theology governing its divine services, although the current Handbook Committee is engaged in drafting a theology of this kind as a basis for resolving issues that may arise in the course of renewing the forms of service.

The "other divine services" referred to in this connection may be taken to mean the occasional services celebrated in the Lutheran Church, which can be of a number of kinds. Most of them are focused on events in people's personal lives, although some can involve objects. Of the occasional services of a personal nature, confirmation, ordination and matrimony belong to the pre-Reformation tradition and are also "closer" to the true sacraments in terms of their content.

Luther, for example, rejected the notion of confirmation as a true sacrament, as there is no direct reference in the Bible to its institution. Thus, in his opinion, it lacks a specific divine origin and promise, nor does it imply the same "certainty" of salvation as the true sacraments do. In spite of this it can nevertheless be regarded as a *caerimonia sacramentali* a major part of which consists of blessing the confirmand through the word of God, prayer and the laying on of hands. It is in any case not an independent sacrament, as it is closely linked to baptism. It does not "confirm" the baptism in the sense of adding any new content to it, but it does involve the blessing of people who have been baptized, the strengthening of their endeavours in the Christian life and the fulfilment of their calling to the universal priesthood.[10]

In Lutheran eyes marriage is a "secular" institution that belongs above all to the "social order" of things.[11] This does not mean, however, that marriage and the solemnization of matrimony cannot have a "spiritual" dimension as well. Melanchthon considered it quite possible to

10 See Peura 1996, p. 213.

11 Luther, *Traubüchlin*. See Confessions, p. 318.

regard marriage as a sacrament,[12] and Luther included in the final prayer of the marriage service in his Traubüchlin a sentiment that quite clearly has an element of sacramental theology about it: "you who … allowed marriage to reflect the secret of love that prevailed between your beloved Son Jesus Christ and His bride, the Church".[13] It is this analogy that forms the core theological argument for regarding marriage as a sacrament in those churches that recognise this in their teachings. In the sense that one constituent of marriage in a mutual, reciprocal love that relinquishes everything that is one's own and gives oneself unconditionally to the other, marriage and the solemnization of matrimony indeed serve to strengthen the partners in their endeavours to lead a Christian life.

The anointing of the sick, which is not mentioned in the service book of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, is nevertheless a practise approved by the church should a member of the congregation ask for it. Thus it is not an official sacrament in our church but it is undeniably of a sacramental nature.

The burial of the dead is perhaps the least sacramental by nature among the most frequently celebrated occasional services. This is quite understandable, of course, as it is centred not on a living person but on someone who has passed on to the life hereafter. Luther never formulated an order of service for the burial of the dead, so that we have no idea of his perceptions regarding its purpose, but he emphasized in other connections that burial should take place with dignity in honour and praise of

12 Apologia XII, Confessions, p. 187.

13 Confessions, p. 320.

the "most joyous" article of our faith, the resurrection of the dead.[14] The burial of the dead also has a powerful connection with baptism, as baptism is participation of the individual in the death of Christ. Baptism marks the beginning of a process of death and resurrection that continues until death. In other words, death is the temporal culmination of the process of change that began with baptism, a process that is at the same time the gateway to resurrection and eternal life.[15]

Of the other services that are centred on individual people, mention should be made of various services of blessing, the use of which is very much on the increase in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. In addition to the induction of ministers to various positions within the church, there are occasions for blessing those taking up positions of trust on church councils etc. and services of blessing for people achieving significant points of transition in their lives. It is a custom in some parishes to bless children who are about to start school, for instance. Such services are not sacraments, of course, but since they include the reading of God's word, prayer and the pronouncement of a blessing they have a dimension that is apt to strengthen faith, sanctity, the fulfilment of one's calling and one's commitment to a life of Christian endeavour.

Other services in use in our church are focused more on the consecration of objects such as church buildings and the principal vessels, textiles and furnishings that belong to them, and also the blessing of parishioners' homes.

14 Peura 1996, p. 218, referring to Friedemann Merkel.

15 See Peura 1996, p. 218.

Emphasis in these is again laid on the fact that they contain the word of God and prayer, and the theologians who favour this approach have frequently reminded us that such services of inauguration and blessing do not bring about any sanctity in the objects concerned, because our church does not recognise any "material gift of grace". The German Lutheran theologian Peter Brunner has for his own part emphasized that apart from its actual use, a church is only an ordinary building and an altar is an ordinary table.[16] This strict alternative is, however, not a fruitful solution for determining the spiritual nature of the services concerned, for at least we have to say that such objects stand out from others by virtue of their use in a sacred connection, so that they should not be treated in an inappropriate manner. Secondly, it is not essential to define their sanctity in accordance with any particular philosophy, e.g. that of Aristotle, so that it has to be decided whether they possess any holy habitus or quality or not. In this sense it is best to approach the problem by way of the concept of a Christian symbol, so that the question of the ontological nature of their sanctity can be left in peace as a holy mystery.

16 "The altar was from the beginning an ordinary table … It was only when celebrating the Lord's Supper that the communion table became the place where the Body and Blood that He sacrificed for us were present … The communion table is not the Lord's table outside of its function in the communion service. It is not an altar in the true sense of the word, but it *becomes* the Lord's table and altar each time it is used in a service for that purpose ... Our deliberations have led to the conclusion that Christians are entirely free to return the table that has served as an altar in a church service to its ordinary everyday use once the service is over. No sacred quality that we can recognize from antiquity or from the Old Testament attaches itself to a table that serves as an altar in a church service." Peter Brunner. *Die Bedeutung des Altars für den Gottesdienst der christlichen Kirche.* Kerygma und Dogma 20 (1974), p. 240.

From the perspective of the unity of the church, the Lutheran confession may be said to distinguish clearly between the essential and the inessential. The essential thing for unity is unanimity over the word and the sacraments. The other divine services are not essential, so that there can be differences with respect to them without any damage being done to the unity of the church. The toleration of differences does not, however, mean that these holy offices are matters of no consequence for the life of the church. One must always ask in connection with them in what way they serve the goal of Christians' participation in salvation, i.e. in what way they promote righteousness and the pursuit of Christian endeavours, sanctity and everlasting life. In spite of the fall of man, the reality of creation is something good, as it came from the hand of God and is His gift to us. For its own part it is in no need of sanctification. God himself is present everywhere in the reality He has created, but it is only when the gifts He has created become instruments and symbols of salvation that they take on a special function of their own.

Metropolitan Ambrosius

The Churches – the Hope of the World

The Millennium and expectations of Christ's second coming

In autumn of the year 418 Bishop Augustine of Hippo received a letter from his colleague Bishop Hesychius of Salomae asking whether the end of the world was at hand. It was a very reasonable question, for Europe had recently been invaded by the Huns, Rome had been sacked and there had been earthquakes and other natural calamities. Augustine replied, however, in the words of Jesus to the apostles, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses … to

the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:7-8).

Hesychius was not satisfied with this answer, and wrote again, explaining that God may give Christians intimations of things that are to come. Although Jesus did not state the time of his second coming, one was entitled to deliberate upon it, and also to love him and to long for it to come about. The events of his own times revealed that it must be close.

Augustine replied by saying that a Christian should live his whole life in the love of Christ and in the expectation of his second coming. As the Bible did not give a concrete answer as to when it would happen, it was impossible to calculate at what point history would come to an end. We should be prepared, however, to confront Christ "whether he be close at hand or far away, with unshakeable hope and sincere, ardent love."[17]

Aren't we rather overstepping the mark by claiming that the Christian churches have a special remedy for the ills of our times, whether it be global economic or environmental problems, the crisis in the Balkans or the new ascendancy of the market economy in our own country? One could scarcely say that the churches showed any signs of strengthening their grasp or influence over people's everyday lives in the course of the 20th century, on the contrary. Admittedly the futurologist John Naisbitt, in his book *Megatrends*, speaks of a re-emergence of religion as one of the mainstream tendencies at the turn of the millennium, but his additional comment that in this sense spirituality is *in* but institutions are *out* merely

17 Daley, pp. 8-10

leads the church worker to ponder still more seriously over the state of the traditional churches. Looked at from this perspective, our title would have at least warranted a question mark after it.

Since we are engaged here in a national theological dialogue between the Evangelical Lutheran and Orthodox churches in Finland, we should instead stop at this point to consider why we have chosen as our theme "The Churches – the Hope of the World".

At the same time, in the context of the new millennium we may – and indeed should – examine the matter from the perspective of the passage of time and the fulfilment of time. This brings us face to face with two crucial questions. Is there any hope for the world? And what may be the future significance and contribution of the church, or the churches?

Divergent views of the concept of hope

The main theme of the Second General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Evanston, USA, in 1954 was "Christ – the Hope of the World". This was intended to reflect the fact that where the churches had expressed their desire at the previous assembly in Amsterdam in 1948 to "remain together", they were now declaring their intention, with God's help, to "grow together" as God's people on their pilgrimage through the world.[18]

18 Kruger, p. 39

A great deal of consideration was given at that meeting to the question of Christian hope, and opinions differed widely between the churches. It was largely the European protestant churches that regarded hope as an eschatological matter, something that will be fulfilled in the unforeseeable future, while the American churches emphasized the significance of Christian hope in the existing world, in the historical situation as it was at that moment. It may have been difficult during the Cold War years to gain any clear picture of the work of the Holy Spirit in the churches and in the world, although there was all the more need for signs of hope at that time and for considering the universal significance of the work of Christ and the mission of the church as a task inherent in its nature.

The representatives of the Orthodox churches at that gathering issued a separate statement of their own in which they attempted to advance both of the above views, recalling that eternal life is not merely something that will come to pass some time in the future but that we can participate in the kingdom of God here and now – through the sacraments of the church.[19]

A long time has elapsed since the days of Evanston, and I am not entirely convinced that the World Council of Churches would be prepared nowadays to speak of the "churches" as the hope of the world, although we are collectively moving in that direction.[20]

The ecumenical climate in our own country demonstra-

19 Patelos, p. 92

20 See BEM, CUV, for example

tes that, starting out from quite distinct Christian traditions, we are prepared to come together as churches to consider the role and purpose of the Church as a whole in God's scheme of redemption, and through this – if possible – the relation of the Christian churches to the culture of our own day and age, modern religious aspirations and the future of the world. As Bishop Voitto Huotari put it at our opening session, "We have ahead of us the Jubilee Year – a year of hope for all Christians."

The Incarnation – God's love for mankind

One of the main ideas to emerge from the Pan-Orthodox theological seminar on "The Annunciation of the Virgin Mary: the Word of God made Flesh" held in Nazareth, Israel, earlier this spring was that there was indeed good reason for thanks and rejoicing at the millennium, since the incarnation of Christ marks the turning point in the history of man's salvation, even though mankind will never be able to fully appreciate the mystery of that incarnation.

The incarnation was an act of God's philanthropy, His love for mankind, and as such it was a part of His eternal purposes. God would have become man, as Maximus the Confessor and many others of the Church Fathers have written, even if man had never sinned. But as the Fall had taken place, Christ was able to bring us salvation.

Christ himself founded the Church, which in a concrete sense began with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit

at Pentecost. It is a prolongation of the incarnation, the unique presence of Christ among us. Many Orthodox theologians ascribe three attributes to the church: it is the body of Christ, a perpetual Pentecost and the image of the Holy Trinity.[21]

"We, who are many, are one body in Christ" (Rom. 12:5). We meet with Christ and are united with Him through the Church, through living contact with His congregation, which includes those who have died and all the celestial powers.

The mutual connection and unity between Christ and the Church is manifested in a unique manner in the holy mysteries. In baptism we are interred with Christ and rise with Him; in the Eucharist we become partakers in His body and blood. It is no coincidence that in most of the mysteries we make use of materials from nature, which thereby become intermediaries in transmitting the Spirit of God. In this way they allude to the incarnation, in which Christ, by becoming physically a man, sanctified the material world.

The Holy Eucharist – a foretaste of the glory to come

The celebration of the Eucharist lies at the very heart of the life of the church. "Thine own, of Thine own, we of-

21 See, for example, Ware, pp. 240-243; Nissiotis, p. 101

fer unto Thee in all and for all."[22] It is the task, or calling, of all human beings to bring themselves, the whole of creation and everything that exists before God to be sanctified. This takes place in the anaphora to the Eucharist.

The celebration of the Eucharist has always been understood as a collective duty belonging to the people of God. Consequently the structure of the congregation as a living organism began to manifest itself from the times of the very early Church in the fact that inductions into the various degrees of the priesthood took place in its midst.

Those who partake in the Eucharist become living members of the body of Christ, the Church. It is for this reason that the spiritual teachers of the Early Church emphasized quite plainly that there was no salvation outside the church: *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*.

The church understands repentance on the part of one of its members not as an individualistic forgiveness of sins but as a return from individuality and self-indulgence to participation in the Eucharistic community. As the words of the prayer of absolution express it, "Reconcile and unite him unto thy holy Church, through Jesus Christ our Lord."[23]

Thus we do not pray in the Holy Liturgy only for the salvation of our souls but for the sanctification of our souls and bodies, just as we also pray "for fair seasons, for an abundance of the fruits of the earth and for peace-

22 The Orthodox Liturgy, p. 75

23 Service Book, p. 290

ful times."[24]Innumerable examples are to be found in the traditions of the church of how this present life and its material reality can be glorified through human spiritual endeavours and the grace and power of God. The transformation of the bread and wine into the holy gifts provides a presentiment of the perfect glory that will one day come to be. It is with good reason that Christians look forward with expectation to the glorification of the whole of creation at the end of the world as we know it.

Hope and love for Christ are not always "hidden and unobservable to the senses" even in our times, although some Christian sources may claim that this is the case. The classic example of this is the story of St. Seraphim of Sarov and his friend Motovilov, who experienced a miracle of the transfiguration of Mount Tabor in the forest of Sarov in central Russia. Their bodies and whole beings were radiant with a blinding light like the sun, brought about by the Holy Spirit, and they felt the presence of an unusual calm, peace, unspeakable joy and warmth. This was no imaginary new world, however, for they were still surrounded by the wintry forest and the snow.[25] This was the first fruits of the glory which "no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor. 2:9).

Similarly the traveller in *The Way of a Pilgrim* speaks of how, having discovered the silent Jesus Prayer, he was able to understand the joy of life and think that the bliss

24 The Orthodox Liturgy, p. 36

25 Zander, pp. 60-65

of the kingdom of heaven could scarcely be greater or more perfect than this. The depths of his heart and everything that lay outside him called him to love and praise God. "People, trees, plants, animals – they were all closely related to me, for the name of Jesus Christ was depicted in all of them."[26]

Catholicism – the hope of the world

Catholicism, in the sense in which we speak of the catholic or universal Church, is of great importance where "the hope of the world" is concerned. From the times of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed onwards, the word "catholic" has been one of the typical adjectives used to describe the nature of the church. The surprising thing is that people have been – to my mind unnecessarily – reluctant to use it in either the Lutheran or Orthodox liturgical tradition in Finland until very recent times.

As Professor Nikos Nissiotis has demonstrated, the Greek term "katholikos" originally meant perfection, a totality, indivisibility rather than universality. Within the church it meant the fullness of grace and truth, as epitomized in the sacramental life of a congregation gathered around its bishop.[27]

Metropolitan John of Pergamon comes to the same conclusion on the basis of the writings of the teachers of

26 The Way of a Pilgrim, pp. 54, 156

27 Nissiotis, p.102

the early church. In his opinion Catholicism as used in the first three centuries of the church referred almost exclusively to local churches. The teachings of St. Ignatius, for example, identify Christ and the whole Church specifically with a local congregation led by its bishop.[28]

It was only in the fourth century that the term catholic was linked with the worldwide nature of the church, when St. Augustine and others began to defend the church against the provincialism of certain sects. At the same time the word came to be used in the east in a unifying sense, so that universality became one of its attributes.[29]

In the last resort, the Catholicism of the church rests on the fact that it is the body of Christ. It is not an objective gift that can be possessed, nor an objective order that can be implemented, but it is the presence of Christ, He who in His own being unites His whole congregation, the whole of mankind, the saints and the whole of creation in one. No human endeavours can render the Church catholic, however good may be the intentions to "be one and work as one". The profoundest essence of Catholicism lies in Christ's transcendence of all contradictions and dichotomies.[30]

The Catholicism of the Church also has a pneumatological dimension. Whenever the church gathers together as the body of Christ to celebrate the Eucharist, this involves an appeal to the Holy Spirit: "Send down thy Holy

28 Zizioulas, pp. 143-144, 149

29 Ibid. p. 144

30 Ibid. pp. 158-159, 162

Spirit upon us and upon these gifts here set forth."[31]

The way in which the Holy Spirit is invoked to sanctify the Eucharistic gifts and bestow fellowship and unity on the congregation is expressed still more succinctly in the Liturgy of St. Basil the Great. "And unite us all one with another, as many as are partakers of the one bread and cup in the communion of the one Holy Spirit."[32]

Eschatology – the church's constant yearning for the kingdom of God

This epiclesis prayer is an invocation to God to grant his Church what it has already received historically in Christ, for through the Eucharistic elements we as the congregation partake of the "immortal" food "for eternal life" (John 6:27). In the words of St. Ignatius, these gifts are "the elixir and antidote that ensures that we will not die but live eternally in Jesus Christ".

Thus the Eucharist is at the same time a sacramental prediction of the time that is to come, a foretaste of resurrection. It is in this vein that the priest prays after taking communion, "O Christ, O great and most sacred Passover! O Wisdom and Word of God and Power. Grant that we may more truly have communion with thee in the day of thy Kingdom which knoweth no eventide."[33]

31 The Orthodox Liturgy, p. 75

32 The Orthodox Liturgy, p. 129; Zizioulas, p. 160

33 The Orthodox Liturgy, p. 94

In the reality of the church, eternity forces its way in and becomes present in time, even though we cannot equate the two. Similarly we encounter a tension in the life of the sacraments between that part of God's plan of redemption that has already been fulfilled and that part which is still to come. We can nevertheless claim on account of Christ's incarnation that everlasting life in God, his finality, is already with us in historical time. History as a form of existence in place and time offers us in Christ an opportunity for communion with the eternal.

This tension between history and the kingdom of God is not a matter of dualism but rather a yearning after "metamorphosis", or transfiguration. In the words of St. Paul, "we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling … because we wish not to be unclothed but to be further clothed" (2 Cor. 5:2-4). We do not do so only because our present state is by nature less real, but because the presence and influence of the Antichrist in history makes the church's current form of existence fragile and thus full of suffering.[34]

The events of the redemption are actualized in the present

The church is a community that remembers and recalls to mind the acts of redemption performed by God in the course of history. Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana spoke at the 1999 General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Harare of anamnesis as something that

34 Zizioulas, p. 18

defines our identity as Christians. It is a matter of remembering, calling to mind and transferring to the present in concrete form the event by which God, through Christ, came into human life.[35]

Anamnesis does not operate solely with the past. It makes both the past and the future immediate to us now. It surpasses the classic categories of created time. "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). The Orthodox Liturgy opens up a perspective on the future, on the final events, which "are mentioned as 'already completed', for Christ, who is 'both the bringer and he who is brought' is above place and time and above the characteristics of everything that has been created" (Clemens of Alexandria).[36] This means that we are able to remember with thankful hearts in the prayer of consecration "all those things which came to pass for our sakes: the cross, the tomb … the coming again a second time in glory."[37]

This adds a depth dimension to the Christian view of history, but it also places limits on it. History is not merely a shadow, as the Puritans or Pietists have sometimes claimed. It is one stage in the destiny of man.

Time is nevertheless a form of existence given by God to beings that He has created. Time and its passing are not an illusion but reality. Time moves on inexorably, and is in a sense, as Georges Florovsky perceives it, for examp-

35 Anastasios, p. 1

36 Anastasios, p. 3

37 The Orthodox Liturgy, p. 74

le, moving towards a final goal.[38]

History has a "metahistorical" goal. It is moving towards a terminal point, a point of fulfilment, a point where history is no more. Time is filled by eternity. History may also be looked on as a time of growth, and just as wheat and tares will growth together until the time of harvesting, so history will mature, not only for judgement but also for fulfilment.[39]

Closing remarks

As the second millennium comes to an end there has been much talk in the media and elsewhere of "the end of the world". One fundamentalist Christian community has been counting the months and days, and some secular sources have perceived a sense of the dramatic, of the "end of time", in the progression from the second to the third millennium of the Christian era.

Although the time in which we live is fragile, the work of salvation and sanctification performed by Christ is forever present in it. We come up against this fact in a unique manner in the Church, which is the body of Christ. In this sense the Church is indeed the hope of the world, in the midst of all the surrounding turbulence, because as Christians we know that one day Christ will be all in all.

38 Florovsky, pp. 246-247

39 Ibid. pp. 247, 253

Finally I would like to draw attention briefly to two things. The fact that the church is a sign of hope calls us as churches to accept a common responsibility and perform a common act of witness. Being "the hope of the world" implies a commitment to bear our common burdens and perform acts of love and peace through prayer and sharing.

To quote the final prayer of the Liturgy of the Early Church, read after the exhortation "Let us depart in peace", we go on to pray, "Bless them that put their trust in Thee, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance … grant peace to the world … to those in authority and to all Thy people …"[40] The fact that this prayer was at one time read outside the church building does much to emphasize the close relation that exists between the Holy Liturgy and Christians' mission of service in the world.

"Liturgy after the Liturgy" is an expression of common responsibility, of our endeavours to glorify the world. Respect for others, love for one's neighbour and sharing what one has are all part of compliance with the dual commandment of love.

The ethics of the Sermon on the Mount call on us to do more in the way of sharing than is implied by the modern welfare state, for instance. When Abba Agathon was once asked what is meant by perfect love, he replied, "I would like to find a leper and give him my own body and take his. That would be perfect love." The Christian love and the wonder and joy of the Resurrection of

40 The Orthodox Liturgy, p. 97

which St. John Chrysostom speaks in his Easter Homily when he promises full wages to those who come to work at the eleventh hour is diametrically opposed to the modern "bourgeois" way of thinking.

The role of the churches as "the hope of the world" is of equal importance as far as unity of belief and common witness amongst the churches are concerned. In the opinion of the Orthodox Church, unity amongst the Christian churches implies unanimity over the basic element of the faith. Until that is achieved there can be no common sacraments. The Eucharist, for example, cannot be an instrument for working towards a common faith, but rather it must be the outcome and crown of a common faith that has already been achieved. In the same way it should always be remembered how Jesus in his Prayer of the Great High Priest left us with a common challenge and duty: "That they may all be one … so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:21).

One of the basic questions for us Orthodox is to determine what is the relation of the "One Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church" to the other Christian churches. How do we understand the problems of the unity of the church and the divisions that exist in it? What are the bounds of the church, and what validity should be attached to the sacraments of Christian communities that lie outside the Orthodox Church, for instance?

Many significant Orthodox theologians of our day, including Metropolitan John of Pergamon and Metropolitan Damaskinos of Switzerland, admit that Orthodox theology does not yet provide a satisfactory solution to the problem of the bounds of the church or define the

significance of the question for people and communities that are outside the Orthodox Church.[41] Serious deliberations have certainly taken place on this theme in connection with preparation for the Great and Holy Synod, but no common approach has yet been found. It is fairly generally acknowledged, however, that God's work of redemption is not limited to those who lie within the canonical bounds of the Orthodox Church.

An equally pressing question for the churches is their attitude to other religions. Professor Samuel Huntington's notion of a clash of civilizations sets us thinking what the role of religions might be in such a clash. The increase in interaction between religions raises the question of how Christ may in some way be present in other religions. In what way could Christ's work of redemption impinge on people who are searching for the truth and living in accordance with their own consciences? It will not be easy to answer such questions, but it is our duty to draw on our own rich spiritual legacy in order to make our contribution towards truth and hope in this respect.

41 Clapsis, pp. 115-120

Rev. Dr. Antti Raunio

The Churches – the Hope of the World

1. Christ – the hope of the world

Our title, The Churches – the Hope of the World, is in itself ambiguous. It can mean that we should be talking either about the churches as the hope of the world or else about the open question of the churches' relationship with the hope of the world. To make matters worse, the concept of hope is open to numerous interpretations, as it can refer to either the attitude of being hopeful or the object of that hoping, and to either something that has not yet been realized or an existing state of the human mind. It would, I am sure, be rather problematical to set out from the notion that the churches are the object of the world's hopes in the sense that the peoples of the world should turn to the Christian churches and put their hopes in them, as such a view could lead to all manner of misunderstandings.

However, it is the case that Christians proclaim in their Creed that they believe in the One Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. This Church is the body of Christ, and all Christians are members of it. It is through this church that Christ is present in the world, and the Bible bears witness to the fact that Christ is our hope (1 Tim. 1:1). Christ is a servant of the Lord who "will not break a bruised reed or quench a smouldering wick until he brings justice to victory, and in his name the Gentiles will hope (Matt. 12:15-21; Is. 42: 1-4). Although none of the existing Christian churches can proclaim itself to be the hope of the world, the churches together may claim that Christ, who is present in the world and gathers all Christians together into one body through his Holy Spirit, is the hope of the peoples and the whole of creation. Understood in this way, Christ is not only the object of hope but He is that hope, through which the world can put its hope in God. God, in turn, has deigned to make it known to His holy ones what a dazzling brilliance is attached to the mystery that is to be revealed to all nations, "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). St. Paul's view of the Christ present in all Christians as a hope of glory may be understood only in the context of the notion of the Church as the body of Christ:[42] "Make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of

42 In the Finnish translation of the Bible adopted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland in 1992, the Greek expression *Khristos en hymin* is rendered as the equivalent of "Christ is in the midst of you", but it is pointed out in a footnote that it can also be translated as "Christ is in you", i.e. it may refer either to the congregation of believers or to individual Christians. In the light of St. Paul's theological thinking this ambivalence would seem strange, as Christ's presence in a Christian never singles that person out as an "individual Christian", but rather integrates the person into the body of Christ.

peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling" (Eph. 4:3-4).

Thus the church of Christ is a community of hope, and hope for the glory of God, and also for justice, peace and the integrity of the created universe, belongs to the nature of the church and of its mission in the world. These themes, often known as the social ethics of the church, are clearly to the fore whenever the Bible speaks of hope.

2. The Church's task of helping people to hope

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland has seen it as one of its central tasks to help people towards hope and the courage to live their lives to the full.[43] This led one working group considering future policies for the church's activities to note that the church is a community of hope only when it will agree to bear the burden of people's sufferings. The bearing of this burden and the awakening of hope have both a social and a spiritual dimension, and also both a temporal and an eternal one. The church attempts to promote the emergence and expansion of hope both by bringing grace and forgiveness into people's lives and by taking part in discussions and decisions regarding social affairs.

The church attempts in its own activities to involve itself with the experiences of people of its own times, their

43 This is emphasized especially in *Direction 2000, a church growing from the bottom up*, the report of a group appointed by the Bishops' Conference to monitor the Church 2000 process.

fears in life and the reasons for their lack of hope, and to respond to these. This means at the same time taking a critical look at its own structures and ways of working, as the church may be acting in contradiction to its own message if its structures and ways of working are apt to maintain feelings of powerlessness and submissiveness more than of hope and courage. This does not mean, however, that the revival of the church as a community of hope should be dictated by "the experiences of modern man" or by "public opinion". The point of departure for any renewal must be the nature of the church itself as the body of Christ and as a community of saints brought together by the word and the sacraments.

The feelings that have come to light most readily when examining the hopelessness and faint-heartedness of the people of our times are alienation, powerlessness and isolation, and also in more recent times an increasing proportion of feelings of insecurity. Alienation refers to the rejection by individual people of the common aims and objectives of society and their consequent withdrawal from the communities and institutions that pursue those objectives, while the inverse of this is concentration on one's own aims and objectives and one's own close social ties. This "cultivation of one's own little world" can in turn increase the sense of hopelessness and insecurity, as it undermines the foundation of the democratic system and yields ground to those who are able to exploit the system for their own advantage (Paul Otto Brunstad). The feeling of powerlessness chiefly arises from experiences that point to a decline in one's abilities to influence the course of events and a tendency to lose out to others. People feel that they are at the mercy of those who are more powerful than themselves. This

renders some people incapacitated, while others react by seeking a false sense of power from strong emotional stimuli and the rapid satisfaction of their immediate needs. Patient optimism and expectation and the postponement of acts of self-satisfaction out of consideration for others are no longer valued, and perhaps no longer even recognized. Isolation may be simply an excessive form of the feeling of alienation and hopelessness. People feel that they have dropped out from society, that they are not needed and that there are no opportunities open to them. There is no hope at all of anything better. The bitterness and hopelessness of those who feel isolated provide a ready-made breeding ground for violence and terrorism, and there are those who are ready to take advantage of this mood in others.

How can the church help to arouse hope in people and encourage them to find new opportunities? How can the church be a community of hope and a communicator of hope in our times?

3. The Church as the body of Christ and a community of hope

The word and the sacraments are – as our theology somewhat dryly puts it – the constitutive marks of the church. This means that they are essential to the nature of the church and in fact have given rise to the church. They unite people with God and with others through Christ, thus creating a community that represents the people of God and the body of Christ.

The word of God creates the Church so that it will create Christ in people's hearts. The word allows them to partake in the person and work of Christ, in other words in the act of the word of God becoming man, dying on the cross and rising from the dead. In becoming man, the Son of God forsook everything that was His and took upon Himself the tribulations and sin of men, and in the same way Christians should forsake all the good that they have received from Christ and take upon themselves the weakness of their fellow men and bear their burdens. Christ unites people as one body so that the good that people have is not their own but received by them from Christ through their fellow men. Likewise the sin, distress and burdens that people have do not weigh on their own shoulders, but others have, together with Christ, taken it upon themselves to bear them. In this way people "are born for each other", when the word causes Christ to be born in their hearts. It is through this birth of Christ in their hearts that they become spiritually people who are able to receive each other and take each other's part, through which they become members of the spiritual body of Christ who are ready to help and support their neighbours in every way.

We become members of the body of Christ in Holy Baptism, the purpose and effect of which is our salvation, or liberation from the power of evil and entry into the kingdom of Christ. This occurs through the death of the "old man" and rise of the "new man" in baptism, whereby we become partakers in the righteousness of Christ so that everything that is Christ's becomes ours as Christians and Christ takes upon Himself everything that we are. Thus we all become one with Christ in baptism and Christ and His Church become one body and one spi-

rit. The Christian life is indeed a constant return to the baptismal situation, since our selfish ego has to die daily in the kingdom of Christ and be replaced by a new man so that we can constantly cast off hatred, jealousy, greed, sloth, pride and unbelief and can become more gentle, more patient and more conciliatory as Christians.

Although baptism allows Christians to partake in the righteousness of Christ it does not destroy our propensity for evil at one stroke. This is why we need the sacrament of Holy Communion, in which Christ takes the sinful human form on Himself and enters into our struggle against evil. This in turn arouses a sense of love in us so that we are able to take on the form of Christ, that of righteousness. When the righteousness of Christ is combined with human sin, we become together with Christ "one cake, one bread, one body and one cup". This is in effect a question of food becoming combined with the person who consumes it. The act of accepting the body and blood of Christ means for us as Christians that we finally take on the same form as Him, a process that is accompanied by a shedding of our self-love and the implantation and gradual growth of a love that seeks the common good. This does not occur once and for all, but lasts for the whole duration of our life and will reach fulfilment in the Last Day, when Christ finally transforms His people in His own image.

There are two dimensions to the unity conferred by this sacrament. The first is that when we receive communion we partake of Christ and His gifts. This means that we receive as gifts all the spiritual virtues of Christ and His Church and all our sins and sufferings are shared by Christ and his saints, and the second is that all Chris-

tians benefit from each person who partakes in communion. Communicants should not be merely seeking strength and consolation for themselves but should also be playing their part in bearing the misfortunes of all, just as they themselves are being carried forward by Christ and His Church. The suppression of self-centred love lies precisely in this, that Christians should be ready to bear the miseries of the whole of Christianity and creation and suffer all the injustices perpetrated upon innocent people, of which the world is full. The bearing of each other's burdens which Christ emphasized is a matter of defending those who have been wronged, acting and praying on their behalf and suffering alongside them. This is in the final instance made possible by the dual identification with Christ and with other people through Holy Communion. It is precisely the uniting presence of Christ that makes the needs of others into something of urgency for the body of Christ, that is for the church, at the same time as it makes the church and each of its members into a servant of others. In this sense Christ is indeed the hope of the world, and through Him the Church is the hope of the world.

But what is the relationship between the spiritual reality of the body of Christ and the hope of the world, which is directed towards the achievement of justice, victory over poverty and suffering, the promotion of wellbeing, etc.?

4. A natural hope for better days

In the words of Luther, our secular society is, or should

be, the image and shadow of the kingdom of Christ, so that where the kingdom of Christ brings us and gives to us eternal righteousness and eternal life, our secular society should maintain this temporal, ephemeral life and justice and peace within it (WA 30 II, 554, 11-16). Thus an analogical relationship exists between the kingdom of God and human society. Society, which maintains human life and promotes justice and peace, is an image or reflection of the kingdom of God.

Correspondingly, Luther speaks of two kinds of hope. In the first place, there is "natural hope", focused on things that people do not have but consider it possible to obtain or achieve. This hope of better times to come is one of the essentials of life. It is a gift from God, although we should not rely on it alone, for its purpose is to turn our thoughts towards the true, eternal hope, in God himself (WA 6, 122). As Luther sees it, the focus of our natural hope is upon visible things that are possible, whereas that of our eternal hope is on things that are unseen and "impossible", i.e. they seem impossible from the perspective of our natural human understanding and hope. There is, however, a clear connection between natural and eternal hope.

This relationship between natural and eternal hope is central to the search for the Lutheran view of the church as a community of hope.

Luther's position, therefore, is that natural hope is essential to life, but that life should not be built up on the strength of this hope alone. In other words, the hope for better things to come is an essential feature of human life, but it is not the foundation of that life. The church

does not reject natural hope as a worldly aberration but actively supports and promotes it, but it reminds us at the same time that the foundation of human life does not lie in improving conditions within society or the conditions under which we personally live.

The natural hope in better things to come can become distorted, and indeed does so constantly, until it takes the form of a striving for personal success and the promotion of one's own wellbeing, while the wellbeing of others is of no special significance or is at most a by-product of our own success. Natural hope is also apt to become distorted in the form of self-centred nationalism, aimed at ensuring improvements in the conditions of life in one's own country without any consideration for other nations or even at their expense. It is even possible for nations and states to unite in the pursuit of welfare for their own region or continent without taking the interests of other regions sufficiently into account. Such a striving towards better times may be simply a guise for greed, selfishness dressed up as good intentions.

One of the principal aims of Lutheran social ethics has been to throw aside all the veils and obfuscations that conceal greed. This was particularly in evidence in the efforts at achieving social progress that took place at the time of the Reformation, when greed of a kind that undermined and destroyed the common good was perceived in the church's activities, the business world, administration, the judicial system and the structures of society itself, even though such "structures" in the modern sense were not even recognised at that time. Examples may be found in the criticism levelled at the trade in indulgences, exorbitant rates of interest and the system

of public begging. The natural hope in better things to come is not, therefore, a question of individuals' attempts to improve their own lot but of communities' attempts to promote the common good. This means that we need systems and institutions to take care of the distribution of the common good, not in the sense of achieving a constant increase in that which is to be distributed but quite simply the distribution of existing resources in such a way that everyone has enough. Nowadays there is a global dimension to this promotion of the common good, of course, so that it is no longer a matter of distribution within a town and its surrounding rural area as it was during the Reformation, but of distribution within the global community. The problem is, however, that no global system exists by which the common good can be shared more evenly throughout the world, and in many places there is even a lack of local institutions for achieving this.

It nevertheless seems to be that precisely those systems and institutions that have been created in order to promote and distribute the common good have in many places proved to be sources of weakness and hopelessness rather than of hope in a better future. Is the fault in the institutions and systems themselves or rather in the fact that too much has been expected of them, that they have been given a position which does not belong to them and which in effect misrepresents their purpose?

Is it not the case, in fact, that systems and institutions such as the state, the economy, parliamentary democracy and social security have begun to be understood, separately or collectively, as sources of welfare instead of promoters and distributors of welfare? Does the fun-

damental problem not lie in the fact that the hopes that have been placed in these institutions are ones to which they were not, and will never be, satisfactorily able to respond? If it is indeed the case that our hope for better things to come has been vested in these social institutions, it is these that have become *ipso facto* the foundation of our lives.

In becoming the foundation of our lives and the source of the common good, these social institutions and systems have also laid themselves open to the selfish pursuits of individual people. This is quite possible in the case of economic systems, state administrative and political systems, social policy and social security systems and all the people who work in them. In this way they become objects of a hope of a kind that will never reach fulfilment but will inevitably lead to disappointment and a sense of hopelessness. The natural hope for better times is arrested and extinguished in them and they are unable to offer any path towards a durable, eternal hope.

Disappointment with the ability of state and social institutions to satisfy the natural hope vested in them has been felt all across Europe in recent years, as manifested in the collapse of the socialist system in the east and the crisis of the welfare state in the west, and a new kind of natural hope has been intensively promoted in its place. This is based on the freedom of individuals to pursue the possibilities for achieving their own goals and satisfying their own needs in so far as this can be done without infringing the corresponding freedoms of others. This way of thinking is apt to be suspicious of the duties of the state or society to promote the common good, or even to reject the notion entirely. At least it tends to restrict

these duties to a minimum. Good is to be promoted by individuals pursuing their own ends, and hope is vested in the possibilities and freedoms that individuals have at their disposal and their active pursuance of economic growth. But this form of natural hope has also managed within a relatively short space of time to arouse many feelings of disappointment. One of the first instances of this was the fact that many people who moved to the towns and cities some time ago in search of a new and better future have ended up in a state of permanent poverty and misery, and similar disappointment has been felt in Asia in recent years as many of those who set out to build up their lives on the strength of economic growth have found themselves stranded with nothing to show for it.

A great deal of discussion is going on at the present time about whether the target of our "natural hope" should be a social model based on the welfare society or a liberal model based on the maximization of individuals' freedom of action. These two models are not entirely mutually exclusive, in fact, and it is possible to conceive of combinations of features from both of them, but the starting points are quite distinct views on the implementation and distribution of the common good and different understandings of the object of our natural hope.

5. The dawn of an eternal hope: solidarity in society and among mankind

In the light of its own socio-ethical tradition, the Luthe-

ran Church regards a welfare society based on solidarity and joint responsibility as a better object of our natural hope than the liberal market economy model based on individual freedoms,[44] and the Finnish Lutheran Church has attempted in its recent socio-ethical thinking to search for means by which it would be possible to give rise to organizations devoted to achieving greater equality in the distribution of welfare at the global level. While lending support to a hope for better times that is grounded in mutual solidarity, the church nevertheless reminds us at the same time that human life – whether that of individuals, communities or the whole of mankind – should not be built up entirely on the strength of such a hope.

From a theological point of view, our natural hope should be focused on God's gifts to mankind and his acts of creation, in other words on the good things that the created world provides to meet the needs of human life. God himself is present in everything that He has created and uses these things as means of transmitting his good gifts to us. This means that He is also a part of the created world through which good is to be passed on to all those in need. In the Lutheran view a social system or a state is created by God as a means of distributing the good that comes from Him to those who need it. The social order is in existence to distribute and mediate the good emanating from God and to protect it from destruction. A state with its institutions is not a source

44 See *Kohti yhteistä hyvää. Suomen evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon piispojen puheenvuoro hyvinvointiyhteiskunnan tulevaisuudesta* (Towards the Common Good, pronouncement by the bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland on the future of the welfare society), 1999.

of good, therefore, but a communicator, protector and equalizer of it. The aim of a social system is thus communion, the maintenance and protection of a community. Not only is the Church the body of Christ, but by an ancient analogy society is like a body, in which all are members in each other and in the service of each other. The principle that we refer to here as solidarity is built in to the Lutheran concept of a community, in which each member has the task of promoting the good of the others and the common good of all, while the community as a whole has the task of promoting the good of every one of its members. In such a system the good of each member of the community is not dependent on his own efforts so much as on the outcome of the solidarity of the community's activities.

Lutheran socio-ethics also makes allowance, however, for the limitations on people's natural solidarity and the tendency to adjust it in favour of the selfish desires of a particular group or individual. It is for this reason that we need institutions within society that can force people to take account of the common good and ensure its fulfilment. We need taxes in order to pay for the maintenance of the common good, we need reliable law enforcement institutions, we need a comprehensive system of social security in which standards are not dependent on the ability of the individual to pay, and we need "social rights", in the name of which society can guarantee all its members a basic level of income, health services and education. These things belong to every person by virtue of being a person and not on account of his financial status or his competence in any particular field of life. This is why the Lutheran Church regards the natural hope that is essential to life as being based on so-

lidarity within a community, which, in spite of all the difficulties – in many people's opinion insurmountable ones – we should attempt to understand and implement on a global scale. It should, perhaps, also be emphasized at this point that solidarity within the community does not mean the prevention of activity on the part of individuals, but it does offer as a motivation for activity an orientation towards the other people and the common good rather than the promotion of one's own interests.

6. A lasting hope in God

Our natural hope is thus focused on all that God has created and the good ensuring from these things. Such a hope cannot be durable without being connected to our eternal hope. Created good can guide people to a lasting hope because the object of that hope is present in everything that has been created, i.e. created things occupy their rightful place as objects of our hope only when we look at the true object of our hope, which is hidden "behind" or "inside" them, namely God.

It is impossible to describe the content of this eternal hope without connecting it with faith and love, for hope can remain potent only with the help of faith and love. Faith recognises God as He really is, as the source and giver of all good things. Hope trusts patiently in God's promises, such as the coming of righteousness and peace and the liberation of the whole created world from the burden of sin. Love binds each human being to God and to his fellow human beings, but love is unable to make us all one with God and our neighbours unless faith recognises the true, living God and hope places its trust in His words, i.e. in His promises.

One thing that Christian faith, hope and love have in common is that they are all imbued by the cross, and another is that they remain active and gain in strength at times when, from a human point of view, their opposite prevails. Faith recognises Almighty God, the source of all good, in the crucified Christ, hope places its trust in the fulfilment of all God's promises even though it sees around it nothing but suffering, tribulations and defeat, and love reaches out to that which would not seem to be worthy of being loved, God dying on the cross and a sinful, troublesome and objectionable neighbour. In all these things faith, hope and love are actually focused on God, who doesn't appear before us in might and power but is concealed within the distress and weakness of the world.

Christian faith, hope and love are all three derived from the presence of the triune God, and their place is in the inner man, which does not perform deeds but receives God and His deeds. It is faith that receives God's deeds, and it is faith alone that can use aright all the material and spiritual gifts that come from God. Faith renders them present and receives them, but it does not transform them into the individual's own properties or attributes but always regards them as belonging to God. Thus God can remain as God, the only one who is good and the provider of all good.

Together with faith we are given hope and love. These unite Christians with God and with their fellow men. This union through love is something that is just beginning and remains incomplete in the course of this life, but hope is capable of uniting us with what we do not yet see and cannot even conceive of as possible. It is in hope

that God's promises come true in the here and now, and not only to the extent that we humans regard them as true, but being present in reality, they are indeed true.

Christian hope, which arises and gains in strength when people are persecuted and tested, causes them to give up searching for help and salvation from their bodily or spiritual deeds or accomplishments, so that they no longer pin their hopes on created things or on themselves but seek help from "outside" themselves and the created world, from God alone.

According to Luther, despair, the opposite of hope, arises from an attitude of mind that seeks for good deeds at a time when the conscience is in a state of confusion and imagines that sin can be overcome by good deeds. It may be difficult to perceive the connection between this concept and analyses of the reasons for hopelessness and despair in modern-day man, but I believe that there is a connection. If what ultimately lies behind this hopelessness and despair is human selfishness and greed, either individual or collective, it should, and indeed must, be pointed out that the reason for the despair cannot be removed by active efforts or by deeds. The belief in active human effort as a means of eliminating despair contains in itself an element of unbelief, namely the notion that selfishness and greed can be overcome by something other than God himself. Despair also contains an element of misguided love, by which people attempt to perform good deeds of their own accord.

Hope arises when people long for that which they love. The object of hope is thus the same as the object of love. Just as love unites the lover with the loved one, so the

hope of one who is strong unites that person with the object of that hope. Christian hope unites people with God, even though the object of hope is neither visible nor otherwise observable. Thus this hope alters the people who hope, making them in a way concealed and unrecognisable and leading them into a state of inner obscurity in which hope does not "know" what it is that it hopes for, only what it does not hope for. Christians certainly know that the object of their hope is nothing created, nothing that can be seen or touched, but an eternal, invisible and inscrutable God. Hope does not know what it hopes for because it is content that, since God knows more than man does, it can wait for whatever God sees fit to provide. The human soul that hopes in this way is at once a hope that reaches out towards the good that is to come from God and the thing hoped for, the unknown good that is to come from God. The soul hopes for that which it cannot see, i.e. God, and hopes for it in a condition which it cannot see, in God.

The community of all the saints, Christ's spiritual body in which all are members of each other and serve each other, is similarly an object of hope. The members of the body of Christ have been inspired with love for Christ and for each other and they have begun to be shaped in Christ's image by virtue of this love, although this, again, is concealed from view and imperceptible to the senses. It is real, however, and is present in the hope that unites people with what they cannot see. Visible, observable unity with Christ and all his saints will be a perfect reality only on the Last Day, but in hope it can be present here and now. In hope the Christian is somewhere which he cannot see, in the spiritual body of Christ, where all people are members of each other, support each other

and bear each other's burdens.

When people have been united with God in hope, their hope is not based on anything observable such as other people, welfare, property or success. They have become so free that they no longer need to strive for those things. They are ready to endure with patience all manner of trials and tribulations and everything that created beings can do to them, for they no longer regard good as coming from created beings but exclusively from God. But for precisely this reason they are at the same time ready to take part in God's work of distributing His gifts to those who need them.

Furthermore, hope is prepared to undergo tribulations imposed by God, for hope is grounded in faith, which knows that God is good and that He has given all his good gifts to us through Christ, and hope is able to trust that God will fulfil – and has already fulfilled – all His promises, even though none of them may be seen or experienced – only the opposite of God's promises.

Mankind's hopes for better days to come, a more just society, peace among the nations and the wellbeing of the whole of creation are a natural and essential part of human life. They are not at variance with Christian hopes directed towards God nor are they subordinate to these or in any other way inconsequential. They may be incorporated into the concept of Christian hope and visible efforts should be made to fulfil them. The church of Christ takes the distress and misfortune of the world upon itself and deals with it as it would with its own distress and misfortune, while at the same time bringing the love, righteousness, peace, purity and freedom

of Jesus Christ into the world. All this comes hidden and bound in the created realty of the world, in water, in bread and wine and in clay vessels, but these created things are not the object of the hope but the instruments that convey it. Thus the hope for a better world remains alive in that hope which arises from and is maintained by its own object, the source and giver of all good things, the God of hope who came into the world as man.