



# The Two Folk Churches in Finland

The 12th Finnish Lutheran-Orthodox  
Theological Discussions 2014

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The Church and Action

National Church Council  
Department for International Relations

Helsinki 2015

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## Foreword

Along with the Nordic welfare-state system Finland shares with the other Nordic countries the historical folk church tradition. In Finland and Sweden especially the sixteenth century Reformation was in many respects less radical than in Central Europe. For example, the church retained much of the medieval liturgy and the historic episcopate. The Swedish king Gustav Wasa played an essential centralising role in the Reformation's implementation in Sweden-Finland, as did bishops and theologians such as Olaus and Laurentius Petri in Sweden and Mikael Agricola in Finland. In Finland the early Lutheran liturgies were based on the medieval Dominican use of the Diocese of Turku. However, a Lutheran state church gradually emerged with the king as its head. Finland remained part of Sweden and the Church of Sweden until 1809, constituting the easternmost dioceses of the latter – Turku, and later also Vyborg.

The next step in the formation of today's independent Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF) took place during the period when Finland was an autonomous Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire, from 1809 until 1917. This interval is essential for any understanding of the unique features of the Lutheran tradition in Finland. The Orthodox Tsar Alexander II, inspired by his liberal tendencies and aiming to stabilise the region, allowed the Lutheran Church to remain the Church of Finland alongside the Orthodox Christian tradition, preserving the Church Act from the Swedish era. The year 1817, when, as an indication of the new church's status, the Tsar made the Bishop of Turku Archbishop of Finland, is regarded as the year of the independent Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland's inception. Following the Central European Pietistic Awakening, revival movements developed within the ELCF which became important not only in moulding the church's character, but also for the formation of modern Finnish society.

The historical and sociological position of the Finns as an essentially Lutheran people and Finland as an autonomous part of the predominantly Orthodox Russian Empire paved the way for the development of Lutheranism as part of the mainstream Finnish identity within a distinctive ecumenical context in which the Orthodox tradition also plays a significant role. Inspired by German folk church theology in the years following the 1869 Church Act, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland now understood itself as a folk church rather than a state church. The establishment of the General Synod in the 1870s was also important for the development of an autonomous church identity and structure. This was the decisive turning point in the process by which an independent post-state church became a "folk church". The Freedom of Religion Act of 1923 confirmed this, and the process has continued until today.

The ELCF's nineteenth century folk revival movements were essential for the cohesion of Finnish society during the Second World War and the emergence of the post-war neo-folk church model, in which church and people strengthened their mutual ties on the basis of new laity-oriented church work methods in the

context of a changing society. The church's revival movements also maintained their influence and found new expressions. The four nineteenth century revival movements were joined in the 1950s and 1960s by a new sister movement, the neo-pietist or evangelical revival movement, which was critical of the church's secularisation, and which also had certain politico-social ambitions.

In Germany the idea of the folk church was the focus of a growing critique from the 1960s. Finnish development followed a similar, but more moderate, course. The Finnish church differed from the other Nordic folk churches in that it was no longer a state church in the traditional sense. However, as a large majority church, it retained a strong place in society. For decades more than ninety percent of the Finnish population belonged to the ELCF. In the last twenty-five years, however, the percentage of ELCF members has decreased: the church's membership currently constitutes approximately seventy-four percent of the population.

The ELCF's current challenging situation also tells us some important things about Finnish society as a whole. The Church Research Institute's publication *Community, Participation and Faith. Contemporary Challenges of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland* (2013) analysed and reflected on this as follows: "The first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has been challenging for the Church. Opinion polls indicate that central Christian beliefs have ever decreasing personal significance to Finns. In the recent years it can be noted that the Atheistic identity has become ever more prevalent and the share of those is increasing who do not believe in God in any way at all. At the same time Finns still have great appreciation for the Church and gladly allow elements of Christian culture to be visible in public life. In spite of this it is evident that custom and tradition are not enough to maintain the preservation of a Christian world view in the Finnish society."

A further challenge has been the rapid heterogenic and international transformation of Finnish society in the 1990s following the collapse of the Soviet Union, and Finland's EU accession in 1995, with an attendant newly globalised and digitalised context. This has increased the need for ecumenical and inter-faith work, and is a continuation of the process by which Finland has become an increasingly open society since the 1960s. There are, however, also xenophobic tendencies, and these have only served to increase the need for ecumenical dialogue and cooperation.

In ecumenical encounter the identity of the work that theological dialogues can undertake also supports the church's practical ecumenical work at all levels, from official ecumenical meetings to local parish work. This has been the focus of the bilateral dialogue between the ELCF and the Orthodox Church of Finland (OCF). For historical and sociological reasons these churches are Finland's "two folk churches". The Eastern Orthodox influence in Finland is perhaps the more ancient, in spite of the stronger influence of the Western tradition. The aim today is that all registered religious communities have equal opportunities and state support for their work in the spirit of the positive freedom of religion.

Because of the historically interwoven state-church-society relationship the ELCF and the OCF retain a special status in today's Finland, but Finland nonetheless reflects the general European and global post-secular tendency to seek a new balance between the secular and the religious in defining the place of religion in the public square in various societal contexts.

In facing these shared challenges the churches need to join forces in prayer, theological reflection, and practical work. Ecclesiology has become a key theme of today's ecumenical discussion and work. From the folk church perspective especially this approach brings together historical, sociological, theological, ecumenical, and practical strands. In the Twelfth Theological Dialogue between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Orthodox Church of Finland the theme was "The Folk Church: a Theological and Practical Overview".<sup>1</sup>

The presentations of this consultation offer a helpful overview of the church-sociological, historical, ecclesiological, and ecumenical self-understanding of the ELCF and the OCF today. Especially noteworthy for international readers is the historical analysis concerning the Lutheran revival movements and their continuing influence on Finnish church life today. These revival movements represent a Finnish contextualisation of German, Anglo-Saxon, and Nordic influences. It should be noted that the spirituality of the revival movements, especially in Eastern Finland, has been influenced to some extent by the Lutheran-Orthodox encounter.

The Finnish context affords an example of generally good ecumenical relationships. This has served both to inspire and focus the church's life. In the Lutheran-Orthodox relationship we have been able to benefit mutually from "receptive ecumenism" in practice. In the context of today's broad ecumenical frustration and new political tensions, accompanied by the persecution of Christians and other believers in many situations, it is our hope that this harvesting of fruits and good examples may be of some benefit to the international ecumenical community. It is our prayer that ecumenical theological work founded on the heritage of the undivided church and our Christ-centred identity may bring new life to our shared ecumenical journey, in Finland and elsewhere. We continue to seek ways to be more obedient to the command and promise of our Lord Jesus Christ "to be one" in shared witness and service, in order to bring, through our contribution, the goal of the visible unity of the church a small step closer.

*Tommi Karttunen*

Chief Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Theology  
ELCF National Church Council

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<sup>1</sup> The documents from the previous theological dialogues between the ELCF and the OCF have been published in English in the series "Documents of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland" 4, 7, and 12 and in the new series, "Publications of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, The Church and Action 11". See also [sakasti.evl.fi/oppikeskustelut](http://sakasti.evl.fi/oppikeskustelut) "Suomen ortodoksinen kirkko".



# THE TWELFTH THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF FINLAND AND THE ORTHODOX CHURCH OF FINLAND, 2014

## Communiqué

Bilateral theological consultations between delegations of the Orthodox Church of Finland and the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church were held at the invitation of the Orthodox Church of Finland from 21<sup>st</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> October in Oulu. The theme of the consultations was: “The Folk Church: a Theological and Practical Overview”. The Orthodox Church of Finland’s delegation was led by Bishop Arseni, and its other members were Archimandrite Andreas Larikka, Dr Pekka Metso, Dr Juha Riikonen, and the vicar of the local parish, Marko Patronen, with Pastor Tuukka Rantanen. The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church’s delegation was led by Bishop Seppo Häkkinen, and its other members were local vicar the Revd Dr Niilo Pesonen, the Diocesan Secretary Pastor Kati Jansa, the Revd Dr Teemu Kakkuri, the Revd Dr Leena Sorsa, and the Chief Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Theology of the ELCF’s Department for International Relations the Revd Dr Tomi Karttunen.

In his opening remarks Bishop Arseni said that the idea of the deep connection between church and nation was derived from the early church. Warm relations between church and state – known as the Byzantine Symphony – had been codified between 529 and 534, when Emperor Justinian I collected the *Corpus iuris civilis* body of laws. It was a legacy of this body of laws that the Finnish President, just like a Catholic Emperor, had still appointed both Lutheran and Orthodox bishops until a few decades earlier. Since the doctrinal consultations of 2012 the role of religion in Finnish society had come to the fore in many ways. From an economic perspective church resignations and the criticism in society of religion seemed a negative phenomenon, but it was of the essence of the faith that the wheat be separated from the chaff. The church lived in time, but the foundation of the faith was unchanging. Although church membership might have decreased the heartbeat of parish life could grow stronger if members were committed and active.

In his opening remarks Bishop Seppo Häkkinen stressed that the question of the church was clear in its general outline but complex and challenging in its substance. He said that the Faith and Order Commission’s document “The

Church: Towards a Common Vision”, which had brought together in a new way recent decades’ ecumenical reflection on the doctrine of the church, afforded a good example of the importance and slow progress of ecclesiological discussion. The document addressed what had been achieved and the questions that still required work on the journey towards the visible unity of the church. If the question of the church were challenging, so was the question of the folk church. Familiarising oneself theologically with the problematic of the folk church, and especially of the folk church’s identity, was, however, as necessary as it was interesting. The fact that this theme had been chosen was a sign of the ecumenical transparency and good relations of our churches. We were able, and wanted, to discuss a subject that was difficult, and in the history of which our churches had endured traumatic periods and experiences.

### **The Folk Church: a Theological and Practical Overview**

The theme was introduced from a theological and practical perspective by the Revd Dr Tomi Karttunen and Dr Pekka Metso, and from an historical and practical perspective by the Revd Dr Teemu Kakkuri and Dr Juha Riikonen.

Tomi Karttunen examined the current handling of the debate concerning the concept of the folk church and its identity in the light of the German and Nordic folk church and ecumenical ecclesiological debates. Although the folk church was primarily a historico-sociological concept, it also needed to be evaluated theologically. Historically the concept of the folk church was linked to the demise of the state church during the French Revolution of 1789 and the resulting rise of liberalism. In Finland the unravelling of the state church system began with the Church Act of 1869. As a folk church the church’s independence had subsequently grown incrementally.

The folk church concept described the vision of the mission of a church working among a particular country’s people. In order to avoid unhealthy nationalism it was necessary to emphasise that this was never only about a church of a single nation, but must always be seen in the context of the church of the nations and of the ecumenical and international community. The notion of the folk church should not obscure the identity of the church as the people of God, the body of Christ. Theologically the church’s essence was as a witnessing and serving community, “a church for others” founded on the word and sacraments and mediating participation in the life of the Triune God as the basis of its life. The Holy Trinity also formed the basis of the church’s concept of the local parish as eucharistic community (communion or eucharistic ecclesiology). The relationship of the persons of the Triune God as the source of the church’s life was also the theological basis of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church’s guidelines until 2020, *A Church of Encounter*.

According to Pekka Metso the question of the folk church, or of the church and national identity, was of striking relevance to the Orthodox local churches. A critical review of the issues of both church and nationalism and church and state was therefore desirable and necessary, although it was important to avoid simplistic theological conclusions. An understanding of the Christian nation and state as the ideal was embedded in many local churches, to the extent that the church was also expected to support currently held policy positions. This view obscured the link between the church's universal and local nature. However, within the Orthodox Church there was also a visible struggle to distinguish between church and state, as well as between church and nation.

Solving the diaspora question was important for the future of Orthodox local churches. In Orthodoxy it was common for a number of people of different nationalities to live in the same area. This afforded the possibility of establishing new local churches based on common faith and canonical order. As new local churches were formed it was important to avoid ethnic emphases and stress the local or regional character of the church. Where the Orthodox Church of Finland was concerned, with its spectrum of Orthodox nationalities, there was practical evidence that the Orthodox local church did not necessarily have to have a pronounced national ideology, but could simply be Orthodox. This sort of alignment might prove the lifeblood of the diaspora question's resolution. If nationalist goals were at the forefront of the quest for solutions it could only lead to a dead end.

According to Teemu Kakkuri the Lutheran Church's revival movements were key to the birth and shaping of voluntary civic action in Finland. The church did not remain the preserve of the upper class, but was embraced by different elements of the nation as their own church. The church establishment's emphasis on the virtues and benefits of the Enlightenment were no answer to the devastation and confusion caused to people during the eighteenth century "years of death". The revival movements' response was existentially more appealing, and also served as a channel for voluntary civil action for the benefit of the nation's subjects. The work of Archbishop Tengström was key in bringing together the dissemination of Bibles to the people for educational purposes and the biblical revival arising from English evangelicalism. Alongside Tsar Alexander I's liberal religious policy, this paved the way for the revival movements' work. Positivity bore fruit: separatism remained a marginal phenomenon, and the influence of the revival movements was channelled through the church's work. The revival movements built the folk church by promoting lay activity, creating a tradition of spiritual singing and devotions, breaking the power of the estates, and by working as pioneers and experimenters in many areas of the church's work.

Juha Riikonen considered the nationality question in the Orthodox Church of Finland in the light of the history of the denomination's establishment. In the view of nationally-minded Orthodox priests the Orthodox Church could only retain its place in an independent Finland through an embrace of Finnish values

and customs. Sergei Okulov arose as a leading figure among nationally-minded clergy at the turn of the twentieth century: he considered it essential that the church adopt the vernacular and that Orthodoxy should be generally taught among the people. This required that the clergy had Finnish nationality. The Orthodox Diocese of Finland was established in 1892 as part of the Church of Russia. In 1922 the committee drafting the law on religious freedom approached the place of the Orthodox Church on the basis of its being historically a folk church: for all of their history the Karelians had been caught in the conflict between the kingdom of Sweden and Russia. In 1923 an Orthodox archdiocese, subject to the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, was formed, which was recognised as a national Orthodox denomination. The canonical connection with Constantinople had seemed distant at first. Patriarch Athenagoras's letter of 1954 had been an expression of the solution's final settlement, and the place of the Orthodox Church of Finland as an autonomous church under the Patriarchate of Constantinople was strengthened.

**We are agreed** that space needs to be allowed for different religions and convictions in Finland. They give meaning and direction to the lives of individuals and communities. As Christians, we want to recall that the concept of human rights owes much to the Christian faith's emphasis on the unique value of every human being made in the image of God. We are concerned about the growth of religious illiteracy and a superficial or propagandistically biased attitude towards religions.

Our churches need courage and freedom to work in Finnish society in accordance with their faith. At the same time the churches need to be open to dialogue. Worldwide, Christianity is growing and vibrant. The churches will continue to be significant leaders of opinion in Finnish society.

We believe that churches and religious communities should be accorded equal treatment in our country. For this to happen the historical and cultural heritage of our country and its effect on religious identity needs to be taken into account. Finnish culture is changing because of internationalisation and other factors. Through understanding and internalising our own tradition we learn to respect and understand the traditions of others.

## **The continuation of the consultations**

It was decided that shared theological doctrinal discussions should continue. The next consultations will be held in 2016, with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland responsible for their organisation. As future themes "An Evaluation of our Theological Dialogue" and "The Common Heritage of our Worshipping Lives" have been provisionally agreed. A joint exploratory planning meeting will be held at the end of 2015.

Oulu, 22.10.2014

## **A Theological and Practical Overview of the Folk Church, opening speech**

Doctrinal discussions between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Orthodox Church of Finland have been held eleven times over the years, and this occasion brings the total to a dozen. The consultations have been alternately hosted by the Lutherans and the Orthodox. The themes discussed at the meetings have been jointly agreed, and those involved have found that their respect for each other's views has significantly increased. The most difficult issues have been avoided, and efforts have instead focused on reflection on doctrinal issues belonging to the period of the undivided church, which therefore naturally unite us.

The Russian church has suspended its dialogue with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. Internationally, therefore, the situation in Orthodox-Lutheran discussions is in a state of ferment. Fortunately, this does not mean that there has been a complete breakdown in contact, but it does perhaps call us to find new ways of communicating with each other. Here in the north meetings between the Lutheran and Orthodox churches of the Barents Sea region have been held for a number of years, and at these meetings at least contact has been effected at grassroots level concerning agreed activities. Lutheran contact with the east is not therefore completely broken, even if at the level of doctrinal consultation it seems to have reached its end.

One of the main structural differences between the Lutherans and Orthodox is that every Lutheran local church is independent. At a church-wide level the Lutheran World Federation does not direct doctrinal solutions. The Orthodox Church, by contrast, has seven canons of the councils of the church that are binding for all Orthodox local churches, although interpretation concerning any article of dogma is undertaken by the local Bishops' Conference. The binding force of the great synods might be seen in some respects as an obstacle to breakthrough in our consultations, but it also means that as part of a more widely connected whole the Orthodox local church may bring ecumenically nourished approaches to bear in the national context. A great and holy synod, as you well know, has been in a sporadic process of preparation since the 1960s. It is scheduled to convene in 2016, but in terms of its decisions nothing revolutionary should be expected.

It is my view that as our twelfth doctrinal consultation begins it is time to evaluate the quality, yield, and significance of our dialogue. I wish to underline strongly, however, that in proposing the objective of evaluation I do not intend to distance the Orthodox Church in Finland from the Lutheran Church in the Russian fashion, but that our starting point should be the need to consider the significance, direction, and opportunities of our own work.

It is my suggestion as we begin this round of our consultations that we consider the possibility of taking as our next theme an evaluation of the contents of our dialogue from the perspective of the ecumenical progress that has been made so far on their foundation. We may ask, what is the function of our national dialogue? How does it relate to the broader dialogue between the churches, and does it need to be linked with it? Can we set some goals for the future and identify what is possible? In 2008 in Pullach in Germany a consultation was held at which the results of our local dialogues were evaluated as part of the ongoing Lutheran-Orthodox doctrinal consultations. The aim of the project of the Akadimia Theologikon Spúdon at Volos in Greece and the Institute de Recherche Oecuménique in Strasbourg, which explores the results and opportunities of Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue, may constitute something similar. The Conference of European Churches (CEC) has also begun just such an evaluation of bilateral Lutheran-Orthodox dialogues.

It is my hope that you will not be surprised by the questions I have raised here. They are, however, what springs to mind as a new approach as I have reflected on the work of this meeting. My approach to my own work has always been practical, and it is on this basis that I say this. Unnecessary work should be avoided and necessary work needs a programme.

The theme of these consultations is “A Theological and Practical Overview of the Folk Church”. It is a theme that can be viewed from many perspectives. Included in its consideration are the topics of nationalism versus patriotism, and theology versus history. The idea of a deep connection between the church and the nation stems from the early church, when the church had an official place in the Roman state. The Byzantine Symphony – the warm relationship between church and state – was defined between 529 and 534, when Emperor Justinian I published the *Corpus Iuris Civilis* body of laws. The fact that until a few decades ago the President of Finland appointed both Lutheran and Orthodox bishops to their offices – like a Catholic Emperor – is an echo of this body of laws.

As in previous doctrinal discussions, the place of religion in Finnish society has arisen in many ways. The resignation of nominal members from the church has been given extensive press coverage, and the strident voice of a small number of so-called free-thinkers has been given media prominence, with well-known results. Individualistic ideas have also arisen among some members of the Lutheran Church, reflected in a desire that religion should modify itself at the behest of and in line with the low-bar requirements stirred up by the media. From the perspective of the finances of both the Lutheran and Orthodox churches such manifestations may seem an evil, but they are, if seen through the prism of faith’s essence, the sieve that separates the wheat from the chaff. The church lives in time, but faith’s foundation is immutable. Membership of the church may shrink, but parish life, if it is committed and active, may become more vibrant than was previously the case.

As these twelfth doctrinal consultations begin, I believe that there are some new and interesting perspectives, as well as some new food for thought, for the question concerning what the folk church is from a theological and practical perspective.

## Opening words at the twelfth consultations between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Orthodox Church of Finland, 21.-22.10.14, Oulu

*“Thank God, even a seven year old child knows what the church is, namely, holy believers and ‘sheep who hear the voice of their Shepherd (John 10:3).’ For thus the children pray: ‘I believe in one, holy, Christian church.’”*

So wrote Martin Luther in 1537 in the twelfth Schmalkald Article. Ever since this text belonging to the Lutheran confessions has often been used and quoted in discussions of church doctrine.

Over the years I have started to doubt Luther’s optimism. I understand that where the words of the creed are prayed there is the essence of the church. But I still sometimes feel that even learned theologians struggle to say what the church is. A good example is the Faith and Order Commission’s document *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* (2013). The document draws together the ecumenical ecclesiological endeavour of recent decades on the basis of the work of Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, and Protestant theologians.

The origins of the document lie in the 1927 World Conference on Faith and Order. Almost nine decades later the document was published, which states in its introduction:

*“The present text – The Church: Towards a Common Vision – addresses what many consider to be the most difficult issues facing the churches in overcoming any remaining obstacles to their living out the Lord’s gift of communion: our understanding of the nature of the Church itself”(p.1).*

So even decades after work began there is no common understanding among the churches of what the church is. Martin Luther may have said, “*Even a seven year old child knows what the church is*”; but for us, with our master’s degrees and doctorates, priests and bishops, it seems much more difficult. But this is precisely why work on the nature and identity of the church is so important.

While this may be received with some anxiety, I stress that, for all the slowness and difficulty of the ecclesiological discussion, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* is an excellent document. It shows how far the Christian communities have come in their quest for a common understanding of the church. The text reflects the progress that has been made, and indicates where work is still needed. As we begin these twelfth theological consultations between the Evangelical Lutheran

Church of Finland and the Orthodox Church of Finland we are, therefore, addressing a very topical ecumenical theme.

If finding a consensus on the nature of the church is difficult, it is even more difficult to agree on the concept of the folk church. This is our focus in these consultations, whose theme is “The Folk Church: a Theological and Practical Overview”. Coming to a theological understanding of the problematic of the folk church and especially its identity is both a necessary and interesting challenge. At the same time our chosen theme is an indication of the ecumenical transparency and good relations of our churches. We are willing and able to discuss a difficult subject that our churches have historically found traumatic.

The question of the folk church unites us as churches. We both work in Finnish society at a time that poses many challenges to the churches. We must therefore also discuss the folk church as a practical matter. Our missional environment and context, the values and climate of opinion of Finnish society, affect our churches’ lives. A shared discussion may help both folk churches to strengthen their identity as the church, but may also assist us in together serving Finnish society and the temporal and eternal best interests of its people.

The common task of the folk churches is to bear witness to Christ. This is how we may best work as churches for the people. As these consultations between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Orthodox Church of Finland begin it is my hope that they may contribute to this goal. My request and prayer is that God will bless these consultations and send his Holy Spirit to guide our discussions.

## A Theological and Practical Overview of the Folk Church – a Post-Constantinian Church?

### 1. A declining folk church – Christian identity and community

*A danger for the folk church is a problem that afflicts it from within, even as its position seen from the outside remains unchanged over a long period. This happens in such a way that, lacking a particular identity on the basis of which its nature as the people of God might be made obvious, it can no longer influence its members. In such circumstances the church's members cease to know what faith is all about. It becomes impossible for Christian heritage to be passed on through further education, for example, and the church gradually becomes meaningless, because it no longer bears any intrinsic feature that its members might not meet elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>*

These words about the scope of the folk church debate in a report for the Church Order Committee by Kalevi Toiviainen, Bishop Emeritus of Mikkeli, may be considered a very prophetic view of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the wider cultural circle of traditional majority churches in the West today. The folk church has been characterised as the “internal secularisation of the church” – a term no longer used to refer only to new pietist revival movements, but to a broader phenomenon. In Germany, for example, Michael Welker has stated that there are widely prevalent theologies and touted forms of piety characterised by:

*...an abstract theism, an emptying of theological content, weak confessional awareness, and a need also to adapt to various cultural developments in their entirety. As a rule this adaptation is accompanied by the strengthening and entrenchment of the individualism and subjectivism associated with our time.<sup>2</sup>*

Even in the 1960s pamphlets of Osmo Tiililä, Seppo A. Teinonen, and Risto Cantell, “The Crisis of the Church”, “The Church of Crisis”, and “The Church on the Road to Renewal”, there was a concern about the course of the Finnish folk church. “The Tension between the Church of the Ideal and the Existing Reality”, the diagnosis submitted by Toiviainen and others at the folk church seminar organ-

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1 Toiviainen 1980, p. 123 (Report of the the Church Order Committee, Annexe 2, spring session of General Synod, 1980).

2 Welker 1995, pp 75–76.

ised by the Department for Foreign Relations between 22<sup>nd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> September 1975, raised the need for the Church Research Institute to investigate the matter in a broadly based research project, which did not materialise as planned. The theme was taken up in the late 1980s and early 1990s in Harri Heino's booklet "Visions for the Folk Church of the Future" and in Ilkka Pärssinen's synod book "To Whom Does the Church Belong?" The theme of the "Church 2000" report was "A Church Growing from Below" – and research has followed. Björn Vikström has studied the folk church in the post-modern age, with particular reference to the Swedish folk church debate (2008); Seppo Häkkinen, Bishop of Mikkeli, has tackled the question of the tension between reality and ideal in the Finnish folk church in his doctoral dissertation (2010); and Patrik Hagman has addressed the issue in his book "After the Folk Church" (2013).<sup>3</sup> In recent years debate about

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3 Presentations at the seminar on the folk church published in the Finnish Journal of Theology (FJT) 2/1976. Especially interesting for our theme is Häkkinen 2010, p. 248 and p. 259: "The church's identity and its different interpretations affect the tension between ideal and reality, which manifests itself in the church's work and the dimension of private spirituality (practical commitment). A feature of modernisation is that it has resulted in the church's internal differentiation. It is thus able to maintain its structure as a folk church, but at the same time it has lost opportunities to form a clear identity and shore itself up internally. The church has adapted to a changing society by increasingly treating faith's external impact (performance) in parallel with the purity of the message of faith (function). The development of working practices and a broadening of the opportunities for participation have brought new people into the orbit of mission, but it has yet to see increasing involvement in the church's activities. ...Societal change has challenged the church's traditional community, whose weakening has contributed to a weakening of the sense of belonging to the church... A second factor in relation to ideal and reality is consciousness of membership. It has weakened the passing of the tradition among the declining younger generations."

Patrik Hagman's book "After the Folk Church" observes that Nordic Lutherans should question their own understanding of key issues if they are to be the church in an increasingly post-Christian period. Hagman discusses Luther's model of the two kingdoms alongside Dietrich Bonhoeffer's corrective, but ultimately finds more inspiration in the offerings of the Mennonite John Howard Yoder and the Methodist Stanley Hauerwas. Hagman's interpretation of Luther and Bonhoeffer is not entirely convincing, and the link he makes between the Eucharist and his concept of the church may well be examined through the prism not only of Hauerwas, but also of Luther, Bonhoeffer, and the general ecumenical communion ecclesiology discourse. For example, Hagman 2013, p. 88, seems to assume that the doctrine of the two kingdoms requires the church to be a majority church. This is not the case, as theologically the two kingdoms model is founded on the basic idea of the Triune God's gift of love being made real in the world (Raunio 2012, p. 67), the link between law and gospel, and the doctrine of the two separate natures of Christ. Secondly, for example, the folk church model is used in Germany, in spite of the fact that the church is in the minority in the eastern part of the country. Hagman's description of Bonhoeffer is problematic because he identifies Bonhoeffer's theological concept of "magistrate" as an empirical-sociological description of the state, and suggests that this is incompatible with the idea of the modern liberal state (Hagman 2013, pp 114–115). Clearly in the background of this is Hauerwas's interpretation of the North American cultural sphere and his consideration of its locally based communitarianism. This can also be seen in the way he quotes Hauerwas at the bottom of page 115. Interestingly, the former General Secretary of the Conference of European Churches, the Baptist pastor Keith Clements, is sceptical about the compatibility of the Hauerwas-Yoder model with the European context and sees Bonhoeffer's approach as offering more to an analysis of the current context: "I must confess my intense admiration for Hauerwas's intensely ecclesiological emphasis, which to me represents the full flowering of the Anglo-Saxon Free Church tradition from which I come. ...But he argues by relating such issues to the kind of community that the church should be, rather than to the world as it can be. ...It seems to me that the claim of the secular order upon the attention of Christians can be sustained without diminishing the central place of the church. As Bonhoeffer put it, the penultimate sphere has its proper place" (Clements 2013, 190). At the same time, it is clear that the folk church's realisation requires as its basis the state's positive interpretation of religious freedom in accordance with human rights agreements, probably in tandem with a strengthening of the church's theological and spiritual self-understanding. It is good to maintain a discussion with representatives of

the folk church and its internal state has again intensified not only in Finland but in neighbouring areas such as the Nordic countries and Germany: debate which may be linked with the discussion of the rise of social religion in Russia, and post-socialist countries in general, found in the thinking of Robert Bellah.<sup>4</sup>

The attacks on the Twin Towers in New York in 2001, the Arab Spring of 2011, and tensions related especially to issues of gay sexuality have contributed to a changed situation – in thinking both about the social religion debate and the presence of religion in the public square. In the church's internal debate there has been a concern about decreasing membership, in the background of which is an accelerated decline in a sense of identification with the church.<sup>5</sup> The new framework policy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland until 2020 "A Church of Encounter" (pp 13–14) is a response to the diagnosis of the church's most recent four-year report "The Challenged Church":

*The connection of the Finnish people to the church has weakened rapidly in recent years in terms of their commitment to church doctrine, activities, and membership. This weak commitment to the church is not a reflection of an*

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the American context, but in doing so we must remember the fruits of ecumenical work in general and the issue of European and Third World theology. Instead, Hagman's idea, that the "secular understanding of the state" (Hagman 2013, p. 224) serves to undermine the idea that secular power has a role in the divine plan, is not theologically sustainable. Concerning the theme of the folk church see also, inter alia, Björkstrand 2008, Huotari 2009, pp 225–234, Sammeli Juntunen's article "Kansankirkko ja kirkkokansa", Rovniemi 18.9.10, and Bishop Jari Jolkkonen's 12 theses for the renewal of the folk church vision at the Church Structures Forum, 12.9.13:

1. The folk church cannot be a bastion of nationalism.
  2. The folk church cannot be a bastion of state church ideology.
  3. The folk church cannot be a bastion of spiritual complacency.
  4. A reforming folk church is a church of generous grace.
  5. A reforming folk church relies more on the priesthood of all believers than heretofore.
  6. A reforming folk church is spiritually vital, strong, and vibrant. This is of the essence of the future of the reforming folk church.
  7. A reforming folk church must adhere courageously to its faith and confession.
  8. A reforming folk church better understands that it is a church of the people.
  9. A reforming folk church speaks and acts for social justice.
  10. A reforming folk church is a church of service and mission.
  11. A reforming folk church is structurally flexible and administered with a light touch.
  12. In a reforming folk church heaven can be attained.
- 4 For example, the situation in Ukraine, but also Russia and other post-socialist countries, is analysed in Cyril Hovurun's article "Die Kirche auf dem Maidan: Die Macht des gesellschaftlichen Wandels" (Ökumenische Rundschau 3/2014, 383–404) and in earlier theological dialogue with our church: "Christian identity and church membership from a practical perspective" ("Kristillinen identiteetti ja kirkon jäsenyys käytännöllisen teologian näkökulmasta", Reseptio 1/2012, pp 94–100).
- 5 The bishops' theses "Towards Connectedness" intervened in the tensions of the internal church debate in August 2014: ([http://sakasti.evl.fi/sakasti.nsf/0/862A62AA2AAA19EC2257D3B004D3EB0/\\$FILE/KUTSU%20YHTEYTEEN%20-ESITE.pdf](http://sakasti.evl.fi/sakasti.nsf/0/862A62AA2AAA19EC2257D3B004D3EB0/$FILE/KUTSU%20YHTEYTEEN%20-ESITE.pdf))

*indifference towards issues of spirituality or philosophy of life. Alternative forms of spirituality are increasing. People expect the church to take a more visible role in discussion on life values. The spiritual identity of church employees needs to be supported. ... The weakening of religious education and detachment from a religious community are key factors underlying secularisation. ... The church needs to develop the ability to integrate its unchanging message into a changing missional environment. Central to this challenge is the need to learn to live with the disparity between a person-centred society and a communitarian approach. The church must be able to take into account the individuality of people while honouring the corporate fellowship that is fundamental to it.*

In his recent opening speech at the Bishops' Conference (9.9.14) Bishop Seppo Häkkinen addressed this issue, and said this of our church as it approaches the Reformation's 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2017: "The future of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland does not first depend on its membership development, finances, or structures. The question above all is whether it will decide to remain a church." He referred to a loss of the sense of God's holiness, and said that radicalism should be recognised as sin in order that grace might remain grace and that the sources of human salvation might continue to be seen as lying in the church's word and sacraments in their offering of the means of grace to people. The Christian faith and the church must remain connected. He continued that the place of the Bible as part of the apostolic tradition had been weakened. The church should clearly demonstrate its adherence to biblical faith as a source of strength for life. Similarly the church's members must understand more deeply their calling to find their place among God's people. This called for seamless cooperation between the ordained and the priesthood of all believers. The church father Irenaeus's criteria for truth and falsehood, and for distinguishing the boundaries between issues, remained in force: 1. the Bible; 2. the creed and fundamental dogma; and 3. the apostolic tradition, of which the bishop's office was the servant. It should therefore remain both faithful to God and the gospel of Christ, upholding its importance for people even as it kept in touch with the issues and problems of this age's rising tide of information.

The idea that Protestant Christianity is especially prone to the pernicious influence of individualism is certainly not new. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in his lecture series about the nature of the church at the beginning of the 1930s, inspired by the Luther research of Karl Holl and Reinhold Seeberg, and especially by Luther's Communion sermon of 1519, concluded that "individualism has destroyed the Protestant Reformation"<sup>6</sup>; and concerning the ambiguous striving of the church to be present in society he said: "The church desired to be present everywhere,

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6 DBW 11, p. 145: "Der Individualismus hat den Protestantismus der Reformation zerstört".

but the result was that it was present nowhere.”<sup>7</sup> His critique seemed therefore to be that the church, in seeking to reach out to people, had merged so thoroughly with the prevailing culture that it had lost both its identity and its capacity to inspire. The only remedy was for the church to base its identity on the revelation of God’s glory, maintaining its connection with the inheritance of faith at the same time as it connected with people. In his book “*Sanctorum Communio*” Bonhoeffer emphasised the person and the community along with the unchanging faith of the church, and the church’s continuous actualising of this dialectic as the body of Christ. It is an interesting ecumenical conjecture that Bonhoeffer’s reflection on the personal community of the church has influenced the eucharistic ecclesiology of figures like Alexander Schmemmann and John D. Zizioulas. Ecumenical interaction has generally served to underline the importance of an understanding of community in discussion about the church. Professor of Ecu-  
menics Kalevi Toiviainen says in his previously cited analysis of the folk church:

*...When the phenomenon of Finnish church resignation has been studied, in spite of the ambiguity of results, one constant has been observed: the larger the city, the higher the number of church resignations as a share of the local population. ...The church ... has failed to maintain its connectedness, and the absence of that connectedness in more than the area of doctrine has resulted in a distancing from the church which ultimately leads to resignation. ... Sociological indicators ... suggest that the folk church’s journey to becoming a church to which people belong by personal decision or which is nothing short of a minority church may be a long one.*<sup>8</sup>

Even in the 1970s it was suggested that a decline in church membership would result in the church becoming more confessional. While this may strengthen the church’s desired identity and stabilise its self-understanding, it may also lead to defeatism. In Germany’s case a strengthening of identity has failed to materialise. Michael Welker has called the whinging about declining membership in the mid-1990s a “we’re shrinking” ideology, which easily reinforces itself and leads to a narrowing of perspective. Furthermore, it was clear in the 1980s and 1990s that global Christianity was alive and well. Churches in Africa and Asia, for example, were growing – sometimes exponentially. It began to be said that Christianity’s centre of gravity was shifting from Europe and the North towards the South and East. Kalevi Toiviainen has also referred to ecumenical interaction as a healing balm for national religiosity: “The church is learning to become a church that embraces interconnectedness and abandons self-sufficiency.” Welker introduces

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7 DBW 11, pp 244–246.

8 Toiviainen 1980, p. 124.

a new approach to this debate in the current era of globalisation, averring that “ecumenically and globally, the ‘we’re shrinking’ ideology is clearly unsustainable”<sup>9</sup> – a message that is no less expressed in our church.

In the Finnish context there was the shock of the October 2010 YLE “*Ajan-kohtainen kakkonen*” (“Gay Night”) programme, which was followed by a wave of mass resignation. Recent analysis suggests that the power of social media, coupled with a weakening of ties to the church and religious understanding, erupted in the biggest wave of resignation from the church yet seen in such a short period. Shortcomings were exposed in the church’s crisis management and communications strategy, as well as in the failure of the range of voices in the church’s debate to be heard amidst prejudicial views of the church. The shock deepened when the 2011 Gallup Ecclesiastica survey revealed rapid changes in attitudes to fundamental Christian doctrine when compared with the 2007 survey. In 2011 more than a quarter of respondents stated their belief in the Christian God: a decline of 10% since 2007. The proportion of those reporting that they did not believe in the existence of God increased by the same margin of 10% to an all-time high of 21%. Among young adults only 15% believed in the Christian God.<sup>10</sup>

It may be said that the cherished notion that Nordic Christianity constitutes “belonging without believing” or “believing without belonging” seems less straightforward in the light of these findings. Despite the increase in alternative spirituality outside the community of faith, non-participation often seems a reflection of a significant secularist or religiously indifferent attitude. The number of atheists has grown very rapidly. This trend is an apt reflection of a consumerist, hedonistic, and ahistorical philosophy. But it should not be taken as a sign that it is time to surrender. As part of the Church of Christ the folk church is sent to all nations, and if one person is reached its mission is not undertaken in vain. How then should the church and its message be understood? Since Schaumann’s Church Law of 1869 our church has been called a “folk church”. What does and should the dialogue arising from the German and Nordic folk church idea mean, and what issues need addressing?

Following the 1975 folk church seminar the then chief editor of the Finnish Journal of Theology (*Teologinen Aikakauskirja*, TA), Kalevi Toiviainen, headed the published papers (TA 2/1976) with the title “The Folk Church – What Is It, and Why Do We Need It?” His fundamental question was whether the folk churches should be considered as primarily theological entities or as products for the most part of subsequently theologically justified history and society. To this belonged the questions “How can the folk church make the marks of catholicity and apostolicity its own? What can be said of its role as witness, especially when

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9 Welker 1995, p. 74. Teinonen 1984 already refers to the churches’ growth in the South. (TA 3/1984, 198).

10 *Haastettu kirkko*, p. 42.

the values it recognises differ from the values of those among whom it works? What is the relationship between its goals and the reality?” Given that it seems the concept of the folk church is based more on historical-sociological conditions than it is a theological concept – for all that it can also be perceived, and might wish to be perceived, theologically – I shall examine the concept as expressed in its principal regions, in Germany and the Nordic countries, and especially in Finland and Sweden, in order to highlight the essential characteristics of the discussion from a historical and systematic theological perspective. The concept of the “folk church” is reflected in its own self-understanding in relation to the church’s confession and the undivided Christian inheritance, especially in the most recent ecumenical discussions about the doctrine of the church – as found, for example, in the Faith and Order document “The Church: Towards a Common Vision”. Finally I draw conclusions based on an analysis of the new missional approach for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland until 2020, outlined in “*Kohtaamisen kirkko*” (“A Church of Encounter”).

## 2. The history and meaning of the folk church concept

### 2.1. The collapse of the Constantinian state church after the French Revolution

The idea of the close link between the state, the church, and the people represents a return to the “Constantinian model”, which gave birth to the European state church system. The “*cuius regio, eius regio*” principle of the 1555 Augsburg Settlement brought no substantial change to this. The church was at the same time a state church, a folk church, and a confessional church. The principles of religious freedom espoused by English and Dutch radical reformers on the one hand, and Western Europe’s acceptance of the division of the church following the Thirty Years’ War on the other, broke this system apart. It was now difficult to think of the church as sufficient and complete in and of itself. The Enlightenment began to build up the place of reason and its links with civilisation. As Mikko Juva says: “The French Revolution and liberalism struck the final blow to the state church system.” The French Revolution demonstrated that the state did not necessarily support the church, and liberalism in turn played a leading role in establishing freedom of thought, at whose heart was the principle of freedom from the church’s supervision.<sup>11</sup>

The architect of the folk church concept (*Volkskirche*) is considered to be Friedrich Wilhelm Schleiermacher, “the father of modern ecclesiastical nationalism”

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11 Juva 1976, pp 92–93.

or “the father of the nineteenth century church”. He introduced the concept in his book “*Christliche Sittenlehre*” (“Christian Ethics”) in the 1822–23 semester. Schleiermacher linked German idealism and the protagonists of romanticism associated with Johann Gottfried Herder’s concept of nation in understanding “folk” (“*Volk*”) as no longer a subgroup of “nation” (“*Nation*”) but as its very essence, the basic elements of which were embodied in the language and poetry of Herder. In the background was national enthusiasm generated by the victory over Napoleon.<sup>12</sup> The introduction of the folk church concept was not, however, intended to celebrate the Prussian state, but reflected an attempt to wrest the church from its control. For Schleiermacher the folk church was “a church through the people”:

*The root of all evil lies in some of the mistakes we have made in our implementation of the Reformation. Where once the church was too independent of the state – even elevated above it – it has since been too subject to it, and the idea that it should function only as an institution of the state in certain matters has found increasing acceptance.*<sup>13</sup>

The folk church concept gained new significance in the church reform debate when Johann Hinrich Wichern established his Inner Mission movement in the mid-nineteenth century. It was now understood that the folk church constituted a community that grew naturally through infant baptism. The folk church was understood as being “for all the people”, and a folk education department encouraged the idea that the church should serve as an antidote to secularism. The goal was ultimately a socio-theocratic one: that church and people should overlap each other completely. Wichern’s Inner Mission movement’s motto was: “If the people do not come to church, the church must come to the people.” The idea’s impact in the contemporary Finnish context culminates in the mission principle embodied by the phrase “the church must be where the people are”. An emphasis on the priesthood of all believers became an important tool in “folk mission” (“*Volksmision*”).<sup>14</sup> To an extent Wichern’s movement thus represented, both educationally and missionally, a departure from confessional Lutheranism. W. Löhe’s confessional Lutheran approach, for example, gained some standing in practical parish work, but this cannot be considered a distinct theological school.<sup>15</sup>

Unlike Schleiermacher Wichern emphasised that the link between state and church stemmed from the idea of an entirely Christian people and state. This idea was able to find support from Hegel, for example. Wichern could thus in-

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12 Murtorinne 1976, p. 113; Pärssinen 1991, pp 17–18; Leipold 1997, p. 11.

13 Lainaas: Leipold 1997, p. 15. See also Vikström 2008, pp 52–53.

14 Juva 1976, p. 93; Leipold 1997, p. 18. In the background this is already to be found in Melancthon’s idea of the church as a “school”.

15 Ryökäs 1984, p. 26.

terpret the German victory over France in the 1870-1871 war as “God’s way of reigning”.<sup>16</sup> This prefigured the tribalism of the clergy of the First World War who averred that “God is on our side”.<sup>17</sup> The liberal folk church approach of clergy such as Rudolph Sohm, in which the church as an institution was emptied of its spiritual content and it was considered that the church should be organised on the basis of secular expediency, fed into its Nazi remodelling.<sup>18</sup> The espousal of nationalism in support of military action lent the church credibility after the First World War. At the same time as the Empire, with the Kaiser as *summus episcopus*, was abandoned in 1918, episcopacy was restored to some of the German *Landeskirche* and state and church were in principle separated. This opened the way for various church reforms.

## 2.2. The German folk church after the imperial state church and “the German Christians”

Between the wars discussion in the German context was boosted by the thesis presented in Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s 1927 doctoral dissertation *Sanctorum Communio*. As Andreas Leopold notes, the German folk church debate focused especially on his doctoral dissertation after 1945, when the situation of the German Evangelical Church showed Bonhoeffer’s analysis to be sharply prophetic. He writes: “That a church, which does not constantly burn to move from being a folk church to becoming a confessional community, is in the greatest internal danger is now all too obvious. ... Now more than ever we give thanks for the grace of the folk church, but we must no less open our eyes to the danger of its total corruption.” Bonhoeffer cites two theological justifications for the folk church: (1) As a preaching church, the church goes beyond itself. It is “a church for others”. (2) The world still cannot distinguish between the wheat and the chaff. Through the Word the voluntary church and the folk church, the substantial and the empirical church, the “invisible” and “visible” church are one entity.<sup>19</sup> The true church is therefore

16 Leopold 1997, p. 20.

17 Vikström 2008, p. 54 draws attention to the fact that similar nationalistic views were evident in the Swedish folk church debate in the early 1900s.

18 Ryökäs 1984, p. 25, identifies three distinct strands in the German debate of the 19th century: (1) the national folk church (J.G. Herder, J.G. Fichte, F.L. Jahn, P.A. Lagarde, and J.H. Wichern); (2) (R. Sohm, E. Troeltsch, and A. von Harnack).

19 Leopold 1997, pp 33–35; Bonhoeffer DBW 1, pp 149–150, also addresses the limits of the folk church, although he also highlights the reality of the church’s love, despite its incompleteness, as an historic strength of the folk church: “*Wie kann eine Kirche, die als menschliche Gemeinschaft ihrem Wesen nach Willensgemeinschaft ist, zugleich Volkskirche sein? ... Die sanctorum communio greift mit der Predigt des Wortes, das sie trägt – in beiderlei Sinne –, über sich selbst hinaus und wendet sich an alle, die auch nur Möglichkeit nach zu ihr gehören könnten, und das liegt in ihrem Wesen. Daraus folgt natürlich nicht, daß auch die toten Glieder zum Leibe Christi gehören. Der zweite Grund für die Volkskirche ist, daß hier noch nicht zwischen Unkraut und Weizen geschieden werden kann... Die logische und soziologische Einheit zwischen Freiwilligkeits- und Volkskirche, wesentlicher und empirischer Kirche, ’unsichtbarer’ und ’sichtbarer’ Kirche ist mithin durch das Wort gestiftet, und damit stehen wir bei einer genuin lutherischen Erkenntnis. Es gibt nun für die Kirche einen Zeitpunkt, in*

present in the empirical church. Bonhoeffer emphasises that both love for the church and a deep dogmatic commitment to a sense of the historic accomplishment of the church made it difficult for Luther to break from the Church of Rome.<sup>20</sup>

The “German Christians”, as represented by Wilhelm Stapel, understood “folk church” quite differently. Leipold notes that the typical equation of the term “national church” with the folk dimension of Christianity by hardline German Christians represents the worst abuse of the concept. However, the folk church concept endured through the Nazi period, because of its “integrating strength”, in spite of its vagueness and use as a catch-all term eluding accurate definition. The issue was, however, from the outset about reform, which asserted the right of a “Christian nation” to expand and to define the church’s social and working models. Yet both criticism of the church’s shortcomings and the nature of proposed reform notably differed.<sup>21</sup>

The concept of the folk church has thus been and continues to be interpreted in many different ways. In both the German and Finnish discussions concerning Wolfgang Huber’s mid-1970s article “What does the folk church mean?” (“*Welche Volkskirche meinen wir?*”), to which reference has already been made, five different ways of understanding the folk church are presented:

1. the folk church as a church “through the people” (Schleiermacher);
2. the folk church as a church “towards the people” in the sense of Christian conversion (Wichern);
3. the folk church as a church of one people (prone to nationalism);
4. the folk church as a church “for the people”, shepherded by clergy and emphasising infant baptism (perhaps the dominant understanding in Finland);
5. the folk church as a church of the people as a whole, emphasising the public role of the church (as a state church, threatening its independence).<sup>22</sup>

In the German discussion thinking about the folk church concept has changed significantly since 1945. According to Andreas Leipold, three definitions were especially important in the discussion at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: (1) the church as a church of all the people; (2) the church as a missional church for the people

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*dem sie nicht mehr Volkskirche sein darf, und dieser Zeitpunkt ist dann gekommen, wenn die Kirche in ihrer volkskirchlichen Art nicht mehr das Mittel sehen kann, zur Freiwilligkeitskirche durchzudringen. Dann aber ist ein solcher Schritt kirchenpolitisch, nicht aber dogmatisch begründet. Daraus geht aber doch der wesentliche Freiwilligkeitscharakter der Kirche hervor. Und dennoch liegt in der geschichtlichen, volkskirchlichen Art der Kirche mit ihrer großen Kraft. Das wird übersehen von den Verächtern ihrer Geschichtlichkeit. Echte Liebe zur Kirche wird ihre Unreinheit und Unvollkommenheit mittragen und mitlieben; denn diese empirische Kirche ist es ja, in deren Schoß das Heiligtum Gottes, seine Gemeinde, wächst.”* See also, for example, Karttunen 2006, pp. 173–185.

20 DBW 1, p. 151.

21 Leipold 1997, p. 35 and p. 50.

22 Leipold 1997, pp 118–119.

(the church for the people); and (3) the church as a socio-politically recognised church, supported by the state.<sup>23</sup> After the war there was a striving to restore the church's good name and "the faith of the fathers", but after the 1960s the concept of the folk church became increasingly problematic: sociological analysis along with the church's new public role and secularisation were brought into the discussion,<sup>24</sup> which was increasingly polarised from the 1970s as awareness grew of the reality of declining membership.<sup>25</sup>

Associated with the idea of "the church as a church of all the people" (1) are an appreciation of the church's internal pluralism and its contextual variety, along with the idea that the whole nation should belong to the church. This calls to mind the majority view in recent decades, here and elsewhere. However, it now struggles against the headwind of the general decline in church membership and other problems. It has also been subject to theological critique. Wolfgang Pannenburg, for example, has warned that if pluralism is seen as an ideological programme it leads to a situation in which normative pluralism becomes the only accepted norm, resulting in a disregard for the question of truth and a consequent fragmentation of the content and ethical norms of the faith. Furthermore, pluralism becomes virtually impossible if it has no unifying foundation that can allow a variety of views within defined parameters. Social unity is built on a shared concept of cultural content which can accommodate subcultures. Conflicting equal cultures cannot coexist in the same cultural sphere. This is evidenced by the multitude of failed states in which there has been a failure to connect with cultural foundations.<sup>26</sup>

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23 Leipold 1997, pp 53–56.

24 Leipold 1997, p. 99.

25 In a new trend Jürgen Moltmann in 1975 criticised "top-down" reform programmes and sought inspiration from Latin American liberation theology and its idea of "base communities" and the church growing "from below" ("von unten"). This approach was taken up in Finland by Archbishop John Vikström and to some extent Jaakko Elenius. The "church for the people" idea is now replaced by the idea of "the people's church", which "lives, suffers, and works among and with the people". However, for Moltmann the folk church is also an "integrative power". Moltmann criticises the theological fragility of the folk church's "dual strategy", which aims to reform the church from above and the parish from below. It behoves the church to be more theologically aware of itself and to develop less along folk church lines and become more voluntary. Openness to "everyman" requires a clearer connection with Christ and more openness about the kingdom of God (Leipold 1997, pp 112–113). In Finland Archbishop Kari Mäkinen, in "From Folk Church to a Church of the People" ("*Kansankirkosta kansan kirkoksi*"), his opening speech at the General Synod (8.11.10), has also described a changing situation in which a growing number of people's life circumstances will require the support of church volunteers: "It is said that the folk church is in a time of upheaval. But I see a folk church that is becoming more evidently a people's church, as others have called it. This is something we must welcome. It is already a daily reality for many of our church's workers that people's various life experiences are to be taken seriously. And the truth is that it is in coffee shops, workplaces, and living rooms that the church and its future are discussed. These are the places where the story of the future church will be told. I understand the temptation in this situation to grow hostile and to close ranks, to take cover and become defensive in the midst of changes in lifestyle and culture. I do not know what lies ahead of us. But I do know that this is the Church of Christ, which is led by the Holy Spirit. And I know that a church that wishes to keep the doors open between its deepest message and life's changing reality will need much faith, prayer, and trust, as well as growing courage."

26 Pannenburg 1993, p. 24.

The idea of the folk church as a church with a mission to the people (2) expresses the church's desire to be "a church of all of the people". It has been much in evidence in the Finnish neo-folk church "comrade-in-arms priest" debate since the Second World War. It does not posit that the whole people should be brought into the church's sphere of influence; rather, it proposes a focused missional approach. Especially in its German understanding it is connected with Bonhoeffer's idea of "the church for others" (*Kirche für andere*). Michael Welker has suggested that the idea of "a church for others" protects the folk church's concept of "folk" from succumbing to religious nationalism. "Folk" is always understood as "a people among the nations"; and the church as always part of the ecumenical family of the universal church – as but one of the members of the Church of Christ. In this sense "folk church" encompasses both "folk" and "church", alongside an equal weighting of the church's internal focus and its looking beyond itself.<sup>27</sup>

On one hand, the folk church understood as "a socio-politically recognised church, supported by the state" (3) implies the will of the church to be independent of the state. On the other, the church desires to maintain good relations with the state to further the fulfilment of its mission. The church's political role is a matter of controversy, but it is commonly accepted that the universal gospel should be presented publicly and openly. Faith is not merely a private, but also a public, religious matter, because God is the Creator of the whole world and Christ is fully human. Furthermore, to be silent is no less to make a statement: the church should thus deliberately involve itself in public debate on the basis of its message. This is the timely challenge of Rowan Williams in "Faith in the Public Square" or of "public theology" (Wolfgang Huber<sup>28</sup>, Heinrich Bedford-Strohm),

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27 Leipold 1997, p. 55.

28 Like Moltmann, Wolfgang Huber was inspired by Dietrich Bonhoeffer's theology, and offers a parallel model of thought in his book *Die Kirche* (1979). Huber sought to reflect on the church from an ecumenical perspective, using the theological inheritance of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. According to Huber the folk church is a theological programme that aims to bring to the surface the "church's accessible proclamation to all people". Huber further states that the concept tends to regard the people and the church as a single entity, although in the German context this has not been the reality since the beginning of the 19th century. Furthermore, it is theologically questionable to limit the concept to including only one people (Leipold 1997, pp 118–119).

According to Huber the reform concept had in the 19th century already become concerned to defend the existing institutional church, and looked to the past more than it did to the future. Huber concludes that the "folk church" in this sense is no longer a viable concept. In the Finnish context this conclusion is reflected when in the church's strategy mention is made of "a church that is present", "a church involved in our community", and "a church of encounter". Huber stresses that rather than concerning itself with what goes on inside its own territory it should be understood that it is the church's public responsibility to be actively at work in the ecumenical context. At the end of the 1970s the question of peace in the debate was in this sense a key issue. The church's theological foundation is in the proclamation of God's redemption and his liberating work. It follows that the church has a certain social character which should be examined in the light of this proclamation. Thus, the truth of the church's proclamation sets substantive criteria for all its work, and also in its embrace of political and social responsibility. In speaking of the liberation God brings, therefore, the church needs to speak of people's liberation, and for human rights. All in all, according to Leipold Huber speaks about an "open" and "public" church, which is sure of its core beliefs and can therefore allow for transparency at its edges (Leipold 1997, pp 119–120). Under Huber's leadership these ideas have in part contributed to the implementation of the EKD's most recent

no less for Finland than for Europe in general. Debate about post-secular society, which suggests that secularists need to come to terms with religion, is connected with this challenge.<sup>29</sup>

It seems that the “neo-folk church” experience in Finland had a reforming effect earlier than it did in Germany, where it crumpled in the face of the Third Reich’s onslaught. It was already in its Finnish youth in the 1960s, when the *aggiornamento* spirit of Vatican II also made itself felt. In 1969 the church established a research centre. However, in the 1970s sociological analysis was done in parallel with more rigorous theological endeavour. From its outset the Church Research Institute’s goal was to bring the disciplines of theology and sociology together. At the same time, there were calls from many systematic theologians for a reinforcing of the place of theology. In consequence, discussion of the church’s self-understanding and its theological research became the special responsibility of a committee for theological affairs with a dedicated theological secretary, who was a leading expert in the field.<sup>30</sup>

From the 1970s to the 1990s the German debate was characterised by polarisation between those who spoke in support of the folk church and those who were critical of it. Among German Lutherans the majority supported the folk church, but some wanted to tie the church’s teaching more explicitly to the Barmen Declaration. Alongside this there were those who emphasised a variety of “parish building” programmes. The main focus of this group was the pluralistic society and the church’s calling to negotiate the gaps between multiple value systems. Their aim was to re-think the church’s public mission, and especially its task of proclamation, as the folk church faced a future reality of church resignations. They placed emphasis on pastors’ professional skills, and especially on their social and communication skills, in order to make worship more accessible.<sup>31</sup>

### **2.3. *Complexio oppositorum*: the folk church concept as an integrating “myth”**

In his 1993 lecture “The Myth of the Folk Church” Michael Welker suggested that the philosopher Hans Blumenberg’s concept of myth might open a new path towards a creative reconciliation of the different concepts of the folk church and the church in general. Blumenberg’s use of “myth” allows for an understanding of a multiplicity of life connections from different perspectives. It also helps to reconcile conflicting viewpoints. In forging links in the midst of the world’s

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programme of reform, “*Kirche der Freiheit*” (2006).

29 Leipold 1997, pp 56–57.

30 Murtorinne 1977; Malkavaara 2011, p. 17, p. 19 and especially pp 76–82 for a discussion of the place of theology.

31 Leipold 1997, pp 132–134.

complexity it can break through the experience of alienation and unpredictability. In using the concept of myth as a hermeneutical key, Welker thus seeks to reconcile completely different and partly conflicting views of the church under the concept of the “folk church”. According to Welker systematic tensions are attached to the very concept of “folk”. For Schleiermacher it meant a people that was the subject of its own development: “a church through the people”. In his turn Wichern above all treated of folk as object, from the perspective of the conversion of the whole people through the church’s mission. Welker warns of the folk church’s boundaries in people’s domestic life, language, origin, politics, or other areas, because too close an involvement by the folk church results in it being understood from a perspective of state-nationalism. The folk church can, however, accommodate an understanding that it serves one people among many: the folk church is a church of the peoples. The church must always remember that it is part of the global and ecumenical community.<sup>32</sup>

Welker also sees in the concept of myth a possibility that the “folk church” might easily fail to notice “the folk” and limit their opportunities of involvement – making them the meek of the earth, with an indistinct profile, a voiceless people. A critical consideration of “The Myth of the Folk Church” might open new possibilities of participation for such people. Indeed, special care needs to be taken to provide such possibilities. In this respect the principle of the priesthood of all believers is needed, along with a better use of people’s gifts, so that newly accessible forms of ecclesiastical proclamation may be explored. In this way the church’s invitation to the estranged might be a stronger feature of the folk church’s communications processes. The church needs to make conscious use of a multifaceted congregational proclamation that brings to light the bounty hidden in our parishes. The church would thus be enabled to act against individualism and the erosion of solidarity. Welker’s myth of the folk church thus seeks to unlock the potential of all its members, actively shaped by the idea of the folk church. The ambiguity and diversity associated with the concept of the folk church, according to Andreas Leipold’s folk church dissertation, also serves to offer an analogy to which Blumberg’s concept of myth might apply. At the very least it may help to bridge the gulf between the folk church’s categorical critics and defenders.<sup>33</sup>

In conclusion, it can be said of the current German folk church debate that the folk church concept is one with useful application if it is understood as theologically anchored in the doctrine of the church, and if its self-understanding is broadly multidimensional and comprehensive. This combines the idea of folk as subject and as object, inductive and deductive approaches, and the individual and the community. There is a text on the webpages of the Evangelical Church

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32 Leipold 1997, pp 142–143.

33 Leipold 1997, p. 144.

in Germany which suggests the situation has not changed substantially since the discussion of the late 1990s: “There is still controversy concerning whether the concept of [the folk church] is still applicable to the church’s current situation. If Thesis VI of the Barmen Declaration is used as a measure, then the term remains useful as a characterisation of the church in Germany. Thesis VI states: ‘The Church’s commission, which is the foundation of its freedom, consists in this: in Christ’s stead, and so in the service of his own Word and work, to deliver all people, through preaching and sacrament, the message of the free grace of God.’ ‘All people’, not just some, is and remains the starting point.”

However, the “folk church myth” has not been without its theological ambiguity. Above all, its focus is integrating and based on diaconal mission. It acquires a clearly theological character if it is connected with, for example, Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s “church for others”, and is understood on the basis of Trinitarian Christology. Yet one might ask if it is worthwhile to introduce the secondary concept of “myth”. The same might be said, perhaps, of the classical understanding of the basic concept of the “local church” or “church province”. However, it does seem that in the current context the concept of the folk church can assist in an understanding of the environment in which the church lives and works, at least in the Nordic countries and Germany. In the ecumenical context the local church/church province concept might be more useful and globally accessible. In any case, the church’s theological identity requires more detailed consideration. Before any such ecclesiological review is undertaken, however, an examination of the impact in Finland of the Swedish debate is needed. Because of our shared history and geographical proximity, Swedish thinking about the folk church has had more influence in Finland than has Danish thinking, in spite of the fact that in Denmark the “folk church” concept was already recorded in the constitution as early as 1849.<sup>34</sup>

## 2.4. Einar Billing and the challenge of individualistic passivity to the folk church concept

Einar Billing is considered the founding father of the Swedish idea of the “religiously motivated folk church”. His thinking has been influential in Finland, as can be seen in the thought of bishop and Luther scholar Eino Sormunen in his work “*Kristinoppimme*” (“Our Christian Doctrine”).<sup>35</sup> The folk church concept of

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34 For a discussion of the early history of the Danish “Folkekirken”, see Vikström 2008, pp 55–58.

35 Pärssinen 1991, pp 95–97. For the early history of Swedish folk church thinking see Vikström 2008, pp 58–59. Billing’s historical influence may also be observed in *Kristinoppi* (KO 104. “*Suomen kirkko – kansankirkko*”, “The Finnish Church – a Folk Church”), in which his concept of “timely grace” is very central to the concept of the folk church: “The Finnish church is said to be a folk church because it desires God’s timely grace to be brought close to the lives of the whole people. This is not of course to say that the concept of “timely grace” is used here in the same sense as it is in Billing’s theology.

the leading post-Second World War figure of the Finnish neo-folk church movement, Archbishop Martti Simojoki, differs from Billing's individualistic thinking. Simojoki stressed that the presence of the Church of Christ in the confessional folk church – the church as the Body of Christ – meant that neither new pietistic nor liberal critiques of the church were acceptable:

*We ... have tried to address the problematic of the folk church in such a way as to make it possible for the Church of Christ to be accommodated by and made real in our folk church. I do not think I am wrong when I say that during the war this was precisely the ideal for the clergy. We did not know how to conduct a theological reflection about this, but, to the extent that we were able to express it, we had a strong notion that we must strive in our own church for more commitment and idealism. Our departure point was always that our faith in the holy was of the essence, and we saw that the church was not peripheral, but something closely bound up with our faith ... that when we speak about the church it is a matter for faith, confession, and praise.<sup>36</sup>*

In his statement at the 1975 folk church seminar Simojoki referred to the Danish debate, which regarded Billing's religiously motivated folk church as a Swedish contextualisation which was not applicable elsewhere. This notwithstanding, Einar Billing is perhaps the most influential figure in the history of Swedish folk church theology. He formulated his basic ecclesiology in the early 1900s under the influence of the Young Church Movement, whose vision was expressed in the motto "the Swedish folk – the people of God". Almost as influential was J. E. Eklund, who was not, however, nearly as well known in Finland as Billing. It may be said that Einar Billing's view of the folk church was close to Schleiermacher's individualism, whereas Eklund's owed more to Wichern's collectivism.<sup>37</sup>

The concept of "timely grace" in the background of Billing's understanding of the church is linked with the idea of the historical drama in which God's revelation in history brings liberation and reconciliation through the story of the Exodus, the prophets, the Christ Event, and the church. From this perspective the whole of history can be seen as a single entity. Theology thus interprets the whole of reality. This stems from Billing's idea of the specificity of theology, which rejects the liberal and biblicist idea that the realm of theology should occupy only a special, private space. The folk church offers to every human person God's universal message about the liberation and grace brought in Christ. Billing emphasises God's sovereign, objective work and people as the passive recipients of "timely grace". It is people's passivity that makes possible a harmonic understanding of the whole

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36 Simojoki 1976, pp 88–91.

37 Vikström 2008, pp 60–63; Idestrom 2012, pp 8–9.

of reality. If the church is constituted by individuals who passively receive, the visible character of the church is minimised. The church can neither challenge nor be challenged, because it is not in touch with the reality surrounding it.<sup>38</sup>

Sven-Erik Brodd has posited that problems with the Swedish understanding of the church were evident when Dietrich Bonhoeffer toured Sweden in the early 1930s, and had to change the title of his Uppsala lecture because “A Concrete Doctrine of the Church” was not understood. The flaw may also be reflected in Erik Eckerdal’s apt question for Billing’s folk church theology: “Where will the folk church be made real?” It would appear that the idea of the church as the Body of Christ does not have a significant place in Billing’s thinking.<sup>39</sup> By contrast, Bonhoeffer placed special emphasis on this, to the point of saying that the church was “Christ existing as the congregation”. Eckerdal calls for a reading of Billing against Billing, one which finds in history the significance for the church of the God of an Abraham who flees his commandments, and of Isaac and Jacob.<sup>40</sup>

Billing’s model reflects an emphasis on grace and the word of God, despite the fact that it is open to Welker’s charge of “abstract atheism”. In Finland the bad fruits of this way of thinking can be seen: worship is not truly a corporate “celebration of the people of God”, and the understanding of the church as “the Body of Christ” remains an abstract concept. This in turn means that fellowship can seem distant: the result of “abstract theism” is that congregational connectedness remains conceptual rather than an enfolded word.

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38 Eckerdal 2008, pp 124–127.

39 Eckerdal 2008, p. 128.

40 Eckerdal 2008, p. 130. Antti Miettinen has also drawn attention to similar problems with Billing’s ecclesiology in his dissertation. He emphasises the weight given to God’s revelation as an “event” in Billing’s theology. This would seem to suggest the influence of Neo-Kantianism – the idea of the word as transcendent – on his thinking. This is consonant with the scientific understanding evident in the historical-critical study of the Bible at the time. Miettinen may well have a point in referring to the ideas of Schleiermacher, Albrecht Ritschl, and Adolf von Harnack concerning the hellenising and intellectualising of Christian faith, or their proximity to the “value of experience” in Billing’s thinking. (Miettinen 2011, pp 25–28). The model’s emphasis on the relationship between the anti-metaphysical subject and object is reflected in a critique of Billing’s theological approach to Christ’s presence in the Eucharist and his theology of Baptism. The consequence of his concept of universal “timely grace” is that even before Baptism a person is considered as belonging to the scope of God’s grace. It follows that the unbaptised were members of the Church of Sweden until 2000. This is reflected in the idea of “the open church”, and in the assertion of the primacy of the word in relation to the sacraments. Although Billing’s concept of the church allows for infant Baptism, its theological significance is sketchy and unclear (Miettinen 2011, pp 46–52). This feature of the Swedish folk church concept has long been the subject of criticism in our church, and the Church of Sweden has moved in a more Lutheran direction in the sense that Baptism has been a requirement for membership since separation from the state in 2000. Billing’s folk church concept, which is the result of its essentially objective individualism, poses provocative questions because although he emphasises the place of parish worship, he fails to address what this means in practice. If faith is only connected with the individual’s relationship to preaching, and faith is otherwise invisible, parishioners’ community – their sacred communion – is unnecessary (Miettinen 2011, pp 42–46). Eckerdal 2008, p. 130.

## 2.5. A “democratic folk church” or a “community offering the means of grace”?

Even during Billing’s and Ecklund’s time the understanding of the folk church was clearly influenced by liberal theology and the call for justice. The priest and social democratic parliamentarian Harald Halle personifies this, whereas in Germany the dominance of liberal theology precluded the adoption of such thinking.<sup>41</sup> With the stronger socio-ethical trend of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the Swedish church debate of the 1950s assumed new relevance. The “democratic folk church” ideal, inspired by Viktor Rydberg’s democratic vision of Christian socialism, emerged as the leading model. Later the Bishop of Västerås Arne Palmqvist stressed the theme of an open and democratic folk church.<sup>42</sup>

The Church of Sweden Act states that the church is “...an open national church, which through a democratic organisation and the ministry of the Church carries out nationwide activities”. The “democratic folk church” ideal has also been influential in Finland and has sparked a debate about what it means to say that the Bible and the church’s confession is the supreme guide of the church’s faith. It is desirable to emphasise the importance of faith’s core elements and the basic character of the church’s faith and nature. The fundamental issue concerns how the concept of the Triune God as the source of the church’s life, the Bible, the ecumenical and Lutheran tradition, a culture of good governance, and the contemporary local and global context may interact constructively.

The Swedish folk church debate remains unsettled. The process culminating in the separation in principle of the church from the state has spawned a wealth of studies on the topic. Thomas Ekstrand (2002), for example, has identified the various models at play in the Swedish debate. He calls Billing’s approach to the folk church concept, and Gustaf Wingren’s less individualistic understanding, models in which the church is (1) “an institution of the means of grace”. He describes in turn the approaches of Bo Giertz and the current Bishop of Uppsala and former Lutheran co-chair of the Porvoo Contact Group, Ragnar Persenius, as (2) “a community concerned with the means of grace”. God uses the church to act in the world, but the community of believers, gathered in worship, also plays a central role.<sup>43</sup> This approach can also be described as a sacramental concept of the church, and it is one that is represented in our own church’s ecumenical documents of recent decades. Finnish ecumenical Luther research and ecumenical dialogues, for example the Porvoo Common Statement and dialogues with the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches, have contributed to its development.

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41 Vikström 2008, pp 70–71.

42 Vikström 2008, pp 74–75, p. 78; Miettinen 2011, p. 7, footnote 6 refers to the research of Thidevall, 2000 ja Claesson, 2010.

43 Ideström 2012, p. 23. About Wingren, see Vikström 2008, pp 78–82. Vikström 2008, p. 84, draws attention to the fact that in his book “*Kristi kyrka*” Bo Giertz often uses the concept of “the Body of Christ”, which is almost entirely absent in Billing.

Paragraph 146 of “Justification in the Life of the Church” (2010), the report of the Roman Catholic – Lutheran Dialogue Group for Sweden and Finland, states: “Because of the real presence of Christ, the church is sacramental.” The idea of the church’s sacramentality implies the visible presence of Christ in the church, a view which could already be seen in Martti Simojoki’s mature ecclesiology.

Ekstrand further identifies (3) a “collectively oriented folk church of creation theology”, or “church of the people”. J. A. Ecklund’s early writings already encompass this model in draft form. The “service-oriented folk church” (4) is related to this idea, but it takes a more individually focused approach. Its theological impulse is neighbourly love and an understanding of Christian faith based on contextual theology. Finally, he identifies (5) a “feminist folk church concept”. Central to this is the church understood as an “open community”. It emphasises “...that the church is an open, unhierarchical community that promotes the good stewardship of the whole of creation in its relationship with God”.<sup>44</sup>

When these models are considered in the current context it remains important to note that the view of the church in the Bible and undivided Christendom conforms to the understanding of the Lutheran confession, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, and the ecumenical tradition. Only then may a proper assessment be made of both the church’s faithfulness to apostolicity and catholicity in the light of the revelation of the Triune God and its faithfulness to the fulfilment of the will of God in the contemporary Finnish context.

### **3. The folk church and its essence as a church – what makes a church the church?**

#### **3.1. The Holy Trinity as the foundation of the church**

It has been said that one of the main achievements of twentieth century theology was the uncovering of the roots of Trinitarian doctrine in both the Old and New Testaments.<sup>45</sup> In this respect Andrei Rublev’s famous and much-loved icon of the Holy Trinity serves as a very striking image of ecumenical theology’s core findings over the last century. The century of the church has been spoken of at the same time as has been the forceful return of Trinitarian theology. These two concepts overlap each other. A good example of this is afforded by the Faith and Order Commission’s mission document “The Church: Towards a Common Vision” (2013), which, as the basis of its work, brings together the ecumenical doctrinal

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<sup>44</sup> Idestrom 2012, p.24, quoting Ekstrand 2002, p.97

<sup>45</sup> For the biblical roots of the doctrine of the church, see, for example, K. Stendahl’s review in RGG “*Kirche Im Urchristentum*”, as well as Antti Laato’s article in *Reseptio* 1/2012, pp 39–63. For the doctrine of the church, see, for example, Mannermaa 1983, pp. 93–124, and Kärkkäinen 2002.

endeavours of Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, and Protestant theologians in recent decades. Its clear starting point is that the church is the church of the Triune God.

When the departure point is the Holy Trinity as a whole and not just God as Creator, Christ as Redeemer, or the Holy Trinity as the breath of life, a comprehensive view of faith and life is made possible. From this root spring also the idea that mission should be seen as the mission of God (*Missio Dei*), an emphasis on the holistic nature of mission that takes into account people's material and spiritual reality, as well as the idea of humanity's oneness with the whole of creation – at the same time as human beings have a special role to play, being made in the image and likeness of God. It is no coincidence that Patriarch Bartholomew has been a leading proponent of ecotheology.

It is essential to see the connection between the doctrine of the Trinity and the spiritual nature of the church. In the theological dialogue of recent decades a very broad consensus has been achieved concerning both the church's nature and mission and the foundations of the church in the Holy Trinity. For example, at our church's 15th theological discussions with the Russian Orthodox Church in 2011 at Siikaniemi in Hollola, the theme of which was "The Church as Community", the following theme, among others, was discussed:

*The Holy Trinity is the primary image of the church's existence and life. In the church the human being is drawn into participating in eternal life through the gracious work of the Holy Spirit in the word of God and the holy sacraments, and is connected with the love, of which it is an image, which is the essence of the relationship between the persons of the Holy Trinity. (Thesis 2 of the first discussion group's communiqué)*

The church's foundation in the Holy Trinity is especially to be seen in Holy Baptism, through the sacred transmission of which, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we are tied to Christ and his church. The whole person is born again through the Holy Spirit in the presence of Christ in the water of Baptism and through the words of the sacrament. The Son of Adam, created in the image of God, through the word and the prayer over the water receives a share in grace by the washing of rebirth – in spirit, soul, and body. To be included in the gift of Baptism is to receive the forgiveness of sins through the gift of faith, and at the same time is to be drawn into the selfless life of the Holy Trinity as a communion of the faith and love borne by the Christian hope.

The Siikaniemi consultation also concluded that "The communion of the church reaches its culmination in the sacrament of the Eucharist. ...In this sacrament Creator and the created, heaven and earth, people and angels, living and departed are reconciled" (thesis 5). "In Christian thinking, Baptism and Eucharist have always been the most important sacraments on which the unity and communion (*koinonia*) of the church, created by the Triune God, is founded" (thesis

6). They are also associated with the starting point of the creed, according to which “the unity and continuity [of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church] are closely linked with the office of bishop” (thesis 7). It was also concluded that the church is called by the transforming message of the death and resurrection of the Son of God to a loving diaconal service, which is the universal mission of the church, of the material and spiritual well-being of the whole person (theses 8 and 9). It was also desired to stress that “the Eucharist and service belong together” and that the church “has a social dimension” in witnessing to the love of God in word and deed (thesis 10).<sup>46</sup>

### 3.2. Communion ecclesiology – eucharistic ecclesiology

At the heart of the general ecumenical discussion of the church’s doctrine of the Trinity is the emphasis of *koinonia* or communion ecclesiology on the parish as a worshipping and eucharistic community – in Orthodox theology probably referred to usually as eucharistic ecclesiology – in the background of which is the establishment of the World Council of Churches after the Second World War and the neo-patristic approach emerging in some Orthodox emigré theologies, which also had an impact on Roman Catholic conciliar theological thinking, as well as on some of the Reformation churches.<sup>47</sup>

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46 In the Lutheran contribution to church dialogue the theme of the church has been considered from an exegetical perspective by Antti Laato, from the perspective of systematic theology by Matti Repo, and from the perspective of practical theology by Seppo Häkkinen. Articles have been published in Finnish in the journal *Reseptio*, issue 1/2012.

47 For example, Papanikolaou 2008, p. 238, on the Trinitarian basis of John D. Zizioulas’s eucharistic ecclesiology: “Zizioulas here is linking personhood to the eucharistic ecclesiology of twentieth-century Orthodox theology most evident in the work of Nicolas Afanasiev and Zizioulas’s own mentor, Georges Florovsky. Zizioulas also links his theology of personhood to a theology of the Trinity in a way that is more developed than in Yannaras and less apophatic than in Lossky.” Zizioulas 2011, pp 14–19, writes: “...the ecclesiological meaning of the Eucharistic body of Christ appears as an inevitable and immediate consequence when we consider the Lord’s supper from the perspective (intrinsic to it) of the ‘one’ and the ‘many’. It is therefore not surprising that Paul calls the Church the ‘body of Christ’ (Rom. 12:4–5; 1 Cor. 12:12–26; Eph. 1:23; 4:12–16; 5:36; Col. 1:18–24). This image of the Church, the reason for so much discussion among New Testament exegetes, cannot be understood apart from the Eucharistic experience of the apostolic Church, just as this experience cannot be understood if we refuse to see Jesus Christ as the ‘One’ who incorporates within himself the ‘many’. Similarly, the other images of the Church in the New Testament (‘building’ [1 Cor. 3:9; 14:5–12; 2 Cor. 12:19; Eph. 2:21; 4:12–16], ‘house’ [1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 3:6; 1 Pet. 2:5], ‘perfect man’ [2 Cor 11:2; Eph. 4:13], or the analogy of marriage [Eph. 5:29–32; cr. 1 Cor. 6:15–20]) become clear when we view them in light of this experience.” In linking the eucharistic assembly with the church’s offices and ordination, Zizioulas 2011, pp 22–23, writes in a way that resonates well, for example, with the theology of Luther: “If we consider the epicletic character of the sacrament – this is exactly what it means to relocate all ordination within the framework of the Eucharistic service – we are led to speak of the orders and ministers of the Church neither in ontological terms nor in functional terms (a dilemma in which many of the earlier controversies have been trapped), but in existential and personal terms, just as Paul speaks of the charisms in 1 Corinthians 12. By ‘personal’ and ‘existential’ (terms which, of course, are not ideal because they can have several meanings) I mean first, in a negative sense, no ministry is possible above or outside of the community as an individual and ontological possession and second, in a positive sense, that each ordination and each ministry is existentially linked to the Body of Christ. It is not defined by its ‘utility’ or by its ‘horizontal social structure’, but it is a reflection of the very ministry of Christ, the same energies of God the Father and the gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:45–)

The Faith and Order Commission's mission document "The Church: Towards a Common Vision" represents the first time it has been officially suggested that communion ecclesiology might offer a normative way to understand the nature of the church. The document states: "The biblical notion of *koinonia* has become central in the ecumenical quest for a common understanding of the life and unity of the Church (§ 13). ...The Church is fundamentally a communion in the Triune God and, at the same time, a communion whose members partake together in the life and mission of God (cf. 2 Pet. 1:4), who, as Trinity, is the source and focus of all communion. Thus the Church is both a divine and a human reality" (§ 23).

Our church's draft opinion concerning the mission document states: "The basis of *koinonia* ecclesiology, the partaking in Christ in the life of the church in the Triune God as source and focus, is well expressed in paragraph 23 of 'The Church: Towards a Common Vision'. Its premise draws on the undivided inheritance of Christendom and provides a deep, yet sufficiently flexible, foundation for the church's life and mission in the contemporary context of proclamation. This is clearly evident in the document's concluding section, according to which *koinonia*, 'as communion with the Holy Trinity, is manifested in three interrelated ways: unity in faith, unity in sacramental life, and unity in service (in all its forms, including ministry and mission)' (§ 67). Lutheran theology emphasises justification by faith, but also the principle that faith and love belong together in Christ. Ministry and mission are therefore of the essence of the church as the Body of Christ."

It is, however, good to remember that human beings cannot partake in the life of the Holy Trinity in quite the same sense as do the three persons of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Yet our communion is real, maintaining our connectedness with Christ and his bringing of salvation to those who are baptised. Our connectedness and unity with Christ through faith has made communion possible with the Triune God through the coming among us of Jesus Christ.<sup>48</sup> This is probably a widely shared Christian vision.

Although the Eucharist is the culmination of communion in the church's earthly life, Christians are also bound by Baptism, common faith, the word of God, and prayer. Eucharistic communion between the Lutheran and Orthodox Churches would require unanimity on doctrine and a number of canonical issues, especially where the question of office in the church is concerned. Yet we are united by our Christian Baptism. German Lutherans and local Orthodox churches under the Patriarchate of Constantinople have, with some other churches, recognised each other's Christian Baptism in a 2007 joint declaration. I believe that we in Finland

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*in and for* the one body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12–30)."

48 Evans 1994, p. 319, refers to J. M. R. Tillard's idea that the concept of communion is always relational in nature. However, the communion between the persons of the Godhead is unique, even though people are given access to it through their involvement in the loving work of Christ.

can also recognise each other's Baptism, and accept each other as Christians on the basis of Baptism and our common Christian faith. This is reflected in our designation as Finland's two folk churches. I believe that the degree of our communion is developing and progressing step by step.

At the Second Vatican Council, when the Roman Catholic Church abandoned the idea that it alone was the model for all Christian churches and shifted its focus to the goal of "becoming one church and remaining the church", as the previous pope, while still a cardinal, put it, the goal of visible unity has been very widely accepted as meaning that the Church of Christ should be one, respecting a range of Christian traditions, and building unity through the churches' mutual recognition. Among Orthodox figures, John D. Zizioulas has questioned whether the Orthodox Church as a confessional body makes the claim to be the only true church: "The Church must incarnate people, not ideas or beliefs. A confessional Church is the most disincarnate entity there is." Zizioulas also places stress on working towards a movement of the "local church" to replace the idea of confessionalism.<sup>49</sup>

Naturally, the achievement of unity requires unity in faith as well as a distinguishing between legitimate and illegitimate difference. Truth and love will go hand in hand in this.

### **3.3. One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic – a communion of word and sacrament**

The Nicene Creed's formula that the church is "One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic" plays a central role in theological reflection concerning the marks of the church. The Lutheran tradition adheres to these characteristics, but considers them on the basis of its own confession.

The Lutheran Confessions' interpretive key is to be found in Article VII of the Augsburg Confession of 1530:

*...[the] one holy Church is to continue forever. The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered. And to the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, that is, rites or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere alike.*

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49 Reference to Zizioulas, John A. Jillions 2008, p. 285.

It is therefore intended to emphasise that the ordained ministry of the church has an important role in teaching about the word of God and the sacraments as well as in the sharing of the gospel and the sacraments (Article V).

Interestingly, some Catholic scholars have regarded Luther's understanding of ordained ministry as close to that of the early church and the Orthodox in its emphasis on the word of God, prayer, and the importance of the laying on of hands in the ordination of a priest or a bishop. The Augsburg Confession begins with a statement that links the Lutheran Reformation with the ecumenical creeds of the early church in their western form, and thereby with the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and the two natures of Christ. It concludes by stating that it presents "a summary of the doctrine of our teachers". It further emphasises "...that nothing has been received on our part against Scripture or the Church Catholic or even the Roman Church, so far as the doctrine of the church has been revealed to us in the writings of the Fathers."

On this basis our church's ecumenical work has stressed that the Lutheran confession shares in the undivided inheritance of Christendom. In Lutheran theology the creed's marks of the church as "One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic" are principally met in an assessment of the church's life in the light of Scripture and thus in the teaching of the gospel and the right administration of the sacraments, as well as the divinely instituted ministry of the church. At its heart, therefore, is the church which is present in the local parish's eucharistic celebration, but which at the same time embodies the apostolic faith and binds itself to the inheritance of the one, holy, catholic church.

### **3.4. The relationship between the local and universal church – folk and people**

The church's catholicity – in the sense of its universality and the fullness of its Christian faith – depends on the relationship between the local and the universal Church of Christ. The term "local church" for its part does not refer to the whole Church of Christ, even though it is truly present in the local church, because Christ himself is present in the word and sacraments, and above all in the Holy Eucharist. However, there is still no ecumenical consensus concerning its meaning.

The document "The Church" formulates this in a way that is very widely acceptable from a Lutheran perspective: "Legitimate diversity in the life of communion is a gift from the Lord. The Holy Spirit bestows a variety of complementary gifts on the faithful for the common good (cf. 1 Cor. 12:4–7). The disciples are called to be fully united (cf. Acts 2:44–47; 4:32–37), while respectful of and enriched by their diversities (1 Cor 12:14–26). Cultural and historical factors contribute to the rich diversity within the Church (§ 28). ... At the same time, unity must not be surrendered. Through shared faith in Christ, expressed in the proclamation of the Word, the celebration of the sacraments and lives of service and witness,

each local church is in communion with the local churches of all places and all times. A pastoral ministry for the service of unity and the upholding of diversity is one of the important means given to the Church in aiding those with different gifts and perspectives to remain mutually accountable to each other (§ 29)".

In Finnish Lutheran tradition the "pastoral ministry for the service of unity and the upholding of diversity" referred to here is exemplified by the office of bishop. Last August the bishops of our church published theses called "*Kutsu yhteyteen*" ("A Call to Connectedness"). They stated, among other things, that "to be connected requires confessional recognition and an openness to dialogue", that "it is to be linked with worldwide Christianity", and that "it is strengthened by cooperation".

We live in a global and digital world, in which the world's cultural wealth and its associated frictions are increasingly a reality in Finland. Globalism and ecumenism are central features of the contemporary church's life. It is therefore positive that today's folk church is more clearly a church of the people. It is a "church for others" – called to be both aware of its identity and open to dialogue, a church of both internal and external mission, testifying in service both at home and abroad, offering unconditional love to the needy. This is why our church's new mission guideline *A Church of Encounter* (2014) is founded on the proven theological virtues of faith, hope, and love.

#### **4. The folk church's identity as the people of God: Trinitarian communion as the foundation of a folk church for others**

##### **4.1. The connectedness of the individual and the community: a church of encounter**

The folk church can only be God's pilgrim people if it keeps sight of the church's foundation in the Trinitarian God and his acts in creation, in redemption, and the lively work of the Holy Spirit in word and sacrament. The Holy Trinity is itself the primary image of love in communion, in which the connectedness and distinctiveness of persons serve each other. We can therefore say that the encounter and mutuality of the persons of the Holy Trinity as communion are a prefiguring of the church's communion and the source of its life. The meeting and reconciling of difference is the path to creativity, justice, and peace. The kingdom of God has come near and is present in Christ, who is eternally present in his church, even though we continue to struggle against sin, death, and the power of the Evil One. As the communion of saints the church is, from a human perspective, a community of pardoned sinners. It is a "hospital for the terminally ill" (Luther), which is nevertheless called and equipped for pilgrimage as disciples of its Lord: to take the Path as branches of the True Vine.

In Orthodox theology especially there is, I believe, an emphasis on the church's life in connection with God's coming and the incarnate Christ's mystical encounter with the church in the life of the parochial community, and above all in the divine liturgy. This is not so much an intellectual doctrine as it is a description of the church's socialisation.<sup>50</sup> In the Lutheran Church we have been able to, and we still can learn from this comprehensive approach. It can be suggested, for example, that Dietrich Bonhoeffer's idea of a church "for others" and the idea in Orthodox theology of a church "for the life of the world" are very close.

It appears that in the shaping of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland's understanding of its mission the concept of the folk church has not featured especially prominently in recent decades. The direction of the church's mission has been shaped successively by its mission guidelines documents: "A Church Growing from Below", "A Church that Seeks to Be Present", "A Community of Participation", and, most recently, "A Church of Encounter". All these grow out of our domestic Luther research and the influence of international ecumenical doctrinal discussion, which on the one hand has emphasised Christ's presence in the church as a community of faith and love, and on the other the church's participation in the life of the Triune God.

As a counterbalance to the divisiveness of exclusivism and the fragmentation of individualism, and no less to the church's internal secularising tendency, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland's mission guidelines to 2020, *A Church of Encounter*, has addressed some basic issues from the perspective of a Trinitarian-Christological understanding of the church's life and the basis of its mission:

1) *We emphasise the message of the church* – "The content of the message is constant; only its form alters in response to the surrounding conditions ... Christ is the public truth – not a private truth that is only valid as a separate spiritual aspect of our lives. The Christian message cannot be differentiated from daily reality, but rather, it injects a new, expanding perspective into our reality."

2) *Encounter has meaning*. The basis of this encounter is clearly Trinitarian: "God created human beings to live in fellowship with him as well as with our neighbours and all of creation. The persons of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are in constant reciprocal union with one another.

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50 Cf, for example, Steenberg 2008, p. 121: "Much as Orthodox theology is understood as the mystical encounter with the incarnate Christ, Son of the eternal Father, through the Spirit of Truth, so Orthodox ecclesiology is understood in incarnational and Trinitarian terms. The Church is the body of Christ, offered 'for the life of the world', in which the world finds life through communion with its incarnate Lord. ... The Church is seen primarily as a place of encounter, where God is not so much learned about as met, and where human lives are brought into an *ekklesia*, a community of relation to this encountered God. This focus on encounter establishes the nature of the Church as intrinsically sacramental."

God's Son was born in human form in order that all who have fallen into sin may come face to face with God. He reminded humanity of its mission to love God and neighbour. Human life means living in fellowship with others. Many of the church's challenges afford an opportunity of encounter. ... A focus on encounter highlights what is happening between God and people as well as between one person and another. The significance of encounter derives from the missionary nature of the church. God works through encounter. It forms and sustains individual connections to the parish, and moulds the lives of individuals and the community in various ways."

3) *We love our neighbours* and

4) *We value membership*: "The Bible describes the church as the body of Christ. As members we belong to a living entity. Each member is different, but plays an essential part in the whole. ... In addition to acknowledging difference and individuality, it is important to convey the importance of connectedness. Members are connected through Christ, not through their mutual uniformity. Connectedness with Christ motivates us to seek connectedness between people, even when there is great dissension."

The guidelines place special emphasis on the importance of communication in a section entitled "The church communicates through encounter": "Communication is a key tool for every group and organisation. The fundamental message of the church stems from its fundamental task: the proclamation of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. The church's message about faith, hope, and love is a message that should be shared interactively, enthusiastically, and in a variety of ways. ... A church of encounter works through communication on behalf of the one who sends it." There is thus a clear alignment between theological and missional criteria. At the same time, the church's work is governed by the Church Law and Church Order. The divine is inseparable from the church's human reality, for all that they should not be confused with each other. How should we assess their relationship in the contemporary context?

#### **4.2. The folk church and the state: does the church's public law status compromise its independence?**

The position of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland is governed by the Church Act; that of the Orthodox Church of Finland is recognised in the Orthodox Church of Finland Act, the first chapter of which states:

"The Orthodox Church of Finland is founded on the Bible, tradition, and the dogmas, canons, and other ecclesiastical regulations of the Orthodox Church. The

Orthodox Church of Finland is constituted in the territory of the Finnish state as an autonomous archdiocese. The church is canonically bound to the apostolic and patriarchal ecumenical throne of Constantinople as expressed in the decision of the Ecumenical Patriarch of 16<sup>th</sup> July 1923.” Furthermore, the beginning of the second chapter states: “The basic unit of the church is the diocese.”

For its part the Church Law of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland states in its first chapter: “The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland recognises the Christian faith on the basis of the Bible, which is testified to in the three creeds of the early church and in the books of the Lutheran Confession. The confession of the church is expressed in more detail in the Church Order. In accordance with its confession the church proclaims the word of God and administers the sacraments, and otherwise works to spread the Christian message and promote neighbourly love.”

The position of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland is legally stronger in that only the church may amend the Church Act. The Orthodox Church of Finland has the right to be consulted on proposed amendments and to make them itself. Both churches have tax-raising powers. Both are called “folk churches”, even though the concept has no juridical or legal recognition. The churches’ special status is based on the position of the Lutheran Church as the majority tradition, and on their shared historical and cultural impact on Finnish society.<sup>51</sup> Political considerations have also certainly been involved.

In addition to the respective Church Acts both churches are subject to the Freedom of Religion Act, the Administrative Procedure Act, and the Non-Discrimination Act, among others. Some exemptions may be made on the basis of the church’s confession and tradition. Religious liberty as the right to practice any religion in accordance with the UN’s Declaration of Human Rights has been the central starting point in international discussion, even if socialist realist and humanist-atheist religious policy and French-style *laïcité* thinking have negatively emphasised religious freedom as the freedom from religion. However, religious freedom has generally been understood internationally to mean that the state should not interfere with the content of the church’s proclamation, as long as it does not infringe on basic human rights.

Since the 1960s a Christian ecumenical common front in matters of religious freedom has emerged in Finland, and this has been enhanced in recent decades by cooperation with other religious faiths, and especially with Judaism and Islam, in issues affecting children’s rights, immigrants, social peace, and religious education in schools.<sup>52</sup> This is clearly borne out by the work of the Finnish Ecumenical Council and the interfaith USKOT Forum, for example.

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51 Sorsa 2010, p. 293.

52 Concerning developments especially from the perspective of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, see Sorsa 2010, p. 297.

In the 1960s and early 1970s in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland there was growing negativity concerning the understanding of religious freedom, reflected in an expression of support for the church's identity and efforts to strengthen its independence. As early as 1869 the Church Act and the establishment of the General Synod confirmed the separate identity of the folk church from that of the state, an identity that has strengthened incrementally and has been increasingly influenced by globalisation and multiculturalism, and by international and ecumenical interaction. As early as 1980 the Church Order Committee emphasised that the church's nature as a community of faith, and as an independent and socially active confessional body, lay in its folk church identity. For its part the state has allowed space for this development. This has enabled a positive interpretation of the Freedom of Religion Act, promulgated in 2003. In the 1990s the administrative relations of church and state were distanced from each other – a key expression of this being the 1994 separation of Church Law, Church Order, and the church's elections.<sup>53</sup>

In church discourse equal weight is given to the church's identity, independence, and social influence. To an extent this is linked to the tension between "conservatives" and "liberals". The more conservative – but from a particular perspective the more radical – wing has emphasised a return to the Bible and the confessions as a source of renewal, while liberals have emphasised structural reform in a time of change. One group has seen the church's social position and the associated regulation of public law as having an externalising effect on the church's decision making; the other believes that they contribute to the church's presence in society. Both groups, however, have desired to maintain the church's social influence. Public law status has been seen as the best guarantor of the church's religious freedom, independence, and folk church identity.<sup>54</sup> More recently, however, another trend has emerged in the discussion, in which some voices in the church have questioned its public law status. In part, this may be seen as a backlash against a certain kind of neo-state church ecclesiology and legal positivism on the one hand, and the slow progress of reform on the other. It should be noted that in the Danish example the reform of its operations does not appear to have resulted in the church's increased independence: on the contrary, it seems that the state has tightened its grip on the church.

The events of September 2001, and the Islamic Revolution and Middle Eastern and Balkan wars which preceded it, have brought religion into the political debate in a new way. Religion's new visibility has also attracted adverse reaction: the collapse of socialism has not sounded the death knell of scientific atheism; rather, the turn of the millennium saw the advent of many expressions of New

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53 Sorsa 2010, p. 298.

54 Sorsa 2010, pp 298–300.

Atheism and the opinion that religion should be kept out of the public square. Globally, Christianity and other religions are growing, and in Europe too voices have been raised in support of the view that scarce resources should not be wasted on attacking religion and its public expression (Habermas). Post-secular thinking emphasises the need for both religion and irreligion to be given space. Europe's Christian roots and the contribution of Christianity have broadly sought to emphasise the creation and maintenance of humane values.<sup>55</sup> Human rights thinking owes much to Christianity's emphasis on the unique value of every person as made in God's image.

Slightly worrying are the phenomena that speak of religious illiteracy and a superficially propagandising attitude towards issues related to religious self-understanding. The legal positivist approach to mission has not been able to resolve the interface between theology and jurisprudence. Moderate discussion, listening, familiarisation, and an awareness of the contextual complexities are needed. The church needs courage to act on its own terms while listening with humility and transparency. One example of the growing discussion concerning issues of Christian identity is the question of the transfer of religious holidays falling in the middle of the working week. The discussion concerns the need for a balanced relationship between work and rest in the Christian tradition, as well as elements of international comparison. Although the Constantinian state church is no more, the influence and life of Christianity still have their place.

It is clear that churches and religious communities should be treated equally. However, as part of this the discussion must also take into account people's historical, cultural, and religious identity. We never work with a clean slate, and the basis of people's understanding and learning are informed by the potentials of their own tradition. Familiarity and ownership of one's own tradition teaches us respect and understanding for the tradition of others. The study of one's own religion equips us for dialogue with others. Finnish culture is not static, but changes through encounter. Nevertheless, the social landscape retains some clear features and bears unmistakably human characteristics requiring consideration. British historian Niall Ferguson has correctly asked if Europe has lost its soul. Good values are no longer needed when they are plucked from the soil that nourishes them.

The concept of the folk church may best emphasise that Christianity has fundamentally influenced Finland's integration as part of Europe, the Nordic countries, and the interface between East and West in the northern cultural sphere. Lutheranism has stressed the importance of one's own language and literacy for the nurturing of identity and spiritual life. Orthodoxy has wonderfully preserved the wealth of the undivided church and a comprehensively spiritual view of life

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55 For example, in the 2011 theological dialogue between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church, the shared thesis stated: "Christianity is the basic factor in European culture and society."

that is a challenge to modern humanity's consumption and has a vision for the future. Together our witness is more than the sum of its parts: we are part of the landscape of Finnish, European, and global Christianity; we stand together in many instances with other faiths in representing important values; and we are always on the side of human dignity. The right to religious freedom is the essential basis of faith in and communication of one's own spiritual tradition.

The concept of the folk church was born in the concept of reform. Now the idea of the folk church needs to renew itself in an embrace of the idea of the local church, which would assist us in seeing reformation both internally and externally. The spiritual roots of the church are indispensable for its work, as are the universality of the church and faith in our calling as part of global Christendom. "Public theology", in calling for a church that confidently takes its place in society and follows in the footsteps of Christ, connects scattered humanity to this outward orientation of "the man for others". In this way the folk church as a community of faith and love can act as a sign of hope and unity to the world – to spread among God's pilgrim people the fragrant light of Christ, which shines "...on earth as in heaven."<sup>56</sup>

### 4.3. Ten theses concerning the folk church

#### THE POST-CONSTANTINIAN FOLK CHURCH – TOWARDS GOD, TOWARDS THE WORLD

1. **MARTYRIA.** The sermon as a spiritual, theologically profound, and life-affirming oration. Mission and Christian witness are seen as part of the church's essence, its inhaling and exhaling. Mission belongs to the essence of the church, but so also does human encounter. The church's care for its workers' own spiritual life is important.
2. **LEITURGIA.** The development of a more corporate liturgical life. Worship becomes the genuine centre of the parish's life.
3. **DIAKONIA.** The church's service as part of its essence. Only a church that is a church for others has a future. Out of this grows both diaconal ministry and Christian witness.
4. **TOWARDS CONNECTEDNESS.** Clergy and parishioners seen as complementary. A strengthening of the church's internal unity and dialogue.

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56 For example, Huotari 2009, p. 232, observes that "...any programme of folk church reform will have at least the following features, which will be vital supports for the church's future: a desire to place itself alongside people, a dependency on the presence of grace and comfort, and a ministry and social care that will be wide-ranging in its impact." Furthermore, Huotari sees the reform of the folk church as only one element in the wider reform of the church. "A vision of church reform therefore encompasses the concept of the folk church, worship and sacramental life, the quest for small community, and interaction with the wider Christian experience. Only such coexistence and interaction, as well as rivalry, can bring about the impetus that will lead to comprehensive renewal."

- Immigrants' skills are utilised by involving them ecumenically in different parishes as a normal part of parochial missional culture.
5. CHRISTIAN NURTURE IN THE HOME: crucially important for the future of the church. A comprehensive catechumenate, building and strengthening the Christian identity not only of children and young people but also of adults and the elderly. Divorced from its sources, its roots, the positive social influence of Christianity is at risk of being lost.
  6. THE BIBLE USED AND HELD IN HONOUR – A spiritual reading of the Bible; the Bible as the church's book; the benefits and limitations of historical research.
  7. EKUMENIA AND THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS OF THE CHURCH as a channel of the churches' common inheritance and renewal; the strengthening of witness and service through shared structures and the pooling of resources.
  8. RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION BETWEEN RELIGIONS: religious traditions respected for the promotion and strengthening of social peace. Requires a knowledge of one's own identity and tradition.
  9. THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE REFORMATION IN 2017 as an opportunity for self-assessment and communicating tradition in a new way for our day: the word and sacraments; the sacramentality of the church; an exploitation of the treasures of Lutheran spirituality; the findings of ecumenical Luther research nourishes parish life.
  10. CONTEXTUALISM AND COUNTER-CULTURALISM: an approach of critical solidarity with mainstream society. The presence of the church and its message in the public square and the media. Difficulties associated with the media: across the spectrum clear, unsuperficial language in all areas of communication required, but this cannot be allowed to determine who we are: the value of personal encounter. Poor theology undermines the church both internally and externally.

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## **A Theological and Practical Overview of the Folk Church**

### **1. Introduction**

Some years ago, during a visit to Stockholm, I dropped in to the church of the local Romanian Orthodox parish. No sooner had I stepped inside than I was approached by a gentleman who greeted me in Romanian. When I revealed that I could not speak Romanian, he asked me in Swedish what country I was from. When I told him I was Finnish – and moreover when it became clear that I was Orthodox – the man was visibly delighted and said amicably: “So you had to come here. You have your own church on the other side of the city.”

The encounter illustrates at an everyday and practical level how powerfully linked in Orthodoxy the issues of nationality and church are, and partly also the problems arising from their being so connected. First, the adjective “Orthodox” does not necessarily constitute a sufficiently clear characterisation for all Orthodox of their Christian identity. In many cases the word “Orthodox” is prefaced by an adjective denoting ethnicity: Russian, Greek, or Romanian. Orthodox identity therefore often (but not always) includes a pronounced national undertone. Second, an emphasis on national characteristics erects barriers and causes division within Orthodoxy. As the encounter I have described illustrates, the specificity of national identity may obscure a comprehensive ecclesiological vision of the universality of Orthodoxy as it is manifested locally: in Stockholm the Romanian Orthodox have their own church; the Finns have theirs. In practice the ecclesiastical reality of ethnically defined Orthodoxy has led to an emphasis on separate national identities at the expense of a general Orthodox identity.

An especially strong national emphasis weakens the link of the Orthodox with the so-called Orthodox diaspora churches or the organisation of the church’s life outside the canonical areas of independent local churches. The term “diaspora church” refers to those ethnically based church communities which, as a result of increased emigration, have arisen in regions that were not historically part of any local church jurisdiction. Such non-historic national church communities have retained their links with the mother churches as projections of their canonical territories. In one non-historical area, therefore, there can work a number of churches belonging to the “mission dioceses” of several mother churches. Sweden is a good case in point. It is home to more Orthodox than Finland. There is no

single church: the Orthodox of Sweden are ecclesially connected with their particular country of origin through émigré dioceses or parishes.<sup>1</sup>

The link between church and nation or nationality is not only an ecclesiological question; it is also social and political. This applies both within traditional canonical jurisdictions and to the diaspora. During the summer the Lutheran Emeritus Bishop of Espoo, Mikko Heikka, raised the issue of the connection of the national interests of the Orthodox Church with social questions and international politics. In an article published in *Suomen Kuvalehti* Heikka described the social role of the Russian Orthodox Church as follows:

*Problems with elections, the restriction of the freedom of expression, and the punishment of the political opposition are not the church's concern, because it focuses on its religious mission. The symphony of church and state is perfect. While the Russian Orthodox Church does not interfere with the business of government, it approves of the government's use of force in pursuit of Russian and Slavic interests.*<sup>2</sup>

As Heikka shows, to speak about the folk church or the national church leads naturally to an examining of the relationship between church and state. No one can deny that in appearing to conform so closely and uncritically to government policy the work of the Russian Orthodox Church merits criticism. Heikka suggests that the church finds soteriological justification in its quest to agree with state policy: the Orthodox doctrine of theosis leaves earthly life in the shadows; the church does not interfere in the activities of the political community, but focuses instead on the mystical. In my opinion Heikka goes astray here. In Orthodox theology it is untenable to suppose that the quest for salvation might bypass as irrelevant the individual and the needs of society, and encourage the passive acceptance of injustice. According to Orthodox doctrine the divine encounter with the human being is not a coded process with the human person divorced from their social context; it takes place in the context of their communal interaction with others and in the situations and needs they experience. The extent to which the church in time and space is willing and able to act in accordance with the doctrine to which it is committed and whose communication belongs to its mission, is, of

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1 In 2014 the following Eastern Orthodox communities were registered in Sweden: the Orthodox Church of Bulgaria; the Finnish Orthodox Parish; the Greek Orthodox Metropolitanate; the Orthodox Church of Macedonia; the Orthodox Church of Romania; the Paris Exarchate Orthodox Church of Russia; the Moscow Patriarchate Orthodox Church of Russia; the Antiochian Orthodox Parish; the Orthodox Church of Serbia; and the Orthodox Deanery of Sweden under the auspices of the Orthodox Church of Serbia. In 2013 a total of 88 695 people were registered members of these communities. The number of Eastern Christians in Sweden rises to a total of 150 000 when the membership of Oriental Orthodox churches, which in 2013 numbered 71 178, is added. <http://davidheithstade.wordpress.com/2014/02/10/eastern-orthodoxy-in-sweden/>; <http://www.sst.a.se/statistik/statistik2012.4.524fbd71429b7641b72f86.html>

2 Heikka 2014.

course, a separate issue.<sup>3</sup> A critical examination of the link between both church and nationalism, and church and state, is therefore desirable and necessary, but drawing simplistic theological conclusions in this respect is to be avoided.

For Orthodox Churches the question of the folk church, or the church and national identity, is especially relevant.<sup>4</sup> In many local churches an idealistic understanding of the Christian nation and state, which suggests the church should support current policy positions, is embedded. A church's cherishing of the idea of a link between the nation's interests and those of the state constitutes fertile ground for secular nationalism, raises a barrier to the acceptance of the church's witness to the universal truth. In spite of this nationalist tendency, there is also a tendency in the Orthodox Church to distinguish between church and state, and church and nation.<sup>5</sup> For example, Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople has strongly condemned the nationalist spirit, which he characterises as pseudo-religious and prone to messianic nationalism.<sup>6</sup>

In examining the issue of the church's national character, I shall focus on two themes: first, I shall give an account of the Orthodox understanding of the local church; second, I shall address the current discussion concerning nationalism

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3 The dynamic, corporate, and outwardly open nature of the doctrine of theosis, as well as the ongoing challenge presented in its outworking, is very evident in the following characterisation: "In today's Orthodox Church the strong impact of the liturgy and the theological significance of mystical experience is emphasised. This has contributed to a weakening of the evaluation of ethical issues. We need a greater awareness of what it means to be an Orthodox Christian. ...Orthodox faith is not only about the reassurance of faith or participation in the church's worship. It is a living faith. ...The Orthodox Church stresses that in the ethical life the whole of human existence should be taken into account. Salvation is a process that unifies life's brokenness. And a very important part of the healing process is spiritual growth. Such growth gives to Orthodox Christian ethics a dynamic, functionally oriented dimension. ...Our church is a community of functional ethics." Hakkarainen 2002, 8, 16.

4 In May 2012 an international conference on nationalism in the Orthodox Church ("Ecclesiology and Nationalism in the Postmodern Era") was held at the Volos Theological Academy in Greece. The papers given at the conference showed that the phenomenon or problem of nationalism affects almost the entire Orthodox world. It has a broad effect on the churches' life and on the mutual relations of local churches in weakening the general Orthodox connection of proclamation and experience. The papers have been published in the American St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly, No. 57, 2013, which I used in preparing this paper.

5 Some decades ago Professor John Meyendorff of St Vladimir's Seminary in the US gave a very optimistic description of the expressions of nationalism that existed in the Orthodox churches at that time: "... [I]t is compelling the Orthodox world today to make a choice between mere human traditions and Revelation, and to retain only what constitutes the essential of the Christian message. From numerous signs ... it would seem that an entirely new age appears to be dawning in Orthodox history." J. Meyendorff 1996, 131 (first edition published in 1960). The extent to which this new era has really begun is debatable. On the one hand nationalism in the Orthodox Church has been criticised in the strictest terms in the United States. For example, the then Acting Dean of St Vladimir's Seminary, Thomas Hopko, accuses the Orthodox of changing Orthodoxy into an ideology that serves national, political, and cultural goals. Hopko 1999. A 2008 circular of the Bishops' Synod of the United States rejected acute external ritualism, the worst manifestations of which it underlined were the linking of the forms and customs of nationality with the tradition of the Orthodox Church. Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America 2008.

6 Bartholomew notes in a work published at the time of the Balkan conflict how the connection between the church and a particular nationality in our day has proven problematic. In the extreme this can lead to a person defining their identity on the basis of a national Orthodoxy without any concept of and connection to Christianity. Clément, 1997, 140–141.

within the Orthodox churches. In the latter case the issue of the problem of the diaspora is especially important. My chosen themes are intertwined throughout my paper. I shall deal with the topic from a general Orthodox perspective, so references to the local Finnish context will be limited.

## 2. The local church in Orthodox ecclesiology

### 2.1. The independent local church as the basic ecclesiological unit

In the Orthodox context the question of the importance of nationality for the church and in the church needs to be considered in relation to the church's structure. The doctrine of the church is based on the unity stated in its creed. At the level of church order the doctrine of the church's unity does not imply that there should be a single global structure. Because the church's faith is Catholic and ecumenical (in the latter's former pre-modern sense of ecumenism), that is, it espouses what has generally and commonly been believed by all (catholicity), the church is in its nature also local: it is both singular and universal, the whole church and the local church. The local expression of common faith is integral to the church's structure.<sup>7</sup> In practice this means that the Orthodox Church is made up of independent local churches. Each local church has its own defined canonical territory or jurisdiction, within the boundaries of which the fullness of the faith of the Orthodox Church finds expression. The church's local identity is based on the church's eucharistic nature, expressed in the New Testament's description of the church as a particular community of believers assembling in one place for the breaking of bread.<sup>8</sup> According to canonical order the local church has an episcopal administration: the jurisdiction of the local church is divided into dioceses, whose bishops constitute the local church's synod. In this way the rights and duties of episcopal office are territorially defined.<sup>9</sup> The territorial principle is

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7 "The Eastern Orthodox world today is comprised of various families of national churches in full communion and theological agreement with one another, who hold that their collective solidarity on all critical matters of faith and ritual practice stand as a key witness to enduring Orthodox Christian authenticity. Their common corporate organization flows out of New Testament and early Christian principles of local churches gathered under bishops, arranged in larger Metropolitan provincial synods, and this is eventually culminating in the expression of the ancient Pentarchy of Patriarchates ... which was felt to express a global sense of different Christian cultures in harmony with the whole." McGuckin 2014, 5.

8 "The Church is organized not on an ethnic but on a territorial bases. In the New Testament the term 'church' does not in any way apply to an ethnic identity, but it refers to the total community of believers gathered in a single place." Ware 2013, 238.

9 Zizioulas characterises the canonical ecclesiological principle of territoriality as follows: "...the Church consists of *geographical* – not cultural – units, with the bishops bearing their geographical territory in their very name. ... All of this also applies to broader geographical regions, and forms the basis of ... autocephalous churches, all of which have clearly defined geographical boundaries which may not be exceeded." Zizioulas 2013, 454.

reflected concretely in the titles of bishops, for every bishop is always the bishop of a particular place or territory.

The principle of localism is expressed in the church's canonical tradition. Since the fourth century Canon 34 of the Holy Apostles has determined that in each nation each bishop is responsible for all the Christian in the territory of the bishop's diocese, without infringing on the right of the bishops of the neighbouring dioceses.<sup>10</sup> According to the territorial principle Canon 28 of the Synod of Chalcedon provides for barbarians – that is, non-Greeks – to be connected to the existing church structure. They do not, therefore, constitute separate ethnically defined groups or territories, but are organised as part of the provincial system of episcopal governance.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, Canon 17 of the Synod of Chalcedon and Canon 38 of the Third Synod of Constantinople (691) state that the territory of a diocese should be contiguous with secular administrative boundaries.<sup>12</sup>

In one church a variety of nationalities can be positively represented, because unity does not mean the prevailing of uniformity in everything (Eph. 4:4-5; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11). The church's unity and catholicity transcend all differences of gender, social status, and nationality.<sup>13</sup> This is precisely because the local church is organised territorially, not on the basis of ethnic or cultural boundaries. The contiguity of ecclesiastical and secular administrative territories also contributes to the emergence of the political concept that the state is the parent of national identity. The Eastern Roman or Byzantine Church was the Roman Church.<sup>14</sup> In the Roman Empire Christian diversity was encompassed by the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, under the auspices of one Christian state. This was the case in spite of the fact that Christians were also aware of differences arising from particular national identity. In the Empire the church served to form the basis of a Christian identity that embraced a diversity of ethnic groups. It should therefore be noted that the canonical territory of local churches has traditionally encompassed many different nationalities. The ancient Patriarchates, Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem, were multinational and multicultural.<sup>15</sup> Baptism and the bond with the local yet universal church community of which it was the inception were more critical to the Christian population's identity than was ethnic background.

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10 *Ortodoksisen kirkon kanonit* 1980, 80.

11 *Ortodoksisen kirkon kanonit* 1980, 287. Zizioulas expresses the idea of the ecclesiastical unity of the nationalities present within a local church's territory as follows: "...every nationality residing in that particular place automatically belongs to the primate of that place." Zizioulas 2013, 456.

12 *Ortodoksisen kirkon kanonit* 1980, 271, 381.

13 Fitzgerald 2004, 140.

14 The Eastern Orthodox are still called "Romans" by the Middle Eastern Oriental Orthodox and by Muslims.

15 Ware 2013, 244.

## 2.2. The ecclesiological problematic of national local churches

Although the Orthodox Church's canonical tradition clearly emphasises that the jurisdiction of the local church is determined on the basis of territorial boundaries, many Orthodox local churches are also clearly national churches. How can this be explained? In Orthodox ecclesiology national churches do not exist *de jure*, but their existence *de facto* is indisputable. The emergence of national churches is a relatively recent phenomenon, and is linked to the formation of European nation states in the nineteenth century. The formation of ecclesiastical structures in line with national boundaries, however, had already begun in the Balkans when the church expanded the Byzantine sphere of influence to the region at the beginning of the ninth century. This created the so-called Byzantine Commonwealth, made up of local churches under the authority of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. The enlargement of the church by a couple of nations did not at first give rise to nationally defined local churches. The transnational character of the church continued in the Balkans from the arrival of the Turks in the mid-fifteenth century until the early decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup>

Under Turkish rule nationalism gained a foothold in the Balkans. Hellenism arose among the Greeks, and the Serbs and others were inspired by nationalism to seek national and ecclesiastical independence. The early nineteenth century saw the start of uprisings in which the Balkan peoples declared their independence. At the same time their churches broke from the discipline of the Patriarchate of Constantinople and declared their independence.<sup>17</sup> Unlike the Patriarchates of the ancient Pentarchy, the autocephalous churches emerging in the nineteenth century were defined on the basis of the borders of the new nation states – notwithstanding the fact that the basis of their jurisdictional definition was territorial rather than ethnic.<sup>18</sup> In terms of tradition, the ordering of new local churches is still considered problematic, and even un-Orthodox. Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople has described the model of autocephalous Balkan churches as a guest within Orthodoxy, seeing it as fundamentally Lutheran – an apparent reference

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16 For the transnational approach of Constantinople under Turkish rule see Stamatopoulos 2010. In compliance with Islamic law the Turkish authorities recognised Christians as one people (*millet*), regardless of confessional, linguistic or national differences. In the *millet* system the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople was the leader of Christian people (*millet bashi*). The Patriarch of Constantinople's power extended geographically not only to outside canonical jurisdictions but also to other Christians who did not belong to the Eastern Orthodox Church or its subordinates. In the Islamic state the Ecumenical Patriarch was an Ethnarch, who had limited rights of leadership of a very heterogeneous group of people. As a result of this system the Patriarchate practised a centralised policy, under which Balkan ecclesiastical territories such as those of the Bulgarians and Serbs were returned to more stringent control from Constantinople. J. Meyendorff 1996, 78–81.

17 According to Leustean the difficult position of the Patriarch of Constantinople under Turkish rule was critical in the Balkan churches' drive for independence. He cites the hanging of Patriarch Gregory V of Constantinople by the Turks at the Patriarchate gate on Easter Sunday 1821 as providing a major impetus for the struggle for ecclesiastical independence. Leustean 2013, 247.

18 "...the Church saw them as churches in independent states, not as nations' churches. I think this is also important to remember in order to understand the Church's logic on canonicity." Kitromilides 2013, 279.

both to the idea of a link between the state and the church and to the separation of the local church. With the birth of new national churches an autocephaly of mutual dependence was replaced by autocephalism, which was characterised by complete independence.<sup>19</sup> Along the same lines, the Yale University researcher, Archimandrite Cyril Hovorun, notes that the idea that the independent national church is linked with the concept of autocephaly is a phenomenon of the nineteenth century. According to Hovorun the expression of the autocephaly of local churches is reminiscent of current state sovereignty, and the churches' unity is comparable to that of a union of independent states.<sup>20</sup>

The emergence of new autocephalous local churches resulted in tensions with the Patriarchate of Constantinople, from which they had arisen. In many cases churches were granted independence only decades after a unilateral declaration of sovereignty.<sup>21</sup> The detachment of the Bulgarian church was followed by a long-term schism, when the Patriarchates of Constantinople, Antioch, and Alexandria condemned the Bulgarians in 1872 for the sin of *phyletism* or *ethnophyletism* – the destruction of the Church of Christ by national rivalry and controversy.<sup>22</sup> In the background was an attempt by the Bulgarians to establish a jurisdiction without geographical boundaries that would include every Bulgarian in the world. Jurisdictions based on ethnicity are not considered consonant with the canonical tradition of the concept of the local nature of the church.<sup>23</sup> The main reason for the condemnation of phyletism is that its self-definition on ethnic (racial, national, or cultural) grounds results in two or more ecclesiastical jurisdictions working at the same time and in the same territory, directing their work only at the needs of their

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19 Clément 1887, 140. Paul Meyendorff notes that the concept of autocephaly has changed as a result of developments which started in the nineteenth century. Originally it had been a practical mechanism by which the church in a particular territory could constitute a synod for the selection of its leaders and the administration of its own affairs, while maintaining contact with other churches. Today autocephaly has a greater implication of a national space characterised by a concern for associated interests and independence. P. Meyendorff 2013b, 390. In the mid-1970s enthusiasm for the attainment of autocephaly began to grow in the Orthodox Church of Finland. With the establishment of a third diocese in 1980 its attainment was almost a foregone conclusion, but the project never came to fruition. The issue was placed on the agenda of the Church Council a couple of years ago, but the project failed to gain sufficient support. The Finnish desire for the autonomous autocephaly has never received the support of the Patriarchate of Constantinople

20 Hovorun 2013, 428. According to Ware the churches of the Balkans differed significantly from their medieval predecessors, because they were driven by secular nationalism. Ware 2013, 243.

21 Autocephaly was granted to Greece in 1850, Serbia in 1879, Romania in 1885, and Albania in 1922, but not until 1945 to Bulgaria.

22 Ware defines phyletism as follows: "The term 'phyletism', used in an ecclesial context, signifies the predication of ethnic national identity as the bases for church organization." Ware 2013, 239.

23 According to Ware the 1872 decision is based on the following canonical principle: "the criterion for church organization is not ethnic but territorial." Constantinople was ready to recognise the autocephaly of the Bulgarian church if it functioned within defined territorial limits without an all-encompassing ethnically based jurisdiction. Ware 2013, 239. In the Oriental Orthodox churches the situation is different. For example, the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Egyptian Coptic Church are especially ethnic in character. The churches' jurisdiction is not limited geographically but ethnically, with expatriate Armenians and Copts coming under the jurisdiction of their homelands.

own members on the basis of their identity.<sup>24</sup> It should be noted that Orthodox tradition is not opposed to the local cultural expression of Christianity, but that national characteristics are understood as belonging to the local identity of the church.<sup>25</sup> From the perspective of the church (or at least of Orthodox doctrine) it is problematic, however, if an emphasis on the national leads to the idea that only a specific group of people belongs to the local church.

Although the birth of Orthodox national churches is relatively recent, it has had a very significant impact on the interpretation of the church's ecclesiological tradition and in the practice of ecclesial order. Paschalis Kitromilides, Professor of Political Science at Athens University, has stressed the significance of the nineteenth and twentieth century development for the rooting of the concept of the national church. It is his view that the connection between the church, the nation, and nationalism is the result of nation states' quest for self-determination. The pursuit of ecclesiastical autocephaly was the result of the church's involvement in the struggle to create the secular nation state. As a result of the ideological process within local churches the national project was subject to reinterpretation. Orthodoxy became aligned with ethnicity and nationalism, and this was seen as historically justified. According to Kitromilides, however, there is no basis for the idea of an Orthodox parallelism with nationalism, which he sees as an anachronistic historical projection.<sup>26</sup>

Can the emphasis on the national character of Orthodox churches and the outright nationalism observable within them be explained apart from historical forces? David Koyzis, Professor of Political Science at the University of Notre Dame, considers that of Christian denominations it is precisely Eastern Orthodoxy that has been shown to be especially prone to identify faith with ethnic nationalism.<sup>27</sup> Why is this? If the ideological movements of the nineteenth century had been experienced within the church as foreign or harmful, it is unlikely that it would have been so strongly identified with the nation and supported by state sovereignty. As Cyril Hovorun points out, far from opposing it, the church strongly aligned itself with the cause of national independence. When power was transferred from the rulers to the people, the church quickly adapted. According to Hovorun the Orthodox Church promptly adopted the national identity of

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24 Papatomas 2013, 433.

25 An appreciation of national identity is scriptural, seeing belonging to a particular people and having a national identity as a divine blessing that is of especial value and significance in people's relationship with the divine. All nations will praise God (Ps. 116:1; Ps. 85:9) and the gospel will be brought to all nations (Matt. 28:19), who will each follow their own way (Acts 14:16). The eschatological vision of heaven also preserves specific national identity and the idea that those who are saved will bring into it the glory of the nations (Rev. 21:24, 26). Ware 2013, 242. For more detail on the concept of the nation and nationality in the New Testament see Karakolis 2013.

26 Kitromilides 2013, 276–277, 280; 2004, 185–186.

27 Koyzis 2003, 119.

the state, which sees state and nation as inextricably linked.<sup>28</sup> Vasilios Makrides, Professor of Religion at Erfurt University, has suggested that there are a number of reasons Orthodoxy itself uses to explain why the church so seamlessly adopted the principles of the French Revolution and an idea of nationality inspired by German National Romanticism. According to Makrides there are four main internal views of history in the Orthodox Church that have contributed to the emergence of national local churches:<sup>29</sup>

1) *The close relationship between church and state.* Despite being problematic for the Orthodox the idea of the church of the “Byzantine Symphony” and the harmonious connection with the church has always been strongly present and has remained so until our own time.<sup>30</sup>

2) *The church’s structural diversity and the question of the criteria of autocephaly.* The independence of the local church is an ecclesiological principle, the conditions for which have been historically influenced by, for example, political, religious, geographical, regional, and national factors. Furthermore, the question of the territory of a jurisdiction and independence is, according to canonical tradition, linked to changes in state governance.

3) *The endeavour to be rooted in local culture in the birth of Christianity.* The mission of the Eastern Church has always presented Christianity in accordance with local culture and in the vernacular. The process of Christian conversion is linked with local ethno-cultural identity. In the “glocalisation” process universal trends such as Catholic Christianity encounter, mix with, and combine with local trends when the latter is emphasised.<sup>31</sup>

4) *The link between the nation and the homeland.* The idea that a particular local church, nation, or region is special or sacred is a feature of Orthodoxy. The idea of the sacred as limited to a group or region was already

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28 Hovorun 2014, 13.

29 Makrides 2013, 330–343.

30 Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow have openly given expression to the “Byzantine symphony” application to the ordering of church-state relations in the contemporary European context. The Patriarchs’ views differ in that Bartholomew clearly envisages it as a supranational ecclesial model, whereas Kirill sees the symphony as a national model. Leustean 2014a, 29. The idea of the symphony has also met with contemporary criticism. For example, Cyril Hovorun considers the modern application of the Byzantine Symphony concept to be problematic for the simple reason that it is not a perspective that has been implemented in an exemplary fashion, even in Byzantium. According to Hovorun the symphony concept has changed the church’s self-understanding and led to a situation in which the church is no longer able clearly to understand and express its own endeavours – especially when they diverge from the interests of the state. Hovorun 2014, 12.

31 Roudometof (2013) has examined the glocalisation process as a strengthening of local Christian culture at the expense of the general tradition in the Orthodox context.

known in Byzantium. It occurs at various times in many forms among the Orthodox (e.g. “Holy Serbia”, “Holy Russia”). In many cases the ideal is actually considered to be that there should be a single, unified Orthodox population or people in a particular territory.

The formation of nation states transformed ecclesial order not only in the Balkans but also in the Nordic countries: the autonomous Orthodox Church of Finland is the result of the establishment of the Finnish state. In the early twentieth century a strong movement arose in the church wishing to be identified as Finnish, as opposed to Russian, Orthodox.<sup>32</sup> Canonically, the Orthodox Church of Finland is not identified on the basis of national identity, but according to territory. The canonical status of the church was defined by a *Tomos* of 1923, which arranged ecclesiastical jurisdictions in line with the Finnish borders. According to the *Tomos* within these borders all Orthodox – regardless of nationality – belong to the Finnish church.<sup>33</sup> The concept of multi-nationalism and multiculturalism is thus implicitly recorded in the canonical foundations of the local Finnish church. According to the Orthodox understanding of the local church the autonomous Orthodox Church of Finland is a local church functioning within a defined geographical territory, where it is the only canonical Orthodox ecclesiastical structure and canonical Orthodox institution.

In Russia an especially pronounced national ecclesial identity has been adopted. With the fall of the Byzantine Empire the Russian church was for a long time the only Orthodox church working in a politically independent area not under the authority of Islam. Russian nationalism began to gain ground in the church from the mid-eighteenth century. At the end of the nineteenth century the concept emerged in Russian ecclesiastical language of the *chastnaya tserkov'* (частная церковь) – a single, separate church representing a nationally and politically based ecclesiological understanding (note that the term for the traditional concept of a local church is *pomestnaya tserkov'* (поместная церковь). According to this concept the Russian church had a special status under the auspices of Constantinople, because it was *de facto* the only church working in the entire territory of an independent state.<sup>34</sup>

The concept of a link between the church, nation, and state finds later explication in official documents of the Russian church, such as the “Bases of the Social

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32 For Finnish Orthodox nationalism see Laitila & Loima 2004.

33 The *Tomos* states: “...we give our blessing to the autonomy which His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon of Moscow and All Russia has already granted to the Holy Orthodox Church of Finland, and we pray that God will protect the Orthodox Christians living in the Republic of Finland, who now form a single Christian territory henceforth to be known as ‘the Orthodox Archdiocese of Finland’...” *Tomos* 1923. The canonical situation in the territory of the Finnish church is not, however, completely harmonious, as two parishes of the Moscow Patriarchate function within its jurisdiction.

34 Kalkandijeva 2013, 288–289.

Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church”, published at the beginning of the millennium. According to the document “nation” can refer to an ethnic community or to all the inhabitants of a specific state. In line with the Apostles (1 Pet. 2:9–10; 1 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 13:14; Gal. 4:26; Acts 2:3–11) the church may also be seen as a kind of national entity. It is not limited, however, by ethnic, cultural, or linguistic identity, but the marks of “citizenship of the church” are faith in Christ and Baptism. Although Christians are above all citizens of heaven, they should not forget the earthly fatherland of which they are also citizens. Christ himself affords an example of respect for fatherland: he identified with the people among whom he was born; he was an obedient subject of the Roman Empire; and he paid his taxes to Caesar. In the same way the national autocephalous churches recognise the importance of an earthly fatherland. According to the Russian church the church’s universal nature in the local church combine with a national character, in which heavenly and earthly homelands meet.<sup>35</sup> It should be noted first that according to socio-ethical principles the autocephalous church is a national, rather than a local, expression of the universal church. Secondly, national unity appears to some extent a prerequisite for ecclesiastical sovereignty. The document defines the Orthodox nation as an Orthodox faith community which is dominant, or that is recognised as representing a commonly shared faith in civil law, or that is constituted on ethnic lines within the territory of the state.<sup>36</sup>

The document presents Christian patriotism as a positive phenomenon. The understanding of the nation as founded on ethnic and national attributes is combined with patriotism: “The Orthodox Christian is called to love his fatherland, with its boundaries, and those of the same blood living all over the world. In this way we fulfil God’s commandment to love our neighbour, which encompasses the love of one’s family, kindred, and fellow citizens.”<sup>37</sup> Patriotism should be active both in the sense of the defence of the fatherland and in involving oneself on behalf of the welfare of the inhabitants of one’s country. Thus defined, Christian patriotism implies that the ethnic majority group constitutes the local church’s object of loyalty, transcending national boundaries and ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Despite the church’s warnings against the wrongs of aggressive nationalism, xenophobia, and the limiting of citizens’ rights – and taken to an extreme the wars in which the church seeks the role of impartial mediator<sup>38</sup> – Christian patriotism resembles a new doctrine of the Russian state that Russia and its interests

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35 Bases of the Social Concept 2000, II.1.–2.

36 Bases of the Social Concept 2000, II.3.

37 Bases of the Social Concept 2000, II.3.

38 “It is contrary to Orthodox ethics to divide nations into the best and the worst and to belittle any ethnic or civic nation. ... [T]he Orthodox Church carries out the mission of reconciliation between hostile nations and their representatives. Thus, in inter-ethnic conflicts, she does not identify herself with any side, except for cases when one of the sides commit evident aggression or injustice.” Bases of the Social Concept 2000, II.4.

are present wherever its citizens find themselves. However, the Russian church sees itself as non-governmental and independent, unbending in the face of any governmental regulation that threatens its faith. The church's social mission is to cooperate with the secular power in the best interests of all Russian citizens and members of the church.<sup>39</sup>

In the understanding of the Russian Orthodox Church, church, state, and national identity are very closely related. They also partly overlap each other, at least at the levels of national and ecclesial identity: being Russian and Orthodox is inextricably linked.<sup>40</sup> The attempt to define the local church as transcending geographical boundaries on the basis of an ethnically determined membership may be considered ecclesiologicaly problematic.<sup>41</sup> The latter perspective – although contrary to canonical tradition – is not peculiar to Russian Orthodoxy, but is widely prevalent in Orthodox local churches. In practice this can be seen in the way local churches operate outside the area of their historical jurisdiction in the diaspora Orthodox churches.

The canonical tradition of the contemporary church offers a variety of ways of defining the relationship with the state, with the Orthodox Church on one hand having state church status (as in the case of Greece until 1975), and on the other acting completely separately from the state (as in the case of the United States and France).<sup>42</sup> Although the Orthodox Church's understanding is that

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39 Bases of the Social Concept 2000, III, 3, 5–8. For the Russian church's social position see Turunen 2010, 103–114.

40 Verkhovsky (2013) identifies the nationality question as part of the Russian church's current social endeavour, and sees it as constituting an interface of the church's relationship with the Russian state and its political practice. According to the current Patriarch of Moscow's so-called "Kirill's Doctrine" Orthodoxy is identified with Russianness and the Russian interest, and church, state, Russian citizens, and Russians constitute a single ethno-religious group. A good summary of the social position of the Russian church in the Putin era is given by Knox and Mitrofanova 2014, 44–49. In assessing the social position of the Russian church, Professor John Burgess of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary notes that while the church under Patriarch Kirill has actively sought to bring the ministry of the church into every level of society, it has also emphasised the separation of church and state. Nor is it suggested in church circles that the reconversion of Russia would require that all Russians be Russian Orthodox. Burgess sums this up as follows: "Overall, what has occurred so far is less the in-churching of Russian society than the incorporation of the Church into all dimensions of Russian society." Burgess 2014, 43.

41 Is this perhaps a reference to the diaspora activities of the Russian church?

42 Rodopoulos 2007, 208–210. The canonical order of the local church also requires definition in relation to the state. Such relationships have varied according to time and place, and due to local conditions and for historical reasons are further defined in a variety of ways. Historically the state's repeated attempts to suppress the church and the church's consequent struggle to coexist with it have characterised the church's relations with the state. For example, in the Byzantine period church and state were essentially mutually balanced in their order, as expressed in Emperor Justinian's sixth Novel. The Emperor's focus on the church was often marked by a Caesaropapist endeavour. Fairness and reciprocity have not necessarily always been a reality for the church. In his review of the relationship of church and state during the Byzantine period, the church historian John Boojamra also notes that for the church it often constituted a "non-mutual synthesis", in which the church was forced constantly to be alert to its own independence against the Emperor's ambition for power. When the Emperor's power weakened in the thirteenth century, the church's position and independence improved significantly. Boojamra 1981, 189.

temporal power is of divine origin<sup>43</sup>, not all forms of state administration may be considered beneficial for the church's life. It is not insignificant if the secular power persecutes Christians or if the Roman Emperor gives preferential treatment to the church and its faith, if the church works within the bounds of an Islamic Sultanate, if Christian faith is seen as a rival ideology and faces a hostile socialist attitude, or if it functions in the context of the government of the Republic of Finland's – in principle – neutral, if sympathetic, attitude to the church or the European Union's very loose approach to the regulating of the churches' life.

### 3. The church's diaspora and the problem of canonical ecclesiology

The problematic of the national question is most clearly and, from an ecclesiological perspective, most tragically apparent in the diaspora, where Orthodoxy is neither traditional nor the religion of the majority. According to Metropolitan John Zizioulas of Pergamon the possibility of an ecclesiology of the diaspora is originally linked with the Russian Orthodox interpretation of Canon 28 of Chalcedon. Among other things, the canon is concerned with the privilege of the throne of Constantinople in the consecration of bishops for new territories. The Russians began to interpret the canon as defining extra-jurisdictional territories as a kind of "canonical no man's land". In extending its episcopal authority to these areas, the Moscow Patriarchate gave birth to a practice which, at first in principle and then in practice (for other autocephalous churches began to operate in the same way), negated territorial ecclesiastical unity. Zizioulas also considers that the bishops' approach to diaspora areas stems from nationalist aspirations or the principle of autocephaly.<sup>44</sup> Episcopal order built on overlapping ethnic lines is in itself contrary to the church's tradition. According to the traditional understanding of jurisdiction it is also untenable that diaspora bishops belong to

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43 Power in the secular sense – and therefore also the state – is a theological concept: secular power is the God-given use of divine power. According to Orthodoxy the biblically based authority of the church and the authority of the state have one and the same source: God. This is expressed in the sixth Novel of Emperor Justinian of March 535, in which the Emperor's *imperium* and the ecclesiastical *sacerdotium* are defined as the greatest gift of divine human love (philanthropy). It states that both are derived from one and the same principle and regulation of human life. They strive for harmony in the church's service of the things of God and the Emperor's service of human affairs. Boojamra 1981, 204. In spite of the attempt of Emperor Justinian (and of many other rulers) to interpret the link between church and state by blurring the distinction between both (or at least between the state and the church), in the church's understanding both are essentially separate. In principle church and state are independent of each other. The church is the result of Christ's work established by God himself, and its organisation is divinely ordained. By contrast the state is only indirectly established by God. It is the result of divine philanthropy that human society is well-ordered and that there is a system intended for the service of life that works in accordance with human laws. The church is omnipresent, eternal, and one. The church's purpose is the salvation of all people and the whole world. The extent of the state's political power is bounded by geography and human limitations. The state's endeavours and existence are bounded by the temporal purposes of life. Furthermore, there are many states. Rodopoulos 2007, 205–206.

44 Zizioulas 2013, 456–457.

the synod of the mother church. The situation does not therefore in any sense reflect a normal or normative understanding of Orthodoxy.<sup>45</sup>

How then can such an ecclesiological indefensible situation seem to have become relatively permanent? Why have the local churches not acted to solve the diaspora problem? Organising local churches in non-historical areas has proved challenging. First, in diaspora areas the connection between ecclesiastical structures and the mother church is often seen as so important that encouraging mutual Orthodox links in the diaspora area is seen as secondary.<sup>46</sup> Second, at least among the autocephalous mother churches there is still no agreement concerning the contemporary process whereby diaspora communities can be indigenised in areas that have not been historically Orthodox.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, it is not unreasonable to ask if there is genuinely a will to resolve the situation among local churches. This cannot be assumed. The current situation allows an impression that the diaspora represents a form of ecclesiastical colonialism, in which power structures and nationalist cliques outweigh obedience to Orthodox doctrine and practice. The situation of the diaspora is aptly described by Grigorios Papatomas, Professor of Canon Law at the University of Athens and the Saint-Serge Institute in Paris, as an expression of ethnophyletism. The current situation suggests that the autocephalous churches have adopted universalistic thinking. On this basis the diaspora does not really exist, but operating in non-historical territories is simply a question of the (ethnically defined) church's ministry of pastoral care to its members all over the world. Papatomas argues that the prevailing ecclesial model among Orthodox churches is one of universal ethnophyletism (the universal, ethnophyletic church). As a result, few people question the uncanonical nature of the diaspora or the controversy of the lack of progress in resolving it.<sup>48</sup>

The most vigorous attempts to resolve the diaspora problem have been made by the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople.<sup>49</sup> In 2008 the leaders of the in-

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45 The respected eucharistic and canonical ecclesiologist John Zizioulas has described the reality of the overlapping of jurisdictions in the diaspora at the heart of Orthodoxy as an ecclesiological distortion and heresy. Zizioulas 2013, 457.

46 Metropolitan Philip, Bishop of the Patriarchate of Antioch in the United States, has described the psycho-spiritual mental landscape of the diaspora. He suggests that the Orthodox churches have arrived physically in the West, but remain physically absent. As a result Orthodox living in the diaspora inhabit another homeland in their hearts. This has led to the dominance of a ghetto mentality instead of a prophetic and missional vision in diaspora Orthodoxy. Walker 2000, 224–225.

47 McGuckin 2014, 6. For more detail concerning the diaspora churches and their reality see Orthodox Identities 2014; Orthodox Church in Western Europe 2006.

48 Papatomas 2013, 449. Ware also examines the diaspora in the light of phyletism and concludes that the ethnically based order of local churches in Western Europe, America, and Australia is not only uncanonical but also heretical. Ware 2013, 239.

49 Soon after his election as Patriarch, Bartholomew devoted himself to strengthening the link between the Orthodox local churches and to an emphasis on the intra-Orthodox ecumenical role of the Ecumenical Patriarch. Leustean 2014b, 27. On a visit to Finland, in a speech delivered in Joensuu (12.6.10), Patriarch Bartholomew addressed the issue of the bonds between the Orthodox churches as follows: "However, we must honestly admit that we sometimes have an incomplete vision of our bonds, which can suggest that

dependent Orthodox churches gathered at Patriarch Bartholomew's invitation in Constantinople, where they issued a joint statement stating that "national, ethnic, ideological, and religious conflict", among other things, were in the background of humanity's global problems. These forces were described as causes of dangerous disorder in the world. The statement does not explain the extent to which the destructive force of national and ethnic conflict may be seen at work in the Orthodox churches. The document does address, however, the question of canonical exceptions in the area of the diaspora, and the churches' leaders affirm the objective of resolving canonical problems in the diaspora "through an abandoning of influences incompatible with Orthodox ecclesiology".<sup>50</sup>

Practical work with the aim of dismantling problematic structures began very soon: as early as 2009 representatives of the autocephalous churches met at the invitation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate at the pre-conference of the fourth Pan-Orthodox Council.<sup>51</sup> At the meeting the so-called Chambésy Document was prepared, in which it was decided to form Episcopal Assemblies for territories not covered by the geographical territory of any autocephalous church. The world was divided into two different regions, each with an Episcopal Assembly of its canonical bishops.<sup>52</sup> For the most part these assemblies are cooperation bodies serving the experience and expression of Orthodox unity, as opposed – at least

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instead of being the church we are some kind of union of churches. When we lack the ability to address the phenomena of our times with one voice – and even worse – when we fail to present ourselves in the so-called diaspora as one Orthodox Church on the basis of our own ecclesiology and canonical principles, how can we deny that we present a picture of a divided Orthodoxy? This is exactly how we appear, especially to non-theological, secular outsiders. We need a stronger bond and conciliarity in order not to appear as a federation of separate churches but as a single unified church."

50 Statement of the leaders of the Orthodox churches, 2008, §5, §13.

51 The formation of the Episcopal Assemblies is thus part of the planned Pan-Orthodox Synod, under preparation since 1961. According to Paul Meyendorff the preparation of the Synod has in recent years become entangled with nationalism, precisely because of the prevailing difference of opinion concerning the churches' principles of territorial independence and the situation in the diaspora. P. Meyendorff 2013a. In March 2014 it was announced that it is intended to hold the Synod in Constantinople in 2016. The last preparatory meeting for the Synod took place in Geneva in October 2014. According to Archbishop Leo of Karelia and all Finland the Pan-Orthodox Synod is above all expected to resolve the diaspora question: "The most important question is how the Orthodox churches organise themselves outside the territories of the ancient Patriarchates, in the Americas, Asia, and Western Europe. This will include, for example, the position of the autonomous churches of America (the Orthodox Church of America), Japan, Finland, Ukraine, and Estonia. Furthermore, there needs to be a decision about the work of those dioceses in various parts of the Western world which do not at this moment work in accordance with the territorial tradition of our church, but as Greek, Russian, or Romanian ethnically based entities." See the document of the 2014 preparatory meeting for the pan-Orthodox Synod: "The Orthodox World is on the Right Path" 2014.

52 Chambésy Document 2009. The twelve areas are: (i) North and Central America; (ii) South America; (iii) Australia, New Zealand, and Oceania; (iv) Great Britain and Ireland; (v) France; (vi) Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg; (vii) Austria; (viii) Italy and Malta; (ix) Switzerland and Liechtenstein; (x) Germany; (xi) Scandinavia (not including Finland); (xii) Spain and Portugal. The task of the Episcopal Assembly is defined as follows: "The purpose of the Episcopal Assembly is to manifest the unity of the Orthodox Church, to promote collaboration between the churches in all areas of pastoral ministry, and to maintain, preserve and develop the interests of the communities that belong to the canonical Orthodox Bishops of the Region." See also Leustean 2014a, 14–15.

for the moment – to a new kind of ecclesiastical structure alongside the existing autocephalous churches. The Chambésy documents might be interpreted, however, as suggesting that the future organisation of the ecclesiastical diaspora should be aimed at the dismantling of overlapping national structures and the formation of multi-national, local structures in current diaspora areas. The establishment of regional Episcopal Assemblies has given rise to cautious optimism. Given the pressure of national churches' interests brought to bear on the work of the Episcopal Assemblies, there are, however few grounds for optimism.<sup>53</sup>

It is clear that the diaspora presents both a challenge and an opportunity for the Orthodox churches. The current situation affords an opportunity to express Orthodox ecclesiology in a way that corresponds to the churches' understanding of the full extent of the canonical tradition. The Orthodox Church has worked historically in diverse socio-political contexts. The current situation, in which the churches' mission has extended globally beyond regional jurisdictions, contains its own challenges, but it can hardly be more difficult for the Orthodox churches to organise themselves now according to their ecclesiological principles than it has been in the past.

#### **4. And finally: a return to the local church from the folk church**

Orthodoxy understands Christian faith as global – ecumenical and Catholic (universal). In other words, faith and the church which proclaims it belong to everyone, everywhere. However, local witness to the universality of Christianity seems difficult in the Orthodox churches' current situation. In assessing the work of recent decades, it is easy to agree with the statement of the British-based Metropolitan of Diokleia, Kallistos Ware: an extreme nationalist emphasis has greatly damaged the ministry and testimony of the Orthodox Church.<sup>54</sup> Modern nationalism has transformed the way in which the universality and ecumenical nature of faith are understood from the perspective of Orthodox local churches. The universal identity of the Orthodox has receded, as an identity marked by national consciousness has rooted itself in the life of the churches.<sup>55</sup>

This is not only a problem at the level of the churches' mission; the effects of the nationalist tendency seem to extend at least to the area of doctrinal interpretation, and possibly also to the basic doctrine of the church. It remains to be

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53 The statement is described by Paul Meyendorff as follows: "It remains to be seen whether the recently-established 'episcopal assemblies' ... will boldly take a leadership role in the creation of normal, canonical ecclesial structures, or whether they will abdicate their responsibilities and wait for others to decide their fate." P. Meyendorff 2013b, 391.

54 Ware 2013, 241. It should be remembered that the link between national identity, religion, and the state is not a feature only of Orthodoxy. For example, we might mention the link made in Britain between Anglicanism and the crown, and the centrality of Catholicism for Poles and Croats. The Nordic Lutheran folk or state churches exemplify the close connection between the church and national-state identity.

55 Makrides 2013, 327; Tsetsis 2004, 154–157.

seen if the ecclesiological paradigm shift that began in the nineteenth century will become permanent. However, an assessment and review of the current situation shows that, among theologians at least (some of whom are also churchmen), there is now an attempt to make the traditional case for the church's canonical tradition and an authentic ecclesiology. The eucharistic ecclesiology of John Zizioulas offers an excellent example of a way to critique the *status quo* by arguing for a sustainable theology.<sup>56</sup> It is hard to imagine that the diaspora problem might be solved without recourse to the elements of traditional ecclesiology. Yet this may not be enough. As Pantelis Kalaitzidis, the director of the Greek Volos Academy, has noted, we also need to create an entirely new ecclesiological paradigm better suited to the current socio-political and cultural situation. The Orthodox churches can no longer ignore the effects of globalisation.<sup>57</sup> Why has a response to the situation and the quest for an ecclesologically sound solution proved so very difficult? I think Davor Džalto, the Professor of the History of Religion at the University of Belgrade, gets to the heart of the matter when he states that the Orthodox lack the ability to address social and political collectives and institutions appropriately and practically. Their approach is instead characterised by an attempt to explain things metaphysically, by searching for the eschatological significance of each situation and system.<sup>58</sup> What have the eschatological weight of National Romanticism or the modern nation state to do with Orthodox theology? Is it impossible to think that the Orthodox might find a practical and theological way to organise their ecclesial life and traditional jurisdictional areas in the diaspora without recourse to metaphysical interpretation?

My own view is that the future of the Orthodox churches depends largely on solving the diaspora question. From the perspective of corporate Orthodox collectiveness the situation of the diaspora is basically positive: Orthodoxy is common to several inhabitants of different national origin living in the same area. This is a good approach to the establishment of new local churches based on canonical tradition. In referring to new local churches there should be no stress on ethnicity but rather on the church's local or regional character.<sup>59</sup> Today's Orthodox Church

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56 See, for example, Zizioulas 2010, 49–288.

57 Kalaitzidis 2013, 480. Lucian Leustean describes the issues involved in the challenge of globalisation for the Orthodox churches thus: "Will Eastern Christian churches continue divide or will they unite? Will other churches be accepted in the communion of the fifteen recognised churches? These are open questions. However, the history of Eastern Christianity, and, in particular, religious and political developments after the fall of communism, suggest that Eastern Christianity will continue to be a 'family of churches' which is prone to division and new configurations." Leustean 2014a, 16.

58 "The basic problem that many Orthodox theologians face in this regard is their incapacity to think of social and political collectives and institutions in practical and functional terms, rather than in metaphysical ones. In other words, it is not necessary to develop any specific 'teaching' that will justify or support a given social or political order, giving it eschatological significance..." Džalto 2013, 518.

59 Kristina Stoeckl's excellent summary provides a foundation for a general Orthodox view of the potential development of an ecclesial identity that is both transnational and adaptive to local mainstream culture, which may provide a solution to the diaspora question. Stoeckl 2014. See also Roudometof's article about

of Finland, with its spectrum of nationalities, offers practical evidence that the Orthodox local church need not have a pronounced national ideology but can simply be Orthodox. This may provide the essential model for the diaspora solution. If the quest for a future solution is guided by nationalist goals, the road seems to lead to a theological and practical dead end – at least where a general Orthodox testimony and its foundational Orthodox doctrine are concerned.

In a future of new local churches it makes no practical sense to speak of national churches, because the Orthodox population belonging to them will represent a number of different nationalities. For my own part I like the way the Roman Catholic Church expresses its localism. The Catholic Church in Finland works in Finland, the Catholic Church in Sweden works in Sweden, and so on.<sup>60</sup> The designation of localism is based on the New Testament, where Paul speaks about God's church in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2). In my opinion the Orthodox doctrine of a church that is both local and eschatological offers natural ecclesiological criteria for the connection of such localism with the expression of the localism of the universal church.<sup>61</sup> In the future in our vicinity there may be working an *Orthodox Church in Scandinavia* or an *Orthodox Church in France*. In our own national context we can quite naturally speak about the Orthodox Church in Finland. This avoids the problematic connotations generated by the terms “state church” or “folk church”, but speaks instead of the Orthodox local church functioning in the territory of the Finnish state.

Freeing ourselves of ethnic attributes and limitations would also create more favourable conditions for the work of the diaspora Orthodox Church among the majority population: from the point of view of the church's mission what is most important is that a person becomes Christian – whether they become Greek, Russian, or Finnish Orthodox is secondary. The situation is reminiscent of the New Testament debate concerning the criteria for becoming a Christian and a member of the church. Can the church now deviate from the guidance handed down to us in the apostolic tradition?

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the impact of globalisation on contemporary Orthodoxy. In its response to the challenges of globalisation processes of nationalisation and transnationalisation are occurring at the same time within Orthodoxy. Roudometof 2014.

60 Such practices have also been adopted in the parish unions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. In my own city of Joensuu the Lutheran parishes are organised together. This gives a strong message of a local presence that at the same time shows the connection of the local parish to the wider Lutheran community.

61 For the importance of a rediscovery of an eschatological vision of the church for the witness of Orthodoxy see Vassiliadis 2004, 200–203.

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## **The Folk Church: a Practical Overview**

### **A Church of Revival Movements**

*Thesis: Revivalism has contributed to Lutheranism's emergence as a popular independent actor in society. The church has not been the preserve of the upper class, but has genuinely served as a folk church.*

1. The significance of revival movements in the Lutheran folk church
2. The European roots of revivalism
3. The Finnish mental landscape in the 18<sup>th</sup> century
4. Finnish revival movements in context
  - The Folk Revival of the 18<sup>th</sup> century
  - The revival movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century
  - Fennomania and Biblicism
  - Organisation and the profession of lay preacher
5. The interface with Orthodoxy
6. The extent of the revival movements today

### **1. The significance of the revival movements in the Lutheran folk church**

Revivalism is one of at least four factors that have historically contributed to the shaping of the Lutheran folk church in Finland. The other three are: the position of Lutheranism during the period of autonomy at the time of the Grand Duchy; Hegelian nationalism, especially Fennomania; and the involvement of the church in the turning points of the nation's history. Occasionally these four factors have worked in combination and the distinctions between them have been blurred.

The church's five-year report published in 1955 had the subtitle "The Spiritual Life". Under this heading the author of the report, A. E. Jokipii, wrote about the revival movements. Possessive suffixes were used throughout, especially in the term "Our Revival Movements". It seemed that the church had embraced the content and work methods of revivalism as its own.

Conversely, the revival movements were now intrinsically part of the structures of the church. For example, most clergy recruitment took place among the revival movements, which had also become acceptable reference points in the background election material provided by General Synod representatives. One after the other, figures from the revival movements were elected to the episcopate. Among them

were Eero Lehtinen, Olavi Kares, Osmo Alaja, Väinö Malmivaara, L. P. Tapaninen, Hannes Leinonen, Yrjö Massa, Yrjö Sariola, Jukka Malmivaara, Erik Vikström, and, more recently, Samuel Salmi, Simo Peura, Matti Repo, and Jari Jolkkonen.

In this respect the situation of the Finnish Lutheran Church is often compared with that of its Nordic sister churches. They have also been influenced by revival movements, but only in Finland have they always been an established feature of the structures of the church, from parish administration to the General Synod and the episcopate. A sign of how the church's revival movements have become part of the mainstream of the church's life is that since 1954 some have been recognised as official mission organisations of the church.

Revivalism has been a broader phenomenon than in the revival movements themselves. The aim of the movements has been to disseminate their views to a wider audience, and in this they have been successful. Revivalism's voice has been heard over three centuries, and the revivalist Christian has had an established place in ordinary parish life in recent decades. Pietist thinking about personal conversion and faith has spread throughout the church's work, from confirmation camps to funeral orations and the religious columns of the local newspapers. Revivalism has also influenced Finnish general ways of life and thinking. Finns separate faith and daily life, just as pietism teaches. Religion is a private matter, as the revival movements' teaching about personal faith has underlined.

In this also there has been a two-way influence: the revival movements have been a feature of people's lives, especially in Ostrobothnia and Savo; but they have also shaped Finnish mentality in line with an expression of the Christian faith.

## **2. The European roots of revivalism**

Finnish revival arose out of the cultural, economic, and political conditions of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Lutheran Finland, now integrated into Europe, belonged to the western cultural sphere. Revival was a Finnish phenomenon, but its elements were the product of trade and shipping links, ecclesiastical contact, and the result of deliberate missionary effort. For three centuries it found its typical form among northern people. Finnish revivalism developed out of European pietism. All our revival movements owe a great deal to German, English, and American theologians and writers.

Revivalism had four European sources:

- pietism
- Moravianism
- mysticism
- evangelicalism

## **Pietism**

Pietism was a German theological trend emphasising personal conversion and conscious piety of life. In pietism the sacraments of the church and objectively identifiable moments of salvation remained in the background, and subjective faith was central. Pietists organised extra-ecclesial devotional events and conventicles, which were mainly known in Finland as “gatherings”. The laity often spoke at these meetings.

Philip Jakob Spener (1635–1705), whose best-known work *Pia Desideria* was the pietist manifesto, has been called the father of pietism. Spener organised the first conventicle in Frankfurt in 1670. The main elements of Spener’s programme of church reform were Bible teaching, the replacement of polemical confessional loyalty with love across denominational boundaries, and the renewal of preaching. Instead of doctrinal sophistry, there should be guidance in the deepening of the personal life of faith. Renewal of the church began among groups of true believers, whom Spener referred to as “*ecclesiola in ecclesia*”, or “a little church within the church”.

After Spener his compatriot August Herman Francke (1663–1727) took pietism forward. Francke established the foundation bearing his name in the city of Halle in Saxony-Anhalt, along with the educational and social institutions it maintained. Francke’s foundation was a pioneer in Protestant foreign and domestic mission. Francke introduced a practical orientation to pietism. Genuine faith was reflected in willingness to do the work of mission, social care for the underclass, and training in Christian discipleship. The other string to Spener’s bow was spiritual law. Dancing and other merry-making were sins, which those who came to faith must renounce. Revivalism’s characteristic moralism owes its origins to Francke’s work in Halle.

Also new was an emphasis on the conversion experience. The primacy of a Christian’s personal faith had been important to Spener; for Francke, it was no less important that the Christian move at some point in his or her life from unbelief to conscious faith. Faith should neither grow nor drift imperceptibly, without a clearly discernible moment of conversion. If Spener had laid pietism’s foundations, Francke was its chief architect, for it was he who drafted its basic pillars of conversion, rebirth, sanctification, and perfection.

The movement led by Spener has been called moderate, or ecclesiastical, pietism. Where moderate pietism concerned itself with glancing observations about Lutheran doctrine, radical pietism completely rejected it. The inner word, or the direct impact of the experience of Christ on the pietist’s heart, was considered essential. Radical pietism also espoused an eschatology that eagerly awaited Christ’s second coming in its own time.

One of pietism’s strands developed in Württemberg in Southern Germany. In its early days this strand’s most famous figure was Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687–1752). While at the University of Tübingen he became familiar with the

theology of Johann Anrdt, Spener, and Francke. Like Francke, he was an exegetist, and published, among other works, a version of the Greek New Testament and various biblical commentaries. While the radical pietists, in their stress on the internal word, played down the importance of the Bible, Bengel made of it his cathedral: the fortress of doctrine and history, as well as of an understanding of the world.

Pietism represented a challenge to the theological consensus. As much as its representatives approved of its central teachings, they felt that the Lutheran community in its entirety might not be in possession of the correct saving faith. The core of Lutheranism emphasised the word and the efficacy of the sacraments. The pietists questioned this. The Christian received the Holy Spirit in addition to the word and the sacraments, not in and through them.

Pietism also presented a major challenge to the ordained clergy and to social privilege. If the Holy Spirit could influence the laity in sermons, books, and prayer, the clergy's monopoly had been broken. What need was there of priests, bishops, and princes of the church? This realisation gave birth to separatism, the true believers' desire to divorce themselves from the mainstream and universal church. And because the Lutheran church was a guarantor of consensus within the state, the pietists also found themselves in opposition to the state. At local level a gulf emerged inside the church.

### **Moravianism**

Moravianism emerged when the German Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700–1780) established a religious community at his farm in Bethelsdorff in the south-eastern corner of Germany. Von Zinzendorf had received a pietist education, but he and his movement had abandoned pietism by the 1730s. The community established at Bethelsdorff offered sanctuary (*Herrnhut*) to Bohemian and Moravian Hussite refugees, who were persecuted in the Austrian Empire.

In his youth von Zinzendorf had found himself in conflict with his peers in Halle. The question concerned what constituted the essential. The Halle emphasis was on repentance and conversion, while von Zinzendorf stressed Christ's suffering. A hallmark of Moravianism was the development of bridal mysticism, an emphasis on the blood and wounds of Christ, the quest to transcend denomination for the sake of mutual Christian love, and an expansiveness crossing continents. They closely associated themselves with the Lutheran Reformation, and began to organise opposition to pietism. Yet it was still a revival movement, with a strong element of individualism. The personal element of faith may even have deepened in the transition from pietism to Moravian theology, because access to Christ was a deeply personal matter for bridal mysticism.

The Moravians spread quickly to Western Europe and North America. Preachers were sent from its centre to Northern Finland in the 1730s.

## ***Mysticism***

Church history has not always recognised the important part played by mystics in revivalism. This has been especially the case when the focus has been on revival as a strengthening of the structures of the church and as a doctrinally clarifying feature of mainstream Christianity.

The roots of Christian mysticism are in the medieval idea of the holy life and the early church's tradition of hermits and saints. In the modern era one of the earliest and most influential mystic figures was the German Jakob Böhme (1575–1624). Also noteworthy were the radical pietist Konrad Dippel, and former Jesuit Jean de Labadie (1610–1674), who had abandoned Roman Catholicism for the Reformed Church. In both their backgrounds the important late medieval theologian and mystic Johannes Tauler (1300–1361) was influential. Böhme was the most important mystic for Finland, where his version of Christianity had some followers.

Böhme's teaching combined the Lutheran concept of sin and grace with a perception of humanity and explanation of the world borrowed from the alchemists and mystics. The central themes of his writings were fire, the Spirit, the Virgin Mary, the incarnation, and creation. According to Böhme, poetic imagery, rhythm, and tonal colour were more deeply meaningful than prose's subject matter. The mystics approached God along the bridge of language. Creation concealed the image of God, but language made God visible.

Hand-written copies of Jakob Böhme's books had reached Ostrobothnia by the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. An important centre of mysticism was the village of Merikaarto in Vähänkyrö. In addition to Böhme the Stockholm priest Anders Collin (1754–1830) was a recognised authority among the mystics of Ostrobothnia.

## ***Evangelicalism***

The fourth major Christian revival, extending from the 1730s to the present day, has been much influenced by British and American evangelicalism. It began with the island nation's major revivals of the 1730s. Evangelicalism did not constitute itself in new Protestant denominations, but it encompassed a wider stream of religious thought, bringing together, among other groups, advocates of Methodism and Presbyterianism. The birth pangs of the Evangelical Revival took place in South Wales and the cities of Oxford and Bristol, and, of course, in London. It then spread to Scotland and at the same time to Massachusetts and other North American English-speaking colonies. It was largely inspired by earlier English revivalist movements – the Puritans especially – and was influenced by continental European pietism.

In addition to the smaller independent free churches, evangelicalism influenced the large established churches of the United Kingdom, the (Reformed) Church of Scotland and the (Anglican) Church of England. Its prominent early figures were

George Whitfield (1714–1770), John Wesley (1703–1791), and Charles Wesley (1707–1788), along with Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), who was perhaps the movement’s foremost theological thinker.

The Scottish church historian David Bebbington identifies four key characteristics of evangelicalism: the need for every human being to be converted (conversionism); the need for the gospel to be expressed in effort (activism); the centrality of the Bible (biblicism); and the central place of the message of the cross (crucicentrism). Since the Welsh revivals of the 1730s there has been almost no substantive change in evangelicalism. Only political conservatism has been a new trend.

In Finland of these four sources pietism and Moravianism have been those with which the revival movements have themselves identified and with which they have seen a confessional connection. Neither Jakob Böhme’s mystic movement nor the British-American background has been given much consideration. While “American import” has been a pejorative term, German pietism has been embraced as having an historic place in the Lutheran church. If more attention were paid to sources and writers, the significance of evangelicalism and its contribution in the background of the old revival movements would be more obvious.

The *citoyen* (citizen) was one of the central concepts of the French Revolution. Previously the word “movement” only had connotations of restlessness. As a central principal of the Enlightenment, it came to be associated with the quest for change. In the Protestant countries concept and movement united to become Society-Christianity. The modern missionary model was born in Scotland, in which the main actors were not only churches, but societies formed by citizens and their local mission circuits. In the closing years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century denominations emerged in different parts of Scotland as extensions of these mission circuits. The activity of such free associations became a feature of other areas of life.

The Scottish circuits soon spread throughout the kingdom. William Carey and other figures around the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries established a number of missionary societies, such as the Baptist Missionary Society (1793), the London Missionary Society (1795), the Church Missionary Society (1799), the Religious Tract Society (1799), and the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (1813). This period also saw the establishment of the British and Foreign Bible Society (1804), which had a decisive influence on the creation of the Finnish Bible Society.

The global impact of British missionary societies was inherently linked with the advance of British imperialism. William Carey, for example, identified the inspiration for his missionary work as coming from Captain James Cook’s voyages of discovery. Alongside their military and economic imperialism, the British understood themselves as having a call to educate and evangelise throughout the world.

### 3. The Finnish mental landscape in the 18<sup>th</sup> century

When European influence made itself felt in Finland, it encountered a culture affected by the harshness of its surroundings. This was the time of the famine of the 1690s, the fever of the Great Northern War of the early years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and of internal migration and poverty. Yet in the course of the century there were also positive elements: the growth of trade in coastal towns, land reform, and the rise in literacy. The export of Ostrobothnian tar and sawn timber became a source of prosperity for the peasantry and the urban middle class.

Famine and the Great Northern War resulted in a collapse among eastern subjects of their unquestioning trust in the king's ancestral power, which was based to a significant degree on the authority of the church. Death and destruction affected the people's mentality. The authorities' representatives fled to Sweden, and the people were left to the mercy of randomness and violence. The church of the Enlightenment, emphasising as it did reason, virtue, and goodness, was unable to respond to the people's disorientation. As the common people were awakened to conscience and the horrors of hell, the clergy of the Age of Enlightenment responded with instructions for potato growing, lime burning, and river dredging.

In Sweden, and in its eastern diocese Finland, the German theological trend of neology gained a foothold. It bridged the gap between the Enlightenment's critique of religion and deism. The neologists sought to defend the tenets of Christianity by presenting them as either metaphorical or rational. Faith was a practical matter, which pointed the way to a better life.

The emergence of communication expanded world views. For example, the 1755 All Saints' Day Lisbon earthquake soon came to be known of in Finland. The Lisbon earthquake's biggest impact was cultural. It was an apt mirror exposing both the static and collectivist views of the natural order of the Enlightenment and pietism. Both the French Enlightenment philosopher Voltaire and the Finnish pietist priest Aabraham Achrenius (1706–1769) were inspired to interpret the catastrophe from their respective standpoints. Voltaire wrote and published his great poem at about the same time as Achrenius, the vicar of Nousianen, wrote his own. Achrenius's poem ran to eight pages, which he later supplemented with another two. In his sequel Achrenius wrote of the signs of the end-times that would be seen in a number of Finnish localities.

### 4. Finnish revival movements in context

At the same time revivalist literature began to spread, first to the coastal towns and the surrounding countryside, and then more widely in Western Finland and later in the east. Trade recovered slowly after the Great Northern War. Along with New Testaments and hymnals, Johann Arndt's *Garden of Paradise*, Schütz's *Christian Album*, and Arthur Dent's *The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven* soon

appeared in Finnish. With the latter, John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* became the most popular translated work during the revival period.

Books of the revival period:

- Johann Arndt: *The Garden of Paradise* (Finnish translation: 1732)
- Arthur Dent: *The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven* (Finnish translation: 1732)
- David Hollatz: *The Order of Evangelical Grace in the Economy of Salvation* (Finnish translation: 1745)
- Aabraham Achrenius: *The Question of Souls' Cravings* (1749), and several other works
- Erik Pontoppidan: *The Mirror of Faith* (Finnish translation: 1771)
- Thomas Wilcox: *Honey out of the Rock* (Finnish translation: 1779)
- John Bunyan: *The Pilgrim's Progress*

### **Separatism and the folk revivals of the 18<sup>th</sup> century**

In the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries pietism was characterised by a broad stream of theological ideas. There is a legacy of legal documents from the period recording the investigation and punishment of clergy. The renowned radical pietists had some followers, but it would be an exaggeration to speak of movements in this regard. An armed force was recruited by Aabraham Achrenius, and accommodated in the armoury – or sacristy – of Nousiainen church.

By the 1730s evangelicalism and continental Moravianism were already popular movements. In Finland they had some influence. The Moravian groups that emerged in coastal towns were small, but not without significance. Among their number was a bookbinder, who also had the right to sell books.

The first Finnish revival groups were separatists who distanced themselves from the church. Resignation from the church was impossible, for church membership was synonymous with nationality. Jakob and Erik Erikinpoika, the sons of the vicar of Kälviä, gathered a separatist group based on the spirituality of the mystics. It was forced into exile and during the 1740s sailed from Stockholm to Denmark via Holland and Germany. The Erikinpoika's separatist group was one of the first to violate established norms and was the precursor of a number of similar movements. They were deeply marked by their sense of alienation from the state. There were similar groups in Laihia, Pietarsaari, and Alaveteli, which were opposed not only to officialdom but also to its local agents. This is hardly surprising, as the separatism as practised by the followers of Böhme was very different from the Lutheranism of the 17<sup>th</sup> or even the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Among the separatists, however, are the first lay people recorded by name, and their groups were the first lay religious associations. They can therefore be described as true pioneers.

Separatist groups were also quite small. At the beginning of the folk revival of the 1750s revivals took place in entire village areas. The first of these is considered to be the revival in the village of Santtio in Kalanti in 1756. Special features of these folk revivals were the phenomenon of ecstatic utterances and the leading role played by women, who acted as spiritual teachers. Johan Laihiander, the vicar of Eura, wrote in 1758:

*It was a Tuesday. I was dining with a couple of my friends when, casting my eye out of the window, I saw a number of people approaching the vicarage. Scarcely had I stepped out of the hall towards them, when this group, numbering thirteen, had surrounded me. Some embraced me, others fell to their knees, still others stood with their hands raised towards the sky. They all groaned loudly, and asked for the help and advice of their priest. I was at first scared, thinking myself besieged by madmen. But then I recalled hearing the news of some miraculous movement and revival in nearby parishes a few days earlier, and realised that these people had been touched for revival by the hand of the Lord.*

The folk revival began its regional expansion no later than the 1770s. To the east of Tampere was an area of powerful revival, consisting of Orivesi, Sahalahti, and Kangasala. Ruovesi, Eräjärvi, Längelmäki, and Kuhmalahdi, along with Teisko and Messukylä, now areas of Tampere, were also affected. There were also areas of revival in the Häme-Satakunta border areas, in places such as Karkku and Pirkkala, along with southern Lempälä and Vesilahti. A folk revival also began in Savo in the same decade, although its onset has often been dated to 1796. Those movements termed the Old Revivals are not therefore confined to the later Prayer Movement phenomenon, but spread to large areas of Western Finland, Uusimaa, Häme, and Savo. The folk revivals also included the Tornio river valley *Viklundilaisuus* revival.

### **The revival movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century a broad range of revival movements arose from the folk revival. The first Christian association in Finland was the Finnish Bible Society (1812) – recognised as one of Finland's oldest societies. Previously there had only been reading societies, the first of which was founded in Vaasa in 1794. The Stockholm-based *Utile Dulci* and *Pro Fide et Christianismo* societies also had some Finnish members. H. G. Porthan's circle established the Aurora Society, and the Finnish Trade Society was founded in 1797.

In Finland the growth in national identity began with spontaneous religious revival. From its inception, however, the Finnish Bible Society was seen as an intermediary, as opposed to an oppositional, society. Like the Finnish Trade Society it sought to bolster the objectives of the ruling class and inculcate values

among the common people. Bible reading was seen as promoting civic virtues through raising the educational level of the population, and encouraging honesty, diligence, and hard work.

In the background of the Bible Society's establishment, however, was the British evangelical Bible revival. The Scottish Presbyterian minister John Paterson (1776–1855) arrived in Turku in the autumn of 1811 to meet with Bishop Jakob Tengström (1755–1832). With the support of the officials of the Grand Duchy and the church authorities, the Bible Society was established along European lines to organise the printing and distribution of Bibles. Bishop Tengström succeeded in using his influence to begin a Bible revival along British evangelical lines. A combination of factors led to Finland becoming Europe's Bible belt for a hundred years. Supported by the office of the Archbishop, the Bible Society and the Finnish Evangelical Society had a far-reaching influence on church revival. Tengström's successor, E. G. Melartin, made a significant contribution to the widespread free distribution of Bibles in the 1840s and 1850s.

After Turku, Paterson's objective was to establish the Bible Society in St Petersburg, the heart of the Empire. In 1818 the society expanded its work with the establishment of affiliated groups in provincial capitals. Among them, the executive board of the Viipuri Bible Society had representatives of the Orthodox Church from the outset.

Clergy from all over the country joined the society, along with many academics, Turku merchants and craftsmen, and government officials and army officers. Only three members of the peasantry were represented on the first list of members: the squires Mikael Markula and Mikael Sikilä from Loimijoki, and the sherrif Jakob Pyykkönen from Hyrynsalmi.

A valid approach to the Finnish and Swedish revival movements is to see them as part of the Europe-wide *Erweckungsbewegung* (revival) movement. This great wave of revival arose during the Napoleonic wars out of the smoking ruins of the collapse of intellectual optimism. It was followed by an extensive and complex wave of reform in Western Christianity, the influence of which also extended to North America. Through missionary work revival had a global impact, as growing wealth and improved communications made possible work in the colonies and among the ancient cultures of the East.

In addition to Germany and the Nordic countries revival movements arose in the Reformed, or Calvinist, denominations of the Netherlands, Switzerland, and France. Their links with British and American evangelicalism grew stronger. Along with the influence of earlier movements, the new European revivals served as a catalyst within Finnish Christianity. For national, social, and cultural reasons, Finland proved very fertile ground for new waves of revival. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century revival movements became a typically Nordic and Finnish phenomenon. The situation in Finland differed from that in other Nordic countries, because the divorce from Sweden resulted before long in a need to reinforce Finnish national

identity. As the age of the state church began gradually to give way in the other Nordic countries, in Finland the church found a new national mandate in reaction to Russian hegemony. The revival movements found their place as part of the broader national landscape.

The former folk revival was now embedded in the area of Western Finland as the Prayer Movement, which has remained strong until our times, although it has a provincial and thus narrow perspective. In Southern and Central Ostrobothnia the clergy-led Awakened Movement was born. In Eastern Finland the lay leader Paavo Ruotsalainen (1777–1852) established a folk revival known as the Savo Awakening. His leadership was established by the 1820s. The Southern Savo revival has in the past received less attention than Paavo Ruotsalainen's movement. Its leader was Margareta Högman (1786–1849). Her efforts bore fruit in the revival movement known as the Friend Movement in Eastern Häme and Southern Savo. The North Karelian revival was led by Pastor Henrik Renqvist (1789–1866), who was also known as a literary translator and publisher.

The northern revival came into contact with Laestadianism as it entered the north, spreading from Swedish Lapland and from the Norwegian and Finnish Saami revival from the 1840s. Bearing the name of Lars Levi Laestadius (1800–1861), the Vicar of Kaaresuvanto, the movement has spread widely in North America and is the largest religious folk movement in the Nordic countries. In the same decade the Evangelical Movement began in Southern Finland. It was born in the wake of the ministry of the pietist priest F. G. Hedberg (1811–1893). This movement, in its early stages especially, was a reaction to pietistic Christianity, and it can be seen as part of the stream of new European Lutheranism. In contrast to the other movements, it did not emphasise personal faith, but the place of the sacraments, the word, and the church.

Gustav Björkstrand's biography of Jakob Tengström, published in 2012, has prompted reflection on the significance of the Bishop of Turku in the propitious growth of the revival movements. In 1817 the Tsar promoted Tengström to Archbishop, and the Diocese of Turku was elevated to the status of Archdiocese. Previously a proponent of neology, he returned to Lutheran confessionality and biblically-centred thinking as a result of the post-Enlightenment spiritual crisis confronting the whole of Europe in the wake of the Napoleonic wars. He told John Paterson of his appreciation for "the good old ideas" of the Reformation. At the clergy meeting in 1825 he preached against neology and rationalism in support of the gospel.

Under Alexander I and Jacob Tengström there was a blossoming of revivalism throughout the country. At the beginning of Finland's autonomy religious politics was quite liberal. In the Diocese of Porvoo the Alopaeus episcopal and priestly dynasty and the short episcopate of Zacharias Cygnaeus (1763–1830) resulted in a similar cross-fertilisation between the revivals and the leadership of the church. Cygnaeus's successors, Johan Molander (1762–1837) and Carl Gustav Ottelin

(1792–1864), came into conflict with the state authorities in the course of their stewardship of Eastern Finland and Savo.

How significant was this for the folk church? In 1726 the government had sought to curb the spread of pietism and Moravianism through the prohibition of the promotion of private devotional meetings. Although during this period pietists, separatists, and revivalists were sometimes subject to legal challenge, the actions of ecclesiastical courts only contributed to the impact and spread of the revival movements. The effect was mutual, as is evidenced by a contemporary note of Laihiander: the movements came to be valued, or at least respected, by the clergy. Separatism was a very marginal phenomenon, and even the early revivals drew some of their members from the ranks of the clergy. Although the revival movements had not been formally inside the church (whether by choice or not), they now settled into its very fabric.

The revival movements' brushes with the law are certainly highlighted in their own interpretation of their history. The most famous case, the Kalajoki sessions of 1839, serves as a totem for the monumental history of revival. Its shadow extends even to the approach taken by the diocesan chapters towards the Mission Diocese in 2014. The movements' own biased self-understanding is the result of a paucity of sources. From the interrogations of radical pietists in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century until our own day the most readily available and best collated documents have been the judicial ones. The impression is thereby created that revivalism is an aggressive movement, and within the movements in turn that they are alone in being persecuted for their faith.

### ***Fennomans and biblicists***

The next period to be observed begins with the enactment of the new Church Law in 1869, establishing the church's independence. We now leave behind the era of the pietist clergy, and the influential trends among the clergy are the theology of the German Johann Tobias Beck (1804–1878) and evangelicalism. In arguing for fennicisation, the followers of Beck were concerned with biblicism, or a bibliocentric approach. Fennomania and biblicism met in Gustaf Johansson (1844–1939), Bishop of Kuopio, then Savonlinna, and finally Archbishop of Turku. In the 1880s Johansson was seen as the church's spiritual trendsetter, and a large number of clergy modelled themselves on him. One of Beck's first followers had been the former members of the Awakened Movement A. W. Ingman (1819–1877) and Alfred Kihlman (1825–1903). The movement's most influential figures were Archbishops T. T. Renvall (1817–1898) and Gustaf Johansson. The German Beck movement was an academic application of Württemberg pietism. In Finland it influenced the clergy through the breakthrough it made in advancing the basic principles of revivalism at parish level. We can therefore speak of parish pietism.

The background of Fennomania was influenced by Hegelian nationalism, which found expression in Finland in the Finnish movement from the 1830s onwards.

The Evangelical Movement was not a Fennoman movement, but there were many points of overlap with Fennomania. It extended from the towns into the countryside, reaching workers, craftsmen, farmers, and bureaucrats. It was a bilingual movement, whose supporters took part in the Civil War on both sides.

### ***Organisation and the lay preacher***

The period of the new Church Law also marked the beginning of the activity of various associations. The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM) had been founded a decade earlier, in 1859; especially towards the end of the century it accommodated a number of revival movements. In 1873 the Evangelical Movement established the Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland (SLEY), which hired itinerant booksellers who also functioned as lay preachers. In other revival movements this new profession of lay preacher also emerged. In revival tradition they have been called “the fathers of time”, but only part of the period was characterised by their work. Following SLEY the Sortavala Evangelical Society was established, and in the 1890s and 1900s it was the turn of the central organisations of various revival movements. Wilhelmi Malmivaara (1854–1922) was a significant leader of domestic mission work, who founded the revival movement known as the *körtit* (or the *Awakened*). Out of the fragmentation of Laestadianism emerged three different organisations, the largest of which was the Central Association of the Finnish Associations of Peace (SRK).

Behind the emergence of the institution of lay preacher was the spread of literacy and of Bibles, the growing affluence of the peasantry, especially in Ostrobothnia, the increase in the numbers of schoolteachers and other literate professions, and the increased penetration of translated sermon books and other theological literature.

The period's best known lay preachers were Gustav Wilhelm Rask (1822–1896), Simon Helenius, and Johannes Vilhelm Hirvonen in Southern Finland, Kustaa Heinikkala and Pieteri Kurvinen in South-western Finland, Juho Malkamäki in Southern Ostrobothnia, and Taneli Rauhala, Aaprami Tuominiemi, Juho Torppa, Matti Suo, and Leonard Typpö in Central Ostrobothnia. Both Malkamäki and Torppa were Members of Parliament – a measure of the esteem in which lay preachers were held by the rural population. Malkamäki represented the Finnish Party (Suomalainen Puolue); Torppa represented the Progressive Party and the Agrarian Party. The *körtti* Malkamäki and the evangelical Torppa were joined by the Laestadian Typpö, who was a Member of Parliament for the Finnish Party and the National Coalition Party.

Northern Ostrobothnian preachers were the postmaster of Raahe, Johan Westerberck, and Gustaf Skinnari and Juuso Runtti, while Erkki Antti Johonpieti, Joonas Purnu, Fredrik Paksuniemi, and Pietari Hanhivaara worked in Lapland.

The farmer Juuso Runtti served as an MP for the Finnish Party and later the National Coalition Party, but he was also a member of the General Synod – an indication of more active involvement by the revival movements in the church's administration. Runtti's two-fold representation underlines how a provincial activism could follow on from work as a lay preacher.

Local associations and prayer rooms point to the revival movements' role as a channel for popular religiosity. This was especially so with the Evangelical Movement, which was the most highly organised, and whose local applicants pledged to uphold general objectives through association activities and voluntary work. Christian and evangelical folk high schools were of similar importance. The Danish Grundtvig principles of folk education became part of the tradition of the revival movements.

The growth in international contacts at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century brought with it a new wave of evangelicalism to Finland. This was connected with American world mission and the rise of new revivalism. As was typical of revivalism, the denominations involved formed alliance-based organisations. The YMCA, Salvation Army, Student Christian Movement, and the Free Churches arrived in Finland at this time. Some of these movements constituted themselves as independent free churches, some were integrated into the church, and some formed the basis of the movement of the 1900s known as the Fifth Revival or the New Pietists. The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission also underwent the clearest period of revival in its history at this time.

The Fifth Revival's drive to organise itself after the Second World War was characterised by the revival work of Pastor Urho Muroma (1890-1966) and the Swedish lay preacher Frank Mangs (1897-1994). Muroma's movement established the Finnish Bible Institute in 1939, and Mangs's revival established the Folk Bible Society (*Kansan Raamattuseura*) in 1945. These Fifth Revival movements gave birth to the Finnish Lutheran Mission (*Kansanlähetys*) in the 1960s. Associated with these groups were a rejection of ecumenism, fundamentalism, and political conservatism. Since the 1970s the Lutheran Church has also been influenced by the Charismatic Movement and non-denominational trends.

Another development especially characteristic of the old revival movements was the idea of the New Folk Church, in which the folk church principle was publicly embraced. Since the 1970s the New Folk Church has seen a split among the Evangelical, Prayer, and Laestadian Movements concerning their attitude to the ordained ministry of the church, which has developed since 1986 into opposition to, or at least criticism of, the church.

The New Folk Church ecclesiology transformed the church's organisation of its work in social and societal issues. Pietist ecclesiology gave a higher profile to the discussion of religious issues and the church was defined as the guardian of spiritual life. Immediately after the Second World War the door was opened to

ecumenical interaction and contacts were developed with the Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox Churches.

## 5. The interface with Orthodoxy

According to Dr Mauri Kinnunen the spread of the Laestadian revival from the north to Northern Karelia in the 1870s found support among the Orthodox population in the areas where the Orthodox were in a minority. In Liperi, Polvijärvi, and Kuusjärvi especially, many Orthodox joined the Laestadians. Within these areas Laestadianism took root precisely in the villages where there was an Orthodox population. One such village was Harmaalahti in Liperi, where two members of the Orthodox Church, Iivana and Matteij Mutanen, became Laestadian preachers. Members of the Orthodox Church also belonged to the Laestadian community in Joensuu. This spread of Laestadianism could not avoid conflict. Preacher Mutanen was banned by Taipale's priest, Venzevlav Diakonov, from attending church and receiving Holy Communion.

Gatherings in Orthodox homes also attracted the attention of the authorities. Archbishop Johansson reported from the Coronation of Nicholas II in St Petersburg that complaints about the Laestadian "penetration of the Greek Church" had reached even the Tsar. The Laestadian view of the Orthodox Church mirrored the more general Lutheran view: it was associated with imperial power. Pastor Aatu Laitinen wrote as follows:

*If you believe in the atoning blood of the Lord Jesus for your sins and seek forgiveness for your faults, and that he is the ruler of your soul at the hem of the external church, then you are a good and cherished Christian.*

In the 1890s the Sortavala Evangelical Society was active among the Lutheran population of Eastern Karelia. This initiative was inherited from the activity of the Finnish Home Mission (*Suomen Kirkon Sisälähetysseura*), whose forceful leader Otto Aarnisalo often wrote about "draining the frozen bog on the border". At issue, especially in the early years of independence, was the uprooting of Bolshevism from Karelia. The Evangelical Movement's contacts with Orthodoxy were centred on Ingria, where the movement had significant support among the Lutheran Finnish-speaking population.

The Awakened Movement was strongly influenced by the tide of nationalism in the 1920s and 1930s, and its leaders were associated with the Lapua Movement with radical right wing sympathies. To some extent their opposition to Russia influenced their approach to the Orthodox population. Since the Second World War the movement – like the mainstream of the Lutheran folk church – has ecumenically broadened. A sign of this is the accession of the Awakened Movement as a partner of the Finnish Ecumenical Council in the spring of 2014.

The Finnish Ecumenical Council's partner organisations also include the Fifth Revival organisations Logos Ministries of Finland (*Kansan Raamattuseura*) and Media Mission (*Sanansaattajat*).

## 6. The extent of the revival movements today

### *The revival movements since 2010*

The most recent study of the involvement and extent of the activity of the revival movements, as well as their attitudes towards ethical and doctrinal issues, is Dr Hanna Salomäki's comprehensive "Commitment and Involvement of the Revival Movements" (*Herätysliikkeisiin sitoutuminen ja osallistuminen*, Church Research Institute, 2010). It was preceded by the sociological overviews of Dr Voitto Huotari – "Our Church's Revival Movements Today" (*Kirkkomme herätysliikkeet tänään*, Kirjapaja, 1981), and Dr Ari Haavio – "Finnish Religious Movements" (*Suomen uskonnolliset liikkeet*, WSOY, 1965).

**LAESTADIANISM.** The Nordic countries' largest revival movement; it has spread to the United States. It is divided into several groups.

- **Conservative Laestadianism** (*Vanhoillislestadiolaisuus*).  
The largest Laestadian group. 80 000–120 000 adherents in Finland, the other Nordic countries and the United States. In 2011 active in 66% of the parishes of the Lutheran Church. Annual event *Suviseurat* (Summer Gathering). Central Association of Finnish Peace Associations (*Keskusyhdistys Suomen Rauhanyhdistysten*, SRK). Publishes *Päävä mies* magazine.
- **Firstborn Laestadianism** (*Esikoislestadiolaisuus*).  
Adherents in Northern Sweden, Southern Finland, and the United States, Approximately 10 000 adherents. In 2011 active in 20% of the parishes of the Lutheran Church. *Esikoislestadiolaiset ry*. Publishes *Rauhan side* magazine.
- **Rauhansanalaisuus** (*Word of Peace*).  
Adherents in Tornio river valley and Oulu regions, Central Ostrobothnia, and in Swedish-speaking Ostrobothnia, as well as the United States. In 2011 active in 14% of the parishes of the Lutheran Church. Approximately 7000 adherents. Organises *Suvijuhlat* (Summer Festival). Finnish-speaking *Lähetisyhdistys Rauhan Sana* (Mission Association of the Word of Peace, LYRS) and Swedish-speaking *Laestadianernas Fridsföreningars Förbund* (Laestadian Association of Peace Unions, LFF). Publishes *Rauhan sana* and *Sions Missionstidning* magazines.

- **New Awakening** (*Usheräys*). Adherents in the Kalajoki and Pyhäjoki valleys and in Lapland. In 2011 active in 10% of the parishes of the Lutheran Church. Approximately 3000 adherents. Organises *Kesäseurat* (Summer Gatherings). Kalajoki Christian Institute. *Uusiheräys ry*. Publishes *Lähetäjä* magazine.
- **Elämänsanalaisuus** (*Word of Life*). This grouping split from the Conservative Laestadians in 1961. Fewer than 500 adherents. The Laestadius Society (*Laestadius-seura*) and *Elämän sana* magazine ceased operations in 2004.
- Other Laestadian groups retaining adherents in Finland are the *Sillanpääläisyys*, *Steeniläisyys*, *Leeviläisyys*, and *Kontiolaisuus*.

## THE AWAKENED MOVEMENT (KORTTILÄISYYS)

- **Herättäjä-Yhdistys** (*Awakened Association*). In 2011 active in 57% of the parishes of the Lutheran Church. Gatherings, youth work. Aholansaari Activity Centre in Nilsjä. Organises *Herättäjäjuhlat*, with about 20 000 participants, Publishes *Hengellinen Kuukauslehti* magazine.

THE FIFTH REVIVAL. Adherents distributed evenly throughout the country, with a slight preponderance in Eastern Finland.

- **Finnish Bible Institute** - Folk High School in Kauniainen. Youthwork, evangelism, and Bible teaching in conjunction with the parishes. Its mission circles have 11 000 members. In 2011 active in 46% of the parishes of the Lutheran Church. Organises *Hengelliset syventymispäivät* (Spiritual Deepening Days), with 3000 participants. Publishes *Elämään* magazine.
- **Finnish Lutheran Mission** (*Evangelisluterilainen Kansanlähetys*). An official mission organisation of the church. Hausjärvi Folk High School in Ryttylä. Evangelism and Bible teaching in the parishes. In 2011 active in 66% of the parishes of the Lutheran Church. Organises *Kansanlähetyspäivät* (Folk Mission Days), with 6000 – 10 000 participants. Publishes *Uusi tie* magazine.
- **Folk Bible Society** (*Kansan Raamattuseura*). Activity centre at Vivamo in Lohja. Proclamation and educational work in the parishes, student activities in university cities. *Sanan Suvipäivät* (Summer Days of the Word), 4000 participants. In 2011 active in 44% of the parishes of the Lutheran Church. Publishes *Sana* magazine.
- **Opiskelija- ja koululaislähetys** (International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, OPKO).

Student work in 19 towns. Publishes *Arkki* magazine.

- **Finnish Lutheran Overseas Mission** (*Evangelisluterilainen Lähetysyhdistys Kylväjä*).  
An official mission organisation of the church. *Lähetysten kesäpäivät* (Mission Summer Days). Publishes *Kylväjä* magazine.
- **Media Mission** (*Sanansaattajat, SANSA*).  
An official mission organisation of the church. Specialised radio, satellite TV, and internet work. *Medialähetyspäivät* (Media Mission Days). Publishes *Lähde* magazine.

**THE EVANGELICAL MOVEMENT.** Adherents in Western and Southern Finland. Total membership approximately 15 000.

- **The Lutheran Evangelical Association in Finland** (LEAF, *Suomen Luterilainen Evankeliumiyhdistys, SLEY*).  
An official mission organisation of the church. In 2011 active in 53% of the parishes of the Lutheran Church. Organises *Evankeliumijuhlat* (Gospel Festival), with 10 000–12 000 participants. Publishes *Sanansaattaja* magazine.
- **Evankelinen Lähetysyhdistys** (*Evangelical Mission Society, ELY*).  
Approximately 700 supporters. In 2011 active in 17% of the parishes of the Lutheran Church. Unlike SLEY, supports the ordination of women.
- **The Swedish Lutheran Evangelical Association in Finland** (*Svenska Lutherska Evangeliföreningen i Finland, SLEF*).  
An official mission organisation of the Lutheran Church. Organises *Årsfest* (Annual Festival), with approximately 1000 participants. Publishes *Sändebudet* magazine.

**THE PRAYER MOVEMENT.** Adherents in the rural areas of Pori and Rauma in Western Finland.

- **Länsi-Suomen Rukoilevaisten Yhdistys** (*The Prayer Association of Western Finland*).  
Uses the old translation of the Bible (1776). Does not support the ordination of women. Organises worship and meetings in accordance with the old service book of the church (1693). In 2011 active in 3% of the parishes of the Lutheran Church. Organises *Rukoilevaisten Summer Gatherings*. Publishes *Länsi-Suomen Herrännäislehti* magazine.
- **Suomen Rukoilevaisen Kansan Yhdistys** (*The Finnish Folk Prayer Association*).  
Approximately 300 supporters. In 2011 active in 2% of the parishes of the Lutheran Church. Organises *Länsi-Suomen Herrännäisjuhlat* (West-

ern Finland Revival Festival). Involved in the publication of *Hengellinen Kuukauslehti* magazine.

**UUKUNIEMELÄISYYS (THE UUKUNIEMI MOVEMENT).** Has some supporters in South-eastern Finland and South Savo.

- **Parikanniemi Foundation** (*Parikanniemisäätiö*).  
Runs a children's home. Speaking engagements in the parishes. Organises *Orpokotijuhlat* (Orphanage Festival) with approximately 2000 participants. Publishes *Kontti* magazine.

**CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT.** Adherents evenly distributed throughout the country.

- **Hengen uudistus kirkossamme** (*Our Church Renewed by the Spirit*).  
In 2011 active in 3% of the parishes of the Lutheran Church. Approximately 2000 people participate in its summer event. Publishes *Kädenojennus* magazine.
- **Nokia Missio** (*Nokia Mission*).  
Organises charismatic meetings and small group activities in Tampere and towns in Southern Finland. The independent Nokia Missio Church denomination has 300 members (2011). From 2013 its new name is *Uuden toivon seurakunnat* (Congregations of New Hope).
- **New Wine Finland.**  
An interdenominational network. Educational and group activities. Its summer event at Himos in Jämsä brings together about 2000 participants.

**THE MISSION DIOCESE**

- A quasi-independent denomination run by the **Luther Foundation** and three local associations. Has its own Bishop and ordinations. Worshiping communities function in 29 locations (2014). Publishes *Pyhäkön lamppu* magazine.

## **The Nationality Question in the Orthodox Church of Finland**

### **The situation of the Orthodox Church before the independence of Finland**

Since Finland's independence in 1917 the Orthodox in Finland have had an ecclesiastically interesting existence. As a legacy of the previous century the Orthodox Church had become a clearly visible feature of the streetscape of the largest towns. After 1809 the position of the Orthodox Church was strengthened, with the granting of increased civil rights in 1827 in the Autonomous Grand Duchy.

In Finland the Orthodox Church had a small number of members. At best they amounted to only about 2% of the Grand Duchy's population. The Evangelical Lutheran Church was a true folk church; the Orthodox Church was the church of the Tsar, visibly present in impressive ecclesiastical edifices in the grandest urban locations. Many churches were built to serve army garrison towns. These impressive buildings sent a clearly political message. They were a reminder of the close relations of church and state, and the presence of the Tsarist government.

With Finland's nineteenth century national awakening, attention fell on the Orthodox Church: could it be considered to meet the requirements of a national institution in a changing political culture?

The question of Finnish identity gave impetus to the goals of so-called nationally-minded churchmen, who believed that only an Orthodox Church supportive of Finnish values and customs could survive in a newly independent Finland. Sergei Okulov emerged as a leading nationally-minded figure, who felt that the church should adopt the vernacular and that Orthodoxy should be taught to the people in general. For this a Finnish national clergy was needed. Only thus would the Orthodox of Karelia retain the faith of their fathers, and not succumb to the grasp of a Lutheranism that was in many ways more advanced.

The majority of the church's members lived in so-called Border Karelia. The church was, however, a distinctively Russian institution in Finland: in 1920 about 22% of its membership was Russian-speaking.

Sense of identity was affected by the generally poor education of the Border Karelians: many of the Orthodox of Karelia did not consider themselves to be especially Finnish, but were attracted to Russian culture, seeing links with Russia as important. There were contrasting views: the Finnish origins of the Border Karelians and loyalty to Finland were highlighted as was expedient.

From the Russian perspective the fennicisation of the church ran contrary to the customs and tradition of the Russian church, and so the expression of Finnish

identity was opposed. Interestingly, however, those on the Russian side were also positively disposed to services in the vernacular. The Orthodox Diocese of Finland was established in 1892. Its first bishop, Antoniy, has even been considered as having been sympathetic to some aspects of the national struggle.

From the late nineteenth century people were acutely influenced by the challenging issue of education. Dozens of schools had been established in Border Karelia. Most of them were founded by the Karelian Brotherhood, and with few exceptions the language of instruction was Russian. At the same time the Senate of Finland established Finnish schools in Karelia. The Karelians preferred the Russian schools, where the teaching was believed to be better and where a meal was provided in the course of the school day. Many also argued that Russian language skills were important for the communicative networks and even the commercial prospects of Karelian children.

At the same time a similar cultural-political project was underway in Aunus in Karelia. Beyond the border in Russian Karelia dozens of Russian libraries and schools were established to counter the spread of Finnish culture in the early part of the twentieth century. In this work the teacher and school inspector Nikolai Chukov, who after the Second World War was elected as Metropolitan Grigoriy of Leningrad, was especially prominent.

For Chukhov the common Orthodox faith was of incomparably greater significance than any tribal or linguistic connection. Without question, therefore, Karelians belonged to the greater family of Russian nations and to the Moscow Patriarchate. Furthermore, they needed to be protected from Lutheran influence. In the Orthodox Church of Finland Lutheranism was not considered the major threat it was on the other side of the border.

### **The Orthodox Church prevented by statute from seeming to be Russian**

When Finland finally became independent it was desirable to define the status of the Finnish Orthodox. This was addressed as early as 1917. It is now held that the legislation was politically designed as a bulwark against outside interference in Finland's internal affairs more than it reflected a desire to show goodwill towards the Finnish Orthodox. The extent to which the Orthodox Church was seen as a risk in government circles is illustrated by the conviction of Ståhlberg's Constitutional Committee (1917) that the Orthodox diocese was a clearly Russian plant in Finland. In spite of the wish to recognise the church's right to exercise its spiritual role, the law was drafted to ensure that the Finnish Orthodox would be subject to the laws of Finland at least in matters of civil administration.

Brotherus's Freedom of Religion Committee recognised the special status of the Orthodox Church as a folk church. This was informed by historical arguments: for the whole of their history the Karelians had been caught up in the conflicts

between the two kingdoms of Sweden and Moscow, a point emphasised by the church's nationally-minded wing.

Paasikivi's Senate recognised the Greek Catholic denomination on 26th November 1918. From a legislative perspective it is remarkable that it was the Finnish government that established the denomination – an indication of the government's desire to secure the denomination's work in a politically turbulent time.

From its inception it was clear that the openly anti-Russian government of Finland actively regulated the crafting of the church's organisation. However, the minister responsible for church affairs, E. N. Setälä, stressed that church and state were independent of each other. The official reason for this was that the Orthodox Church's role, no less than the Lutheran Church's, was to attend to the instruction and upbringing of its members, and the state should therefore give it financial support. Setälä threatened the church with financial problems if it did not break its connection with Moscow.

The church still belonged to the Russian church and the Moscow Patriarchate. All its bishops and most of its clergy were Russian in the 1920s. Even many of the nationally-minded priests were Russian by nationality.

Setälä insisted that the church's bond with the canonical Russian mother church be cut, and that an independent church be established. In submitting its report to the parliament the Grand Committee expressed its view that the Orthodox denomination should become a completely independent autocephalous church. The more detailed contents of the measure were submitted for the government's consideration, which in practice meant that the affairs of the church were completely subordinate to the government's decision-making. According to the church an outside third party cannot decide on the church's canonical relations, a fact which the authorities later acknowledged.

This recognition was especially influenced by Setälä's emphasis on the church's independence from the state. He had no wish to interfere in the church's internal affairs. However, it could hardly be accepted in government circles that the church might itself decide to continue to belong to the Moscow Patriarchate. The statute recorded that the government of the country was the church's highest administrative authority. This arose from the fact that the state's legislative bodies could legislate without taking into account a denomination's position at all. The church's synod had the right to draft initiatives and present its wishes to the country's legislature. It should be noted that the country's government also had the right of initiative to the church's synod (Statute § 43).

The government also wanted to ensure that candidates for the priesthood in Finland were nationally-minded. In order to minimise Russian influence on the seminary in Sortavala, the government reserved the right to decide on the institution's administrative organisation. Setälä's view was that Russian should not be used at all in teaching, and that textbooks should be translated into Finnish.

When the final statute of the Finnish Greek Catholic denomination had been drafted, the Russian Archbishop Seraphim (Lukyanov) wished to make some amendments and clarifications. However, he was ignored. In Seraphim's view it was unreasonable that Finnish citizenship be required of monks and nuns as well as the church's office holders. It was finally concluded that only those to be professed should apply for citizenship. In the view of Sergei Okulov and Sergei Solntsev elderly monks and nuns should be free to apply for citizenship.

In the final statute, however, elderly monks and nuns were not exempt from the obligation of citizenship. The result was that most of them were left without it. The term "former subject of the Emperor, now a citizen of no country" was used of them. Where church property was concerned, it was taken for granted that former Russian military churches and schools had passed to the Finnish state at independence. Church buildings were taken over for spiritual work among Finnish Lutheran military personnel, and were not handed over to Orthodox parishes, despite requests that they should be.

The state reserved the right to intervene in the nomination of candidates for the Orthodox Church's bishops. The government did not have this right where the selection of Lutheran bishops was concerned, although it also appointed them. The nationally-minded leader and advisor to Setälä, Aleksanteri Sadovnikov, succeeded in getting the statute to stipulate that the bishop could not leave the diocese unless he needed medical treatment, and even then he could do so only with the ministry's permission. This restriction of movement was aimed at Bishop Seraphim, it being felt desirable to monitor his ties with Moscow. Nationally-minded figures were openly involved in lobbying for and preparing regulations designed to minimise Russian influence in the church.

The government also decided on the establishment of spiritual positions (Statute §§ 6–7), whereas the Lutheran Church was permitted to take similar decisions in its own right. The government also decided on the establishment and distribution of new dioceses and parishes (Statute § 4.6), and determined new parishes' connection to the church. In the background of this was the idea germinated by the Paasikivi administration that Eastern Karelia should become part of Finland, and that in this event the region's Orthodox should join the Finnish Orthodox Church.

Overall it should be noted that the government was given significant influence over the church's affairs. It could at any time change or even revoke the statute without consultation with the church. This arrangement meant that the church had to create a climate of trust between the parties. The state could almost completely control the church. The church was given to understand that the state's financial support would be continued only under certain conditions.

Church matters were decided by statute, not by law. Setälä believed this was justified because in parliamentary proceedings the affairs of the Orthodox Church might be adversely affected by anti-clerical forces in the parliament.

## Monasteries in the firing line

The church's canonical relations were found to be within the church's sole discretion. Complicated by the Russian church's weakening situation, this only neared resolution at the end of 1922, when the objective of autocephaly or the achievement of extensive independence was set. It was agreed that the Patriarchate of Constantinople would be able to grant this to the Finnish church. In the spring of 1923 it was decided to send a delegation to Constantinople to seek agreement with the Ecumenical Patriarch.

E. N. Setälä represented the government on the delegation appointed by the state on 9th May 1923. Other members appointed by the Ministry of Education were the Reverend Sergei Solntsev, the nationally-minded bishop Herman Aav, and Archbishop Alexander (Paulus), representing the Orthodox Church of Estonia.

On arrival in Constantinople it was revealed to the delegation that the autocephaly of the small Finnish Orthodox Church could not be recognised. Patriarch Meletios and the Holy Synod of Constantinople were, however, prepared to grant broad autonomy, which was satisfactory to the Finns. Setälä saw the negotiations' outcome only from a political perspective: what was most important was that the Finnish Orthodox Church was now separated canonically from the Moscow Patriarchate. The formation of the Finnish church as an archdiocese did not require the establishment of a national Orthodox church. Perforce, the result of this was a canonical connection to Constantinople.

The results of the Constantinople negotiations could not be preserved intact, but were subject to unauthorised modification. The canonical interpretation of the church's life and order was subordinate to Finnish laws. During the negotiations Patriarch Meletios emphasised that the linking of the Finnish Orthodox Church to the Ecumenical Patriarchate was only possible because the position of the Moscow church had been decisively weakened. The Finns preferred to forget this side of the matter: the separation of the Finnish and Russian churches was considered definitive.

Meletios's diaspora theory was not mentioned in the negotiations' minutes. It stood to reason that all the so-called barbarian territories outside the Patriarchate of Constantinople which were forced to separate from their mother church would automatically come into the Ecumenical Patriarchate's canonical sphere of influence, a position informed by Canon 28 of the Fourth Ecumenical Council. In Moscow the diaspora theory was not recognised. There the cohesion of peoples and historical contact was emphasised in the determination of ecclesiastical boundaries.

A new chapter opened in the church's fennicisation when Archbishop Seraphim was deposed and his office abolished. The justification for his deposing was that his activity was detrimental to the country. Herman Aav was elected as the new Archbishop, and was installed in Constantinople during the autonomy negotiations. Many Russian priests had crossed the border into Russia, especially since 1917. An interesting detail is that Herman Aav was Estonian, not Finnish. Tribal

connection was, however, considered sufficient to establish a right of nationality. Likewise, a significant proportion of the church's members was Karelian-speaking. In spite of this the fennicisation of the church and the introduction of Finnish, as opposed to Karelian, was discussed.

Most of the dispute triggered by the state's formation can be linked to the transition to the new calendar. Controversy finally led to difficult ecclesiastical legal action. There was particular opposition to the new calendar in the Russian monasteries at Valamo and Konevitsa. Between 1925 and 1927 dozens of monks were expelled from Valamo because of the calendar dispute. The government intervened. The Orthodox Church's government committee representative at the Ministry of Education Antti Inkinen wrote later in his memoirs that the Finnish government should not have got involved in the calendar dispute: the "worst of the escalation" would thus have been avoided.

In the 1930s the Valamo monastery dealt with the calendar dispute in its own way. Supporters of the old calendar received a separate space where their services could be offered according to the old calendar. In the Russian ecclesiastical tradition language and calendar were cornerstones whose abandonment was not without difficulty: Church Slavonic services were still in use at New Valamo until the 1970s.

Furthermore, the canonicity of the new archdiocese was not accepted by the male monastery, which recognised the Moscow Patriarchate as the only legitimate mother church, to which the leadership of the monastery was (illegally) subscribed under Metropolitan Yelefver of Lithuania throughout the 1930s. The monastery wished to keep the connection with Moscow and was forced at times to walk a tightrope between Metropolitan Sergei, the Patriarchal acting *locum tenens* of Moscow, and the rulings of Archbishop Herman of Finland. At the same time some of the monks recognised the Paris-based Metropolitan Eulogius, whose parishes had joined the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 1931 when Moscow expelled them for counter-revolutionary and schismatic tendencies: Eulogius had earlier publicly criticised the Soviet Union. According to Moscow there could be no communion with those who recognised Eulogius. This was not a problem for the Finnish church, as Eulogius's parishes came, like it, under the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

The monasteries were regarded as very alien, to a large extent probably because of their Russianness. The prevailing attitude towards them was hostile. They were considered a medieval anachronism that should gradually disappear. Within the church the monasteries were viewed with more understanding, because many of the church's leading figures had good relations with their members. Furthermore, it was acknowledged that at Lintula there was a Finnish national sentiment. During the war many monks with a leaning towards Finnish culture served in the armed forces.

## Helsinki's Russian parishes

Anna Pugina, a Viipuri shopkeeper, gave her apartment to be used for worship according to the old calendar. This gave birth to a “real Russian” parish, in which the old calendar was accepted and Church Slavonic was used in worship. The government granted permission for the establishment of the parish on 23rd December 1926. Six months later a chapel was established in Helsinki.

Many church members with a Russian background found it difficult to accept that the Finnish Orthodox Church was becoming Finnish, especially after the establishment of the canonical connection with Constantinople. The “real Russian” Pokrova parish was connected to the émigré Bishop Eulogius, based in Paris. There was no communion between the Finnish Orthodox Church and the Pokrova parish, in spite of the fact that both belonged to the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Their relations were characterised by mutual national resentment.

Most of the extended Russian community, however, belonged to the Helsinki Orthodox parish, where the Russian ecclesiastical tradition was cherished. After the Second World War, when the balance of power began to shift towards the Finnish with the influx of Karelian Orthodox into the capital, the parish's administration became quite divided.

It is likely that the work of Helsinki's modern Russian congregations continues in largely the same vein. The aim is to preserve an authentically Russian tradition and atmosphere, whose core elements are the use of Church Slavonic and the old calendar. The work of the Russian congregations is expanding to Itäkeskus with the construction of a new church. The construction of a church and adherence to a church outside Finland is often justified because the Finnish Orthodox archdiocese is too bureaucratic: “The priests aren't on duty in the church,” it is said. “They're sitting in the office.”

Only about 2000 members belong to these so-called private Russian congregations, of whom half are the descendants of Old Russian families. Most Russians belonging to the church are currently associated with the Orthodox Church of Finland.

The Orthodox Church of Finland has its own Romanian-speaking priests to serve the Romanian community, who work in Romanian several times a year. A Romanian service is held in Helsinki once a month. A Serbian priest visits from Sweden a few times a year for a service at Helsinki's Trinity Church. Greek services are offered regularly in Helsinki and Tampere. There are two groups from the Ethiopian and Eritrean Oriental Orthodox Churches, which want to be part of the Orthodox Church of Finland; a Coptic priest visits from Sweden. The Orthodox parish of Helsinki pays priests' travel expenses to Finland. In this light it is worth saying that at a practical level at least the various Orthodox nationalities relate naturally to the Orthodox Church of Finland.

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