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THE FINNISH  
LUTHERAN -  
ORTHODOX  
DIALOGUE

CONVERSATIONS IN 1989 AND 1990



DOCUMENTS  
OF THE  
EVANGELICAL  
LUTHERAN  
CHURCH OF  
FINLAND

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THE FINNISH LUTHERAN - ORTHODOX DIALOGUE 1989 AND 1990

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PREFACE

The discussions between the Finnish Orthodox Church and the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church are characterized by the fact that they are two national churches working in the same country. Both have for centuries been integrated into the history and national life of the Finnish people. They have approximately the same public position. For this reason the churches feel that they have had to bear a common responsibility in serving amidst the same people. Their voice is requested and their assistance is expected in the area of values of life. Therefore they share a common concern for issues of pastoral care, church teaching and the ethical situation.

On the other hand, both churches participate in the worldwide ecumenical movement. Both belong to their own worldwide ecclesiastical community as they participate in the international Lutheran-Orthodox theological dialogue. It is clear to them that this obligates them to look beyond the borders of their own country. They cannot be solely national churches, but as national churches they have an obligation towards the whole of Christendom. In their discussions they must in one way or another integrate into the other ecumenical efforts in which their churches are engaged.

Although since 1970 the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church has been engaged in doctrinal discussions with the Russian Orthodox Church, the discussions held at Mikkeli 28th-29th September, 1989 with the Finnish Orthodox Church were the first official discussions between the Finnish churches. This does not mean that there were no contacts between the churches before that date. The leaders of both churches and a large proportion of the clergy know each other so well that there are doubting Thomases: is it worth such good acquaintances entering into official discussions?

The discussions have, however, shown the doubts to be groundless. Due to the churches' common responsibility in the life of the nation the themes chosen have always been related to this. At Mikkeli in 1989 such was "The Relationship between the Church and the People as a Theological and Historical (Contextual) Issue", and at the discussions at New Valamo 8th-10th October, 1990, Marriage between Orthodox and Lutherans as a Pastoral Issue".

A general ecumenical effort was apparent in the subjects under discussion at Mikkeli in 1989: "The Authority and Significance of Ecumenical Councils",

and at New Valamo in 1990 "The Relation between Doctrine and the Canons and the Ecumenically Binding Nature of the Canons".

It is characteristic of both churches that they wish to keep hold of the christological and trinitarian confession of the early Church and thus be anchored in the apostolic and early Church tradition. They wish to believe and confess in the same way as the undivided Church did. But at the same time they notice that it is precisely here that the ecumenical problem lies, regarding just as much how the churches understand themselves as how they view each other. By studying their common heritage the churches attempt to understand better and with greater profundity both their own tradition, to see common elements in it, and also the other one.

The churches have noticed that both in their faith and in their service amidst the same people they have much in common. On the other hand, they have become more aware that the background to each church is a different theological tradition, derived from the New Testament. Typical examples are John's writings on the one hand and Paul's on the other, and the eastern (Byzantine) and western manner of belief and thought based on them. These traditions do, however, have a point of intersection.

After making a start the delegations of the churches have presented their own churches with requests in pastoral matters where they consider there is room for improvement. Thus at the New Valamo discussions the delegations expressed their hope that in Lutheran-Orthodox weddings the marriage should be solemnized according to the customs of each church without mixing traditions. They emphasized the importance of pastoral care for those intending to be married, wished to support the prayer life of the home in the spirit of each tradition, and considered it best that the children of the same family should be baptized in the same church. Thus it is likely that the discussions - if the participating churches draw practical conclusions from them - will help to eliminate areas of friction and prevent proselytism between the churches.

Mikkeli, on Mikael Agricola's day 9th April, 1992

Kalevi Toivainen

## THE FINNISH ORTHODOX - LUTHERAN DIALOGUE

### COMMUNIQUE MIKKELI 1989

The first theological discussions between the delegations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Finnish Orthodox Church were held at Mikkeli in the Mikkeli diocesan chapter on 28th-29th September, 1989. The meeting was hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and by the chairman of its delegation, Kalevi Toivainen, Bishop of Mikkeli.

The churches had agreed two years before on initiating discussions between the two national churches. Both churches had nominated a delegation of five for the discussions.

The leader of the Lutheran delegation was Bishop Kalevi Toivainen and its members were the Revd. Lorenz Grönvik, D.D., Dean Veikko Huotari, the Revd. Hannu T. Kampuri D.D. and Docent Eeva Marikainen.

The leader of the delegation of the Finnish Orthodox Church was Archbishop Johannes and its members were Bishop Ambrosius, Pastor Jarmo Hakkarainen, Pastor Heikki Hattunen and the Revd. Olavi Mertas.

The secretaries to the meeting were General Secretary Simo S. Salo, Kalja Toivonen and Mirna Valiaho.

Observers at the discussions were Father Martti Vuolteen O.P. of the Roman Catholic Church of Finland and Pastor Matti Lintinen of the Finnish Free Church, who was nominated by the Finnish Ecumenical Council.

At the opening ceremony of the discussions the speakers were Archbishop John Vikström for the Lutheran Church and Archbishop Johannes for the Orthodox Church. In their opening speeches both Archbishop Vikström and Archbishop Johannes emphasized the historical significance of the situation and of the initiation of new discussions. It was stated that both parties have previously engaged in dialogue with other Christian traditions. Now the question is one of dialogue on a Finnish basis between the two Finnish national churches. At the same time the churches in question represent not only Finnish Christianity but also the churches' doctrinal legacy. It is a question of a meeting of the Eastern and Western traditions. The purpose of the discussions is constantly to increase mutual knowledge, to remove misunderstandings and to strengthen the atmosphere of Christian love and fellowship. This may provide building materials for use in the world-wide Orthodox - Lutheran dialogue and, it is to be hoped, promote Christian fellowship and the unity of the Church of Christ in this land. Both archbishops emphasized the significance of the

doctrinal discussions for the activities of the Church from the standpoint of truth and fellowship. Although the churches have followed different paths and have drifted apart, there are still points in common and a common legacy. This is to be remembered when one sets out to deal with inter-church problems of principle and of a practical nature.

On the first day of the discussions the delegations participated in an evening service held in Mikkelin Orthodox Church and the following day they attended morning prayers in Mikkelin cathedral. On the first day the delegations spent an evening together in the home of Bishop and Mrs. Toivainen.

Two subjects were under discussion at the conference. The first was *The Authority and Significance of Ecumenical Councils*. Papers on this subject were delivered by Archbishop Johannes and by the Revd. Hannu T. Kampuri, D.D. The second subject under discussion was *The Relationship between the Church and the People as a Theological and Historical Issue*, on which Pastor Heikki Huttunen and Bishop Kalevi Toivainen delivered papers.

In their discussion of the first theme both parties stated that the legacy of the ecumenical councils is an essential part of the life and being of the Church. Therefore it was considered necessary to reconsider the relation between doctrine and the canons and the ecumenically binding nature of the canons for the Church today.

With regard to the second theme, it was stated that both parties had a long history as a national church. For both the relationship between Church and people is of continued importance. The Church of Christ is not, however, limited to any nation but by its very essence it is a world-wide community.

It was decided to continue the discussions in Autumn 1990 with the Finnish Orthodox Church acting as hosts.

Mikkeli, 29th September, 1989

## CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY - OPENING SPEECH

John Vlkström

Your Holiness Archbishop of Karelia and all Finland, honored Bishops, dear Fathers and Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ.

As the theological discussions between the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Finnish Orthodox Church begin here today I wish to greet you all.

This is a historical moment in the life of our churches. For the first time representatives of our churches have now gathered for official doctrinal discussions. These discussions begin today after many years' planning, accompanied by warm thoughts and prayers. This is a significant ecumenical event for us and more widely for all Christendom. Although it is a matter of meeting and discussion between two national churches in Finland, the entire tradition of our churches is involved in the discussions. We not only represent Finnish Christianity but also our doctrinal legacy, the tradition of East and West. It is a meeting of the Eastern and Western traditions.

We are here in Mikkelin, the city of the Archangel Michael, during Michaelmass. May it be our common prayer that the holy angels of God be present in our meeting protecting our common path.

In the doctrinal discussions our churches have a common basis in the Holy Bible, in the apostolic faith and in the legacy of the undivided Church. Although during their history the churches of East and West have followed different paths and drifted apart, it is still possible for us to share a negotiating table, for our point of departure and foundation are shared ones.

In addition to the existence of a common point of departure and a common basis, it must be stated openly at the beginning of the discussions that there are also open problems between our churches. The churches of the East and West have gone their own ways. Our traditions are different. In recent years new problems have arisen. For example, in Finland we have the practical problem of mixed marriages. I hope that in connection with the doctrinal discussions it will be possible to deal with practical issues of church life in addition to the strictly dogmatic issues. Problems between our churches are also caused by our different views and practice in such matters as the ordained ministry. Such differences must also be faced openly.

As we now begin official doctrinal discussions between our churches, we are fulfilling the Church's task of working for truth and unity. From the



standpoint of our church the Finnish Lutheran-Orthodox discussions now commencing continue the series of doctrinal discussions in which our church has engaged with the Russian Orthodox Church, the Finnish Free Church and the Pentecostal movement. Negotiations with the Finnish Orthodox Church are for us members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church a pleasant and important task.

Doctrinal discussion is simultaneously both a challenge and an opportunity. Meeting with another church challenges us to seek our own ecclesiastical identity and obliges us to give reasons for our confessional character in a way which is not mere repetition of old doctrinal statements but a relevant expression of faith in the modern day. Meeting each other is a unique opportunity for deepening our mutual acquaintance and for fuller rejoicing in our common Christian faith.

As I open on behalf of our church the theological discussions between the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Finnish Orthodox Church here at Mikkeli, I wish the leaders and members of the delegations strength and wisdom in your important work. May Almighty God grant His grace and help to us, so that together we may fulfil our common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. To God be thanks and glory.

## OPENING SPEECH

**Archbishop Johannes of Karelia and all Finland**

Address of welcome by His Eminence Archbishop Johannes at the opening session of the Finnish Orthodox-Lutheran theological dialogue at Mikkeli on 28th September, 1989

Your Grace, Archbishop John Vikström, Archbishop of Turku and Finland. Your Reverence Bishop Kalevi Toivainen, Bishop of Mikkeli. Honored members of the delegations and invited observers. Dear friends in Christ.

We are living at what is in a sense a historical moment. To be sure, it is not one of the world's great events, but for our churches it is a new and concrete testimony of the strengthening of fellowship and of the desire to promote unity. We all, as representatives of both the Orthodox and Lutheran churches, have engaged in theological discussions, both with other Christian traditions in general and world-wide between Lutherans and Orthodox. We note with special thankfulness that on many occasions and nowadays regularly the Finnish Orthodox Church has been present with the status of observer at the theological negotiations between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church.

Today an important new phase is beginning. We have gathered here at Mikkeli, the city of the Archangel Michael, as Finnish national Churches to engage in direct theological discussion. In principle it is the goal of dialogues between different traditions to examine and possibly to eliminate obstacles to unity, so that once again we might arrive at the unity of the early Church and in every respect at one faith. As far as this goal is concerned, we can only make a limited contribution. No local Orthodox Church can alone take decisive ecumenical steps. As far as I understand, the same principle, at least in fundamental matters, also applies to the Lutheran Church of Finland. This significantly limits the character of our dialogue, but there nevertheless remains much for us to do. The purpose of our negotiations is the continuing increase of mutual knowledge, the elimination of misunderstandings and the strengthening of the atmosphere of Christian love and unity. What we achieve in these respects may to a certain extent provide building materials for the use and promotion of world-wide Orthodox-Lutheran negotiations.

Many of us already know each other. I believe that this will be a positive factor in making possible the openness and honesty without which no theological dialogue will make progress.

On the Orthodox side we rejoice that His Grace John Vikström, Archbishop of Turku and Finland, emphasizes by his presence the importance attached by the Lutheran Church to the dialogue now about to commence. The same appreciation is also shown by the high theological level of the Lutheran delegation. In this connection I also observe with satisfaction that we have been able to agree on the presence of the Roman Catholic Church of Finland and the Finnish Ecumenical Council as observers. Thus we testify that the final aim of our efforts for unity affects the whole of Christendom and all the people of God in our country.

Your Grace, Archbishop, My Lord Bishop, dear friends in Christ. With these thoughts and prayers I greet you all in the name of the Finnish Orthodox Church and I wish the blessing and guidance of God, who loves men and women, for the Finnish Orthodox-Lutheran dialogue about to begin. May it be marked by truth and love.

## THE AUTHORITY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF ECUMENICAL COUNCILS

Archbishop Johannes

The Orthodox Church recognizes the definitive authority of the seven ecumenical councils of the early Church and their regulative nature for church life. This fact is so descriptive of the character and fundamental attitude of the Church that it justifies the designation 'the Church of the Seven Councils' sometimes used to describe the Orthodox Church.

Speaking of the authority of councils also means speaking about the authority of their teachings and ordinances. This is apparent in the greeting to the Ecumenical Patriarchate contained in the *Pedalion*. It contains several significant phrases that shed light upon the Orthodox view on these matters and emphasize unambiguously that the canons are the rudder of the Church, by which it is guided towards the heavenly harbour, and that the book containing the canons of the ecumenical councils is the steering apparatus, by which the Church of Christ guides and always has guided its children to the Kingdom of God.<sup>1</sup> It is entirely in accordance with the aforementioned views that councils are described as the supreme regulating authority of the Orthodox and that their legacy is called the content of Orthodox faith and the foundation of Orthodox dogmatics.<sup>2</sup>

It would be simple to give numerous similar examples from literature about councils apart from the councils' own legacy, but that is hardly necessary, since we would find views identical in content with those already mentioned. Instead we must go on to examine the councils' own legacy in order to see how the councils themselves interpreted their own character and authority. Thus we shall have the opportunity of describing and understanding the authority of councils in the genuine light of the synodical legacy. This is both natural and essential: the more the Orthodox Church emphasizes the authority and significance of ecumenical councils, the more important it is to know how the councils themselves wished their teachings and ordinances to be received.

When we study the synodical material we discover that the conciliar fathers understood it as a whole, to be received and accepted in its entirety. This is apparent in the statements and ordinances of the fathers of the (to date)

<sup>1</sup> *Pedalion* 7th ed. (Athens 1970), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Karmolitis* 1.: *Minemeia*, 1st part (Athens 1960), pp. 110.



last two - that is, the sixth and seventh - ecumenical councils. The conciliar fathers refer to the canons issued by all previous ecumenical councils and to the rules and explanations of some local synods and bishops, which they list carefully by name and in detail. Thus they proclaim and emphasize that no one has the right to break these canons nor to depreciate them and accept others.<sup>3</sup> This material comprises: first of all, the resolutions, ordinances, definitions and teachings of the ecumenical councils contained in the documents of the Councils of Nicaea I, Constantinople I, Ephesus, Chalcedon, Constantinople II, Constantinople III, i.e. Trullo or Quinisextum, and Nicaea II. In second place, by the authority of the decisions of the ecumenical councils, comes the material contained in the Apostolic canons, the statutes of Antioch, Neocaesarea, Gangra, Antioch, Laodicea, Sardica and Carthage, and the canons and directives of the synods held under Dionysius and Peter, Archbishops of Alexandria, Gregory Thaumaturgos, Bishop of Neocaesarea, Athanasius, Archbishop of Alexandria, Basil, Archbishop of Caesarea, Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa, Gregory the Theologian, Amphilochios of Iconion, Timothy, Theophilus and Cyril, Archbishops of Alexandria, and Gennadios, Patriarch of Constantinople, and of the African synod held under Archbishop Cyprian.

When speaking of the authority and significance of this material the conciliar fathers stress that innovations are to be rejected and their originators punished.<sup>4</sup> In order to prevent unnecessary misunderstandings it may be appropriate to point out that this prohibition by the fathers of the sixth ecumenical council cannot be interpreted as preventing the drawing up and publishing of canons after the council in question. This is apparent in the fact that the seventh ecumenical council expressly confirmed the ordinance in question and also drew up a great number of new canons.<sup>5</sup> The true significance of this ordinance is to be seen thus: the conciliar fathers do not at all reject or condemn the possibility of new canons but reject the idea that some of the new rules should possess a general and obligatory validity unless they are confirmed according to the faith and teachings of ecumenical councils and in harmony with their records. It is illustrative of the attitudes of the conciliar fathers that they regard the canons as divine and compare them to the testimonies of God, which are to be kept in force as a rule of life. Their nature demands that they be preserved fixed and unchanged, as the conciliar fathers express it.<sup>6</sup> There is not the slightest doubt that the conciliar fathers see the ordinances and teachings of

councils as a valuable possession, which in its very nature and essence is clearly positive. They emphasize that they rejoice in them and accept them with joy, and keep all their instructions and rules intact and unchanged, whether it be a question of the ordinances of the holy trumpets of the Spirit, that is, the illustrious apostles, or the sixth ecumenical council, or the canons of the holy fathers or of the local synods assembled to publish and explain the ordinances.<sup>7</sup> We should pay particular attention to the phrases used by the conciliar fathers with reference to the authority of councils: when speaking of this matter they emphasize that the Holy Spirit enlightened the councils and holy fathers and that they defined all that was necessary. Therefore it is natural that the consequence of this state of affairs is that the anathemas of previous councils obligate the fathers of the seventh council and that they keep them in force. The same applies when it is a matter of dismissals, excommunication or other punishments.<sup>8</sup> If and when the rôle of the Holy Spirit is recognized and taken seriously, the attitude of the conciliar fathers is the only one possible. The same principle also explains why the conciliar fathers see and are obligated to see the legacy of the councils as a whole. In the light of the enlightening activity and rôle of the Spirit this is both essential and natural: it is a consequence of the essence of the matter.

In our study of the conciliar fathers' view of the idea of unity in the tradition of the Church we note that when they saw themselves as witnesses to and defenders of the tradition they represent the teaching that the understanding of the unity of faith appears in all ecumenical councils as a continuous tradition, as well as in other material which received ecumenical authority when the councils confirmed and confessed it as an expression of the true tradition. This appears most clearly and characteristically in the conciliar fathers' attitude to the Nicene Creed. Many later councils confirmed and subscribed to this creed. This generally happened with positive statements, but sometimes the same matter is expressed in such a way that the conciliar fathers issued a stern anathema upon everything contrary to the Nicene faith. Then the conciliar fathers speak of unity of heart and declare that the Nicene Creed will never be rejected but will be preserved intact. This confession is the foundation upon which their deliberations are based. They emphasize that their faith is in harmony - or rather, absolutely identical - with what earlier councils taught and preserved and what is to be held in force without change and without addition. When an expression of faith is found true and orthodox, it is described as the faith of the fathers and apostles. Thus the conciliar fathers possess a clear awareness of continuity and unity: "Thus we all believe, thus the orthodox

<sup>3</sup> VI.2 (Roman numerals refer to the numerical order of the ecumenical councils, arabic numerals to the canons).

<sup>4</sup> VI.2.

<sup>5</sup> VII.1.

<sup>6</sup> VII.1.

<sup>7</sup> VII.1.

<sup>8</sup> VII.1.

believe".<sup>9</sup> In the documents of the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople there are also many references to the faith of the apostles, fathers and the four previous councils.<sup>10</sup> The principle of unity and of authority accepted without hesitation is also strongly emphasized in this context: the conciliar fathers possess, preserve and in their preaching declare the faith expressed by the First Ecumenical Council. Similarly, it is stated and emphasized that this is the faith followed, explained and taught by the other ecumenical councils.<sup>11</sup> The fathers of the Third Council of Constantinople refer in the same spirit to previous councils. They respect their teachings, but also demand in clear words that no one may confess a faith differing from the one they themselves express.<sup>12</sup> There is reason to note at this stage that the conciliar fathers are very aware of the fact that they have not at all repeated former expressions but have expressed and formulated in words the common faith of the fathers.<sup>13</sup> The documents show that the fathers of the Third Council of Constantinople were in principle of the opinion that the original formulation and form of words of the Nicene Creed was a sufficient basis for the full knowledge and confirmation of the orthodox faith. They were also aware that in practice it was not so, when the issue was studied from the point of view of prevailing circumstances. Negative phenomena derived from the influence of evil forces through heretical teachers.<sup>14</sup>

When the fathers of the Third Council of Constantinople wish to clarify the form of words of the original faith, this does not mean - nor may it mean - anything new: they do not alter nor distort anything defined or taught by previous councils. These conciliar fathers emphasize that they are preserving

<sup>9</sup> Record of the second session of Chalcedon, column 972, synodical letter of the First Council of Constantinople, column 557; record of the first session of Ephesus, column 1124; letter from the Council of Ephesus to Pope Celestius, column 649; record of the second session of Chalcedon, columns 952, 673 and 972; record to the fourth session of Chalcedon and the Chalcedonian Definition, column 108.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Record of the seventh session of the Second Council of Constantinople, column 346.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Resolution of the Third Council of Constantinople, column 368.

<sup>12</sup> Definition of faith of the Third Council of Constantinople, column 657.

<sup>13</sup> As for the formulation of one faith cf. letter from the First Council of Constantinople to Theodosius, column 557; record of the first and second session of Chalcedon, column 952; Chalcedonian Definition, column 108; resolution of the Second Council of Constantinople, column 368, capitula of the Second Council of Constantinople, column 376; record of the eighth and thirteenth sessions of the Third Council of Constantinople, column 336 and 550; definition of faith of the Third Council of Constantinople, column 632.

<sup>14</sup> Definition of faith of the Third Council of Constantinople, column 636.

the entire legacy of the councils. On the other hand, it must be said that their attitude shows that faithfulness to original truth and synodical authority is evidently more than mere repetition of original forms of words. Unity is not only that a number of expressions are accepted without outward change.<sup>15</sup> Such repetition cannot thus be mechanical repetition, but repetition that takes place in the life and truth given by the Holy Spirit.

In order further to enlarge upon our subject we must emphasize that the fathers of the seventh council proclaim that they confess and teach the same as the six holy ecumenical councils decreed and confirmed, although they explain and express this faith by producing their own ordinances on matters of faith, but here they explain that they are following the tradition of the Catholic Church.<sup>16</sup> In their own words, they thoroughly study and analyze the legacy of the Church, when they affirm that they follow previous councils - adding nothing and preserving without change everything given to them.<sup>17</sup> It is clear that the phrases "without change" and "adding nothing" signify the meaning and content of the phrases. A new application and clarification do not mean additions. With good reason we may say that the fathers of the seventh council represent the spirit and attitude of the early Church, when it is a matter of unity and the authority of ecumenical councils. It is thus when they emphasize that they support the entire synodical legacy and accept it with all its conclusions and consequences.<sup>18</sup> This attitude is profound and significant. When the conciliar fathers explain this principle in their letter to the Emperor and Empress they mention that they have linked everything closely together and understand the harmonious tradition of the Catholic Church, being in entire agreement with the unanimous teachings of the six holy ecumenical councils.<sup>19</sup> The foundation of this unity is the unity of the Church's legacy, the authority of which all are obligated to respect.

In the light of the teachings of the conciliar fathers it is evident that one of the functions of synodical authority is to serve as a protection against heresy and related dangers: no one has authority to teach "another faith".<sup>20</sup> Thus the task of councils is to pronounce anathema on heretics and interpret orthodox

<sup>15</sup> Definition of faith of the Third Council of Constantinople, column 636.

<sup>16</sup> Record of the fourth session of the Second Council of Nicaea, column 129.

<sup>17</sup> Final resolution of the Second Council of Nicaea, column 376.

<sup>18</sup> Nicaea II:1.

<sup>19</sup> Letter from the Second Council of Nicaea to the Emperor and Empress, column 404.

<sup>20</sup> Chalcedonian Definition, column 108.



faith. Thus they act against all who attempt to deny or obscure the truth.<sup>21</sup> The duty of the conciliar fathers is to guard the "ancient border" - the holy faith, which was once for all put in words and expressed. They emphasize that Christ created all the prerequisites for unity between Christians when He confirmed the knowledge of faith among His followers and granted to all the possibility of knowing the same truths in mutual agreement. Thus it is possible to present the truth to all men in the same way.<sup>22</sup> It follows that the authority of councils cannot be "relative" and that diversity of interpretations can be regarded as a positive value. The witness of the councils is free "of all errors, certain" and presented according to the "ancient border".<sup>23</sup> Since the character of the synodical legacy is such, it presupposes and demands as a whole obedience and respect. The idea of authority as such, linked to ecumenical councils, excludes the possibility of partial acceptance and similarly an attitude of selective observance, both of which are based on a criterion external to the councils.

Having considered the character of the legacy of the ecumenical councils as obligatory in its entirety, it is necessary to pay further attention to a point to which we have referred only in passing. We mean the question of how the councils themselves understand and interpret the duty stressed by them of honouring and following the tradition represented by the councils. What, then, is the character of the synodical legacy and of their authority in theory and in practice?

The legacy of the councils is a living one, and everywhere where there is life there is always a certain tension, but not in the legacy itself or in its essence, but between the legacy and the life of the world, which is natural as long as there is growth. Such tension is a natural phenomenon not to be denied or ignored, for it may mean a standstill and death for the riches of Christ and of church life in this world. There is also reason to note that since the legacy of the councils is a living one, it follows that ecumenical councils as a form of church life cannot belong just to the past. If the principle which they express and which is embodied in them is taken seriously and in accordance with the spirit of the councils, the living character of the legacy makes it essential to hold new councils. Only thus can the Church correctly take into account the problems and new circumstances which have arisen in the Church over the past thousand years. Faithfulness to the synodical tradition demands this attitude, and it is possible only on the condition that matters are examined in a way that is profoundly and fundamentally in harmony with the stance taken by ecumeni-

cal councils. Thus unchanging principles are applied to new, concrete situations.

On the basis of what has been said above, we may state that faithfulness to the original legacy is also always a task to be carried out, for faithfulness requires creative obedience. In the form in which the legacy of the councils has been transmitted from one century to the next it is also a task in the sense that it means the same personal responsibility with regard to present-day and future councils as once was shown with regard to the councils of the early Church. The task is to consider, teach and legislate with the help of the Holy Spirit, taking into account the real circumstances. Only thus will Christians be guided to understand how Christian faith is and should be expressed, so that true forms of Christian life correspond to the Christian view of human beings as created by God and as members of the Church, the Body of Christ.

In the modern world and the prevailing ecclesiastical situation the legacy of the councils is also an important practical task. The purpose of this legacy is to serve the cause of unity, to create a correct attitude to faith and life, to guide and protect Christians in the ways of truth, to indicate the right direction, to protect from obstacles and delusions, to give strength to reject schism and dissension and for other similar aims. All this is necessary in the circumstances in which Christians live. The legacy of the councils is the special treasure and precious possession of the Orthodox. It is a sacred treasure, the purpose of which is to serve and educate both the Orthodox churches and all those children of God who have departed from the way of orthodoxy. This makes it especially important for the Orthodox churches as caretakers and guardians of the teachings of the councils to see this legacy as a sacred task: it must be received and understood ever more profoundly, so that it may be expressed and presented in such a way that the rules and explanations of future councils are truly in harmony with the content of faith and represent the "mind of Christ". Then - and only then - can the legacy of the councils serve its original purpose, in particular for those who consciously and in principle have followed the way of the great councils.<sup>24</sup>

No theological reason can be given why the seventh ecumenical council should be the end-point of synodical teaching. On the contrary, we may say on the basis of the councils' own stance that the practice and principles of the ancient conciliar fathers actually presuppose that the teaching of the councils would continue as the duty and right of bishops who act on the basis of the original orthodox faith and of those ordinances and decisions which represent

<sup>21</sup> Record of the fourth session of the Second Council of Nicaea, column 129.

<sup>22</sup> Chalcedonian Definition, column 108.

<sup>23</sup> Synodal letter from the Third Council of Constantinople to Pope Agathos, column 685.

<sup>24</sup> The Canons of the Orthodox Church, Finnish translation by Aarti Järven from the Serbian original, Pöytäkirjat 1980, (originally unpublished edition of two or three copies under the title "The Canons of the Greek Catholic Church"); author's foreword p. 9. Other collections of ecumenically accepted canons in Finnish translation are: *Pöytäkirjat synodien kanoonit*, Finnish translation by Johannes Seppälä, (Pöytäkirjat 1983) and *Pyhien isien kanoonit*, Finnish translation by Johannes Seppälä, Pöytäkirjat 1986.

applications and consequences of this faith and are in harmony with the unchanging truths of faith.<sup>25</sup> Always when the teachings of the councils are conceived merely as a historical legacy to be formally preserved unchanged, it means that its true spirit and likewise its intentions may be misinterpreted. The teachings of the ecumenical councils express and protect the close relationship between the unity and uniformity of the Church. These teachings are always a living legacy and at the same time a challenge, which means that future councils, taking account of the circumstances of the time, must make this legacy more concrete and more perfect in its influence. Similarly, uniformity, by which the unity of faith becomes visible in practice, is a task demanding notice and care for the sake of faith.

The ancient conciliar fathers believed in the divine character of the work of the councils. On the other hand, it appears that even the most demanding statements and principles must be interpreted against the background formed by the extent and internal consistency of the teachings of the councils as a whole. Thus each principle is more than its outer form and expression. For this reason it is logical and natural that the conciliar fathers also confirmed such teachings that very strongly emphasize the need for humility when adopting an attitude to the formulation of canons and statements.<sup>26</sup> No matter how carefully and clearly bishops formulate rules and how detailed are the ordinances they issue on the forms of ecclesiastical conduct and the different aspects of the Christian pilgrimage, they are conscious that there is nothing absolutely final but that to some extent the goal remains one for future councils. All this happens for the care of souls and the elimination of disorder.<sup>27</sup> Therefore in this spirit the fathers of the Council of Gangra once exclaimed: " - we hope that in the Church everything that the Holy Scriptures and apostolic traditions have given to others will be observed."<sup>28</sup>

Due to the unity of faith the aim of ever greater faithfulness to the teachings of the councils is an obligatory and lasting task. It is by nature obedience to a living legacy, which is to be realized in Christ to the glory of God. If this is not confessed, the authority of ecumenical councils cannot be rightly understood.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. VI:1 and 2, which deal both in principle and practice with true faith and concrete teachings based upon it.

<sup>26</sup> At the end of the fourth canon of Archbishop Dionysius there is a powerful expression of such humility: "Study and tell how the matter can be better said!" Although this is an individual case relating to an individual matter, it is still noteworthy, because the canon in question has ecumenical authority.

<sup>27</sup> VI:2.

<sup>28</sup> End of the epilogue of Gangra.

## THE AUTHORITY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF ECUMENICAL COUNCILS

Haanu T. Kampuri

### Introduction

As the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Finnish Orthodox Church commence their bilateral doctrinal discussions we may declare that both churches regard dogma - doctrine - as the central factor in the quest for inter-church fellowship. The Orthodox Church, in accordance with its name, is convinced that it represents true apostolic faith, according to which it praises and worships God. For this reason the Orthodox churches have emphasized in the ecumenical movement that the unity of the Church presupposes a common faith identical with apostolic teaching. The report of the 1977 Valamo consultation states: "Confessing one faith unites the church community. This faith is essentially the same as apostolic teaching and 'the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints'. It is expressed in the entire living tradition of the Church and in particular in the creeds accepted by the ecumenical Church and in the decisions of the ecumenical councils. The Orthodox Church regards the decisions of the ecumenical councils as faithful expressions of the one apostolic faith and therefore binding upon all members of the Church."<sup>1</sup>

On the part of the Lutheran Church, this is apparent in, for instance, the article on the Church in the Augsburg Confession (Confession Augustana, CA), where it is stated that "For the true unity of the church it is enough to agree concerning the teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments."<sup>2</sup> It is, however, clear that the principle expressed in the CA - "to agree concerning the teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments" - has in its brevity offered the possibility of very disparate interpretations of the requirements for church unity. At certain periods in the history of the Lutheran Church the CA principle on the doctrine of the Gospel has been interpreted such that the Bible and the legacy of the ecumenical councils have been placed in antithesis to one another. Then it has been claimed that the principle of *sola scriptura* (by Scripture alone), often emphasized in Lutheranism, nullifies the significance and legacy of the Fathers and ecumenical

<sup>1</sup> Orthodoxy 27, 136. Helsinki 1978.

<sup>2</sup> *The Augsburg Confession*. The Book of Concord. The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert. Philadelphia 1959.



councils.<sup>3</sup> For this reason the booklet "Lutherlaisten eröndykyset" (The Errors of the Lutherans), published in Viipuri in 1910 by the Karelian Fraternity, makes the following statement: "Lutherans expound the Bible as their reason teaches them, but they do not take into account in this matter holy tradition, that is, the expositions of the descendants of the apostles, of the holy Fathers and of teachers of the universal Church."<sup>4</sup>

The criticism of the Karelian Fraternity certainly applies to, for instance, so-called Neo-Protestant theology, which since the 19th century has greatly influenced the life of Lutheran churches. Neo-Protestantism may be regarded as a corresponding doctrinal "pseudomorphosis" brought about by external influences as has affected the teaching and life of Orthodox churches in certain periods of history. I shall attempt to demonstrate that the criticism of the Karelian Fraternity does not apply to genuine Lutheran faith and doctrine, to its real intentions.

The purpose of the Lutheran Reformation was not to invent new doctrine but to return to what was old and original. This is well expressed, for example, at the end of the section of the Augsburg Confession dealing with the most important articles of faith, where the following statement is made: "This is about the sum of our teaching. As can be seen, there is nothing here that departs from the Scriptures or the catholic church or the church of Rome, in so far as the ancient church is known to us from its writers. Since this is so, those who insist that our teachers are to be regarded as heretics judge too harshly. The whole dissension is concerned with certain few abuses which have crept into the churches without proper authority."<sup>5</sup>

The purpose of the Lutheran Reformation was thus to return to the original and ancient catholic faith, which appears in the sacred books of the Scriptures and in the writings of the Fathers. It needs to be stated that this principle does not appear only in one or a few passages in the Lutheran Confessions but is a constantly reiterated principle, the basic intention of the Lutheran Reformation.

This self-awareness of the Lutheran Reformation of its nature as a return to biblical and early church faith forms the background against which we can understand the Lutheran view of the authority and significance of ecumenical councils. Due to this intention of the Lutheran Reformation it is useful first of all to examine the significance of ecumenical councils during the early church period.

## Ecumenical Councils during the Early Church Period

The model ecumenical council is sometimes considered to be the apostolic Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15), held in c.50 A.D. However, a direct historical development from this conference to later conciliar practice cannot be demonstrated. There is a certain difference between the apostolic council and later councils, because the apostolic office was unique, although the episcopal office is a consequence of the apostolic office.

The origin of actual conciliar practice is linked above all with the gradual development of the episcopal office. In order to solve various local problems the bishops of an area gathered to discuss problematic issues. One result of the controversy over the date of Easter was that representatives at regional conferences began to send each other messages. In this way awareness of the common witness and apostolic succession of the episcopate became stronger from the end of the first century onwards. During the following century the synodical decisions of local churches were more regularly communicated to other churches. Of importance in the development of conciliar practice were the councils held at Antioch which dealt with, *inter alia*, Novatianism and the condemnation of the teaching of Paul of Samosata. What was new at these councils was that invitations were issued to representatives of all the churches from the Black Sea to Egypt. In accordance with the principle of universality all the churches were informed of the excommunication of Paul of Samosata.

Ecumenical councils originated, however, only when the Emperor Constantine the Great raised Christianity to the status of a state religion. The Emperor convoked the Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.) so that the council should act as a visible sign of the unity of the Church. It was important to demonstrate the unity of the Church because Constantine hoped that the Church would act as the spiritual foundation of the Empire. The Council of Nicaea strengthened the ecclesio-political unity of the Empire by deciding on the date of Easter, by organizing ecclesiastical areas according to imperial provinces and by converting regional episcopal conferences into provincial councils. The development of the internal hierarchy of the episcopate is connected with this process.

The Emperor was not, however, the only guarantor of the authenticity and ecumenicity of councils. It is well known that the decisions of some councils (e.g. the Council of Ephesus 449 A.D.) were not later accepted. The Emperor's summons was indeed a prerequisite for the convocation of councils but correspondingly it was necessary for there to be an awareness on the part of the assembled bishops that the conference represented the entire Church. The question of the rôle of the Bishop of Rome in constituting ecumenicity has been debated since the fifth century. The most important factor constituting the ecumenicity of a council is, however, to be considered the *later* general

<sup>3</sup> In this connection it should be mentioned that the CA does not have a separate article on the Bible, but the Bible is appealed to as material for argumentation.

<sup>4</sup> *Lutherlaisten eröndykyset*, 5, Viipuri 1910.

<sup>5</sup> *The Augsburg Confession*, 23. The Book of Concord. The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert. Philadelphia 1959.

reception of a council.<sup>6</sup> The councils were only gradually accepted. It is very difficult to produce a conceptual definition of this general reception, both historically and theologically. One such theological attempt was the Russian theologian A. S. Homjakov's Sobornost theory. It has also been stated that the ecumenical synod (in the original sense of the term) was possible only in the "symphony" that existed between the Byzantine Church and Empire.<sup>7</sup>

Generally at least the following seven councils are regarded as ecumenical councils: Nicaea I 325 A.D., Constantinople I 381 A.D., Ephesus 431 A.D., Chalcedon 451 A.D., Constantinople II 553 A.D., Constantinople III 680-681 A.D., Nicaea II 787 A.D. In other words, these councils later received wide acceptance and thereby became ecumenical. Ecumenicity does not therefore strictly refer to the original "representativeness" of the council but to its later wide reception. Ecumenicity is not parliamentarianism.

During the early Church period no particular synodal theory was put forward, although many such theories have since been presented.<sup>8</sup> The councils arose out of the practical need to solve questions of doctrine and church order. The collegiality of bishops at councils was based on the idea that each bishop is a guardian of and witness to the apostolic tradition in his own

6 "Die Gültigkeit und Autorität einer Konzilsentscheidung und damit eines Konzils hängt nicht von irgendeiner Stelle ab, die dieses Konzil autorisiert hat, sondern von seiner *Rezeption durch die rechtgläubige Gesamtkirche*." Georg Kretschmar: *Die Konzile der Alten Kirche*, 73. Die ökumenischen Konzile der Christenheit. Herausgegeben von Hans-Jochen Margull, Stuttgart 1961.

7 "The word 'ecumenical,' in the sense in which it was used by the early Christians and throughout the Middle Ages, has a meaning only in the context of the Byzantine 'symphony' between Church and Empire... Since the Byzantine emperor was considered as the protector of all Christians, the 'ecumenical' councils held doctrinal validity even beyond the border of the empire. However, even inside the empire their acceptance was not automatic... A gap always remained between the ecclesiastical significance of a universal episcopal consensus, which 'ecumenical' councils were supposed to represent, and the political management of church affairs in the framework of the Roman *oikoumene*." John Meyendorff, *What is an Ecumenical Council?* Living Tradition, 54. New York 1978.

8 "It is significant that no attempt to develop a legal or canonical theory of 'General Councils,' as a seat of ultimate authority, with specific competence and models of procedure, was made at this time, in the fourth century or later, although they were *de facto* acknowledged as a proper instance to deal with the questions of faith and doctrine and as a canonical institution, but rather as occasional *charismatic events*." Georges Florovsky: *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View*, 96. Belmont 1972.

diocese. The function of councils was to confirm and articulate this common faith.<sup>9</sup>

For this reason no appeal was made at synods to their *formal* authority but rather to the witness of the Bible and the Fathers. For example, the records of the second session of the Council of Chalcedon tell of the argumentation of the bishops as follows: "And when these letters had been read, the most reverend bishops cried out: We all so believe: Pope Leo thus believes; anathema to him who divides and to him who confounds: this is the faith of Archbishop Leo: Leo thus believes: Leo and Anatolius so believe: we all thus believe. As Cyril so believe we, all of us: eternal be the memory of Cyril: as the epistles of Cyril teach such is our mind, such has been our faith: such is our faith..."<sup>10</sup>

Thus the authority of ecumenical councils is not actually based on themselves (the formal principles required) but on the reception of the councils. An indication of this is the later rejection of certain councils (e.g. the Council of Ephesus 499 A.D.). In the definition of dogma ecumenical councils had thus only secondary authoritative doctrinal significance. "Fundamentally, then, a doctrine did not become orthodox because a council said it was, but a council was orthodox - and therefore binding - because the doctrine it confessed was orthodox."<sup>11</sup> From the point of view of the Empire the significance of councils was legislative, and for this reason their secular significance was based on formal definitions. From the point of view of the Church the councils were above all charismatic in nature.<sup>12</sup> Archbishop Johannes has said: "The

9 "The Council is not above the Church, this was the attitude of the Ancient Church. The Council is precisely a 'representation.' This explains why the Ancient Church never appealed to 'Conciliar authority' in general or *in abstracto*, but always to *particular* Councils, or rather to their 'faith' and witness." Georges Florovsky: *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View*, 97. Belmont 1972.

10 The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church. Their Canons and Dogmatic Degrees. Ed. by Henry R. Percival. A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Vol. XIV, 253. Michigan 1979.

11 *Jaroslav Pelikan: The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600-1700)*, 24. The Christian Tradition. A History of the Development of Doctrine 2. Chicago 1974.

12 "The history of 'reception' or 'rejection' of councils is well known to the historian, but it remains an embarrassment to those theologians who seek clear-cut external criteria of the Church's infallibility. No council is accepted in advance, and many councils are actually disavowed in spite of their formal regularity. The case of the Robber Council of 449 is one of the clearest examples.

A Council is recognized as 'ecumenical,' i.e. as having binding and infallible authority, immediately or after a delay, not because of its canonical competence, but because of its charismatic character. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, all Ecumenical Councils have witnessed to the Truth, in conformity with the Scripture as handed down in Apostolic Tradition." Bishop Mezxios Aghtanyan: *Theological and Historical*



documents of ecumenical councils offer clear testimony to how essential and fundamental the concept of unity of faith is from the standpoint of the nature and intentions of the synods. The only purpose of synods is to proclaim and defend the faith once for all delivered to the Church, as expressed by the 'sensus communis'. The councils witness to this faith."<sup>13</sup>

### The Reception of Ecumenical Councils in the Lutheran Reformation

The question of ecumenical councils in the sense in which we are discussing them in this dialogue was originally somewhat alien to the Lutheran Reformation. During the Lutheran Reformation the question of ecclesiastical councils became fixed as a discussion of the relationship between the Pope and councils. Lutheranism was naturally in agreement with so-called conciliarist theology, according to which the ecclesiastical council is an ecclesiastical body superior to the Pope.<sup>14</sup> In the Lutheran Reformation no principle was laid down with regard to the number of ecumenical councils, for instance, but the confessions refer to individual councils. Lutheranism had to take a more conscious stand with regard to the seven ecumenical councils of the early Church only at a later stage in the correspondence between the Tübingen theologians and Patriarch Jeremiah II (1573-1581). In this context the Lutherans stated that they had kept and preserved the faith inherited from the Holy Apostles and Prophets, the godly Fathers and Patriarchs and the seven Ecumenical Councils, which were based on the God-given Scriptures.<sup>15</sup> The Tübingen theologians thus committed themselves to the ecumenical councils.

Aspects of Conciliarity: Some Propositions for Discussion. GOTR 1979, 1, 13.

- 13 *Johannes*, Metropolitan of Helsinki, Yksityiden ja yhdenmukaisuuden subde kirkossa ekumenisten synodien tradition valossa. Uskon ja kirkon keskeisyyden subde ortodoksisessa kirkossa, 15. Kuopio 1976.

- 14 The Roman Catholic Church regards the criterion of an ecumenical council as being that a Pope has confirmed or accepted it. "An ecclesiastical council is never ecumenical unless a successor of Peter has confirmed it or at least accepted it as such. One of the prerogatives of the Bishop of Rome is the summoning, leading or confirming of such an ecclesiastical council." Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of the Second Vatican Council, 32. Helsinki 1966.

- 15 *Acta et Scripta Theologorum Wirtembergensium et Parliamenti Constantinopolitani D. Hieronymi: que utriusque ab anno MDLXXVI usque ad annum MDLXXXI de Augustana Confessione inter se miserunt: Graece & Latine ab Iisdem Theologis edita*. Wittenberg 1584.

In this paper I have used the English edition by George Mauriantoni: Augsburg and Constantinople. The Correspondence between the Tübingen Theologians and Patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople on the Augsburg Confession, 29. Brookline, Mass. 1982.

Unlike Neo-Protestantism, where the Bible and the tradition of the Church are in a sense placed in opposition, the Lutheran Reformation understood the councils as confessing and defending the faith once for all delivered to the Church. The Bible and the councils' definitions of faith witness to the same faith. And the Lutheran Reformation itself aimed at returning to this original faith, from which the Pope had apostatized. This interpretation appears in, for instance, the Formula of Concord, where it is stated of the doctrine of the person of Christ: "In this matter we have not developed a new doctrine of our own, but we accept and repeat the statements which the ancient orthodox church made herein on the basis of sound passages of the Holy Scriptures..."<sup>16</sup> The Formula of Concord contains the view that the teaching of an ecumenical council is based on New Testament teaching: "Likewise, John 6: 48-58 says that Christ's flesh is a life-giving food, and accordingly the Council of Ephesus decreed that the flesh of Christ has the power to give life."<sup>17</sup> Lutheranism does not thus place the Bible and the teaching of ecumenical councils in opposition but sees them on the same continuum.

The ecumenical councils' definition of faith is seen in, for example, the first article of the Augsburg Confession as a norm against heresies: "Our churches teach with great unanimity that the decree of the Council of Nicaea concerning the unity of the divine essence and concerning the three persons is true and should be believed without any doubting... Therefore all the heresies which are contrary to this article are rejected. Among these are the heresy of the Manichaeans, who assert that there are two gods, one good and one evil; also that of the Valentinians, Arians, Eunomians, Mohammedans, and others like them..."<sup>18</sup>

In the Lutheran Church ecumenical councils are not understood merely as repeating formulated truths of faith but councils also *explicated* more clearly than hitherto the legacy of faith. This is apparent in the statement in the Formula of Concord concerning the decision of the Council of Chalcedon: "In the second place, as far as the discharge of Christ's office is concerned, the person does not act in, with through, or according to one nature only, but in, according to, with and through both natures, or as the Council of Chalcedon

- 16 *Formula of Concord*. Complete exposition, 8, 61. The Book of Concord. The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert. Philadelphia 1959.

- 17 *Formula of Concord*. Complete exposition, 8, 59. The Book of Concord. The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert. Philadelphia 1959.

- 18 *Augsburg Confession*, 11. The Book of Concord. The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert. Philadelphia 1959.

declares, each nature according to its own properties acts in communion with the other."<sup>19</sup>

In appraising the relationship of the Lutheran Reformation to ecumenical councils one must note the distinction that is made between, on the one hand, the unchanging and unrelinquishable legacy of faith and, on the other hand, changing ecclesiastical customs. It has been stated above that according to the article on the Church in the Augsburg Confession the prerequisite for church unity is "unanimity on the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments". Uniformity of customs is not, however, an absolute prerequisite for church unity: "It is not necessary that human traditions or rites and ceremonies, instituted by men, should be alike everywhere."<sup>20</sup> What is unchanging in the Church is the tradition of faith based on divine revelation. Various practices based on human ordinances may, however, change.

One example of a matter belonging to the latter group that frequently arises in the Lutheran confessions is the issue of the status of the Bishop of Rome. In the Lutheran view the decision of the Council of Nicaea concerning the Bishop of Rome is not a divine ordinance but a human agreement made between the churches: "The Council of Nicaea decided that the bishop of Alexandria should administer the churches in the East and the bishop of Rome should administer the suburban churches, that is, those that were in the Roman provinces in the West. Originally, therefore, the authority of the Roman bishop grew out of a decision of a council and is of human right, for if the bishop of Rome had his superiority by divine right, it would not have been lawful for the council to withdraw any right from him and transfer it to the bishop of Alexandria. In fact, all the Eastern bishops should forever have sought ordination and confirmation from the Roman bishop."<sup>21</sup> Any decision of a council on any matter is not therefore formally and automatically a divine ordinance and as such binding. The significance of a council is based above all on the witness of the apostolic faith.<sup>22</sup> The significance of human

arrangements should not be undervalued for they too reflect timeless interpretation of faith, but in them the interpretation of faith is applied to a particular historical situation.

As an example of the difference between a definition of faith and a canon concerning church order we may take the twenty-seventh regulation of Quinisextum (691-692 A.D.), according to which a priest must always wear clerical dress. If he is found wearing any other form of dress he is to be suspended from his office for a week. The regulation is entirely comprehensible and even today well founded in many ways. Clerical dress serves, among other things, as visual preaching. Contemporary semioticians might spend a long time talking about this subject. The matter of clerical dress is not, however, comparable with the Chalcedonian Definition, nor can such divine authority be claimed for it as, for example, for the first commandment of the Decalogue or the double commandment of love given by Christ.

Synodical canons are quite clearly on a different level from synodical definitions of faith. The canons give practical instructions to church members, particularly to the clergy. Definitions of faith and canons are clearly distinguished in synodical records. Our example of clerical dress cannot be in the same way as important a statement from the viewpoint of salvation as, for example, the synodical statements confessing the full divinity of Christ. The directive concerning clerical dress can hardly be regarded as constitutive of church unity; after all there are differences in the dress worn by the clergy of churches in Eucharistic fellowship. The directive is intended primarily for the relationship between priests and their flocks, but at councils church unity is not built upon this relationship, although from the point of view of the activities of the local church this is, of course, the most important thing.

Making a distinction between divine and human regulations does not, of course, mean that Lutherans belittle the importance of church order; the Lutheran Church has furthered it in Finland with the aid of such a sturdy instrument as the stocks. But Lutheranism has stated that "It is not necessary that human traditions or rites and ceremonies, instituted by men, should be alike everywhere." Local differences in church order are not necessarily an obstacle to church unity. From the viewpoint of unity the most important thing is the interpretation of faith. In the Apology of the Augsburg Confession this matter is expressed in the following words: "The Creed also defines the church this way, teaching us to believe that there is a holy, catholic church. Certainly the wicked are not a holy church! The following phrase, 'the communion of saints,' seems to have been added to explain what 'church means, namely, the assembly of saints who share the association of the same Gospel or teaching

19 *Formula of Concord*. Complete exposition, 8, 46. The Book of Concord. The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert. Philadelphia 1959.

20 *CA, VII. The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert. Philadelphia 1959.

21 *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope*, 12. The Book of Concord. The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert. Philadelphia 1959.

22 Analogous to the arguments for the authority of councils is the manner in which the confessions establish the position of Peter among the Apostles. "So Chrysostom declares that Christ says 'on this rock' and not 'on Peter,' for he built his church not on the man but on the faith of Peter; and what was this faith other than 'You are the Christ, the Son

of the living God." *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope*, 28. The Book of Concord. The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert. Philadelphia 1959.

and the same Holy Spirit, who renews, consecrates, and governs their hearts."<sup>23</sup>

The difference in bindingness between divine ordainment and human order described above does not, however, mean that the Lutheran Church appeals to ecumenical councils solely in matters of doctrine. The decision of a council concerning church order is also regarded as a model for order: "...for the words of the Nicene canon read, 'In order, after the presbyters, let the deacons receive Holy Communion from the bishop or from a presbyter.' Paul also commands concerning Communion that one wait for another in order that there may be a common participation."<sup>24</sup>

The theoretical distinction between the theological and so-called non-theological factors in synodical canons is altogether a very difficult one to make.

I have appealed above to the Lutheran confessions as an expression and interpretation of the legacy of faith. Since it is often thought that Lutheranism sets its confessions above the decisions of ecumenical councils, there is reason to clarify this matter somewhat. It would be against the principles of the Lutheran Reformation to have in some way set oneself above or against the creeds of the early Church and the decisions of ecumenical councils. I have stated that Lutherans appealed to the tradition of the early Church in an attempt to bring about changes in some of the evils entrenched in the Church of Rome. "Immediately after the time of the apostles - in fact, already during their lifetime - false teachers and heretics invaded the church. Against these the ancient church formulated symbols (that is, brief and explicit confessions) which were accepted as the unanimous, catholic, Christian faith and confessions of the orthodox and true church, namely, the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed. We pledge ourselves to these, and we hereby reject all heresies and teachings which have been introduced into the church of God contrary to them."<sup>25</sup>

One detail may be mentioned: the criticism in the confessions of the wrongful worship of images of the saints does not mean a rejection of the

theology of images taught by the Second Council of Nicaea.<sup>26</sup> The intention of the criticism is not iconoclasm. The Lutheran Reformation had to take a stand with regard to iconoclasm at Wittenberg (1522) and later in the iconoclastic controversy at Anhalt. The Lutheran attitude to images has been stated as follows: "The Anhalt controversy over images compelled Lutheran theologians to define their attitude to images. The true Lutheran school took a reasoned stance in favour of images, while the Philippists or so-called 'crypto-Calvinist' school either adopted the old view of *adiaphora* or approached Calvinism."<sup>27</sup>

At the beginning we referred to the criticism by the Karelian Fraternity of the Lutheran interpretation of the Bible. The relationship between Bible and tradition has often been broken in practical Lutheranism, when Bible interpretation has been understood as being based exclusively on the inner witness of the Spirit in the individual Bible reader. This, as we noted above, is a view contrary to the intention of the confessions. Although the confessions do not intend to be other than interpretation of the Bible, their aim, however, is to be normative interpretation. This normativeness of interpretation is based on the unchangingness and continuity of true faith, to which the aforementioned passage of the Formula of Concord (footnote 22) declares commitment. Thus, in the Lutheran view, Bible interpretation is not the affair of the individual church member or of the local church but that of the whole Church. It is the tradition of the Church which guides this interpretation.

#### ECUMENICAL COUNCILS IN THE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN TÜBINGEN AND CONSTANTINOPLE

From the point of view of our subject it is reasonable to study the post-Reformation correspondence between the Lutheran theologians of the Tübingen Faculty of Theology and the Patriarch of Constantinople Jeremiah II in the years 1573-1581. In this correspondence the themes were some of the issues and problems arising in the relationship between Lutheranism and Orthodoxy.

23 *Apology of the Augsburg Confession, VII & VIII, 7-8. The Book of Concord. The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.* Translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert. Philadelphia 1959.

24 *Augsburg Confession*, 37-39. *The Book of Concord. The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.* Translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert. Philadelphia 1959.

25 *Epitome*, 2. *The Book of Concord. The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.* Translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert. Philadelphia 1959.

26 "From invocation the next step was to images. Men venerated these and thought they contained some sort of magical power, just as sorcerers imagine that horoscopes carved at a particular time contain power. In one monastery we saw a statue of the blessed Virgin which was manipulated like a puppet so that it seemed to nod Yes or No to the petitioners." *Defence of the Augsburg Confession* 21, 34. *The Book of Concord. The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.* Translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert. Philadelphia 1959.

27 *Jouko Mäntikainen: Kuva teologisen kysymyksenä. Puheseurustaja jumalainvalituksista*, 152. Ed. Esko Koskenvesa. Käytännöllisen teologian julkaisuja C 8/1989. Helsinki Department of Practical Theology, Helsinki.



The correspondence deals at length with such issues as the *filioque* clause. It is to be noted that in their treatment of the *filioque* question both parties appeal to the decisions of the ecumenical councils in an attempt to support their own position. Both parties consider the synodical definitions of faith normative. The difference in interpretation is that in the patriarch's view the formulae of the ecumenical councils exclude the possibility of a *filioque* interpretation, while the Tübingen theologians attempt to demonstrate that the ecumenical councils teach nothing contrary to the *filioque* clause. This problematic issue is at the present time the subject of a large-scale interdenominational study.<sup>32</sup> The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland has sent its response to the Lutheran World Federation, which will study the matter at the next general assembly.

From the point of view of our subject there is reason to study the question of the significance of ecumenical councils for Bible interpretation in the aforementioned correspondence. It is precisely this issue which arose in the correspondence between the Germans and the patriarch. The patriarch stated to the Lutherans that in Bible interpretation one cannot trust one's own interpretation but must follow the theology of the Fathers, which the Councils accepted.<sup>33</sup> The patriarch stated that Lutherans need not attempt to interpret and understand the Bible in any other way than that in which the Church and ecumenical teachers have interpreted it; they themselves interpreted the Bible according to Christ our God, who is himself the truth. The patriarch stated that he held and preserved these truths in the Church. He noticed, however, that the Germans had interpreted some Bible passages wrongly. The eternal walls set up by the Church should not be moved but the Germans should follow the interpretations of ecumenical teachers and councils.<sup>34</sup>

The Lutherans stated to the patriarch that the Apostle anathematized even an angel from heaven if he preached something other than confessed truth. And the Saviour said that every growing thing which is not planted by the heavenly Father will be torn up by the roots. For this reason Lutherans not only accept the teachings of Holy Councils but also defend those teachings which have been interpreted and written according to the Holy Scriptures.<sup>35</sup>

28 The issue is at the present time being studied in the WCC and LWF.

29 *George Marmorosch: Augsburg and Constantinople. The Correspondence between the Tübingen Theologians and Patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople on the Augsburg Confession*, 102-103. Brookline, Mass. 1982.

30 *George Marmorosch: Augsburg and Constantinople. The Correspondence between the Tübingen Theologians and Patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople on the Augsburg Confession*, 210. Brookline, Mass. 1982.

31 *George Marmorosch: Augsburg and Constantinople. The Correspondence between the Tübingen Theologians and Patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople on the Augsburg Confession*, 107. Brookline, Mass. 1982.

The Germans asked a rhetorical question as to whether Lutherans despised what the Holy Fathers and canonically assembled councils wrote in the Holy Spirit. Lutherans affirm that they accept and hold in esteem all the conciliar decisions which are in harmony with the Bible (such as the decisions of the First Council of Nicaea). But not quite everything which the Fathers wrote or councils decided can be indiscriminately accepted, in the Lutheran view. In support of this view Lutherans point to a certain difference between the prophets, Christ and the apostles, on the one hand, and the Fathers and councils, on the other hand. The words and decisions of the former (Christ and the apostles) should without exception be considered divine, while the latter (the words of the councils and Fathers) cannot be esteemed as on the same level. If, however, this were done, the writings of the Fathers and the decisions of the councils should be placed in the same category as the apostolic and prophetic writings. However, neither the Fathers nor the councils have ever demanded this. Lutherans refer in this respect to some of the Fathers' own statements.<sup>36</sup> Lutheran theologians thus in a sense support this difference by a theology of revelation. The Bible is a more original witness to God's salvific acts in history than the writings of the Fathers and the decisions of councils, which interpret the apostolic witness to God's salvific acts.

The correspondence between the Tübingen theologians and Patriarch Jeremiah II thus demonstrates a certain difference in the interpretation of the authority and significance of synods. The Patriarch emphasizes that one must hold fast *literally* to all the statements of the synods. The Patriarch seems to emphasize the *formal* authority of synods. Lutherans, however, do not view the authority of synods as being based on any formal principle but on the *content* of their teaching.

The correspondence between the Tübingen theologians and Patriarch Jeremiah II should not be understood as a final definition of opinion in relations between Lutherans and the Orthodox. This correspondence has never been in any way "canonized" by either party. It offers us valuable material for studying the issues, but it also contains numerous problems of its own day. In the background are many ecclesiastical, geographical and political encumbrances, which in spite of worthy efforts prevent the achieving of unanimity on the themes studied.

32 *George Marmorosch: Augsburg and Constantinople. The Correspondence between the Tübingen Theologians and Patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople on the Augsburg Confession*, 112-113. Brookline, Mass. 1982.

## EVALUATION

In the ecumenical dialogue between the Lutheran and Orthodox Churches the central issue regarding ecumenical councils has been the relationship between the Bible and the councils.<sup>33</sup> I have stated above that the Lutheran Church has not always remained faithful to the original intention of the Reformation when, appealing to the principle of *sola scriptura*, the Bible and councils were presented as mutually exclusive alternatives. On the other hand, Lutherans have suspected that the Orthodox Church interprets the councils formalistically. In the Orthodox Church there has at times been the temptation to interpret the councils on the basis of scholastic tradition. Lutherans too run the risk of interpreting the Lutheran confessions and other Lutheran documents formalistically and legalistically. Modern Orthodox theology has, however, returned the interpretation of the councils to the channel of the legacy of faith of the early Church. Archbishop Johannes rejects the formalistic model of interpretation in his book on ecumenical councils: "...we do not have the right opinion as on the same level or of the same kind as the regulations and ordinances of external law, which should be applied quite in detail... we have seen how impossible it is to adopt in a strict sense a formalistic and legalistic interpretation of the synodical tradition..."<sup>34</sup>

There is reason to note that although in the Lutheran Church the Bible is often said to be the formal principle and sole norm of true doctrine, this idea is misleading in its one-sidedness and leads easily to biblicism and a fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible. In Lutheranism the Bible is not at all considered the sole and primary principle of faith. This is shown by the oft-quoted saying of Luther: "What does not teach Christ is not apostolic, even if Peter or Paul should teach it, and correspondingly, what preaches Christ is

apostolic, even if Judas, Annas, Pilate or Herod should say it."<sup>35</sup> The primary criterion and norm of truth and true doctrine is Christ himself, who is the Truth.

When Lutheranism emphasizes the Bible in relation to tradition, this is because the Bible is *early* tradition in relation to *later* tradition. Although, for instance, prior to the books of the New Testament there was often earlier oral tradition, compared with tradition later than the New Testament the books of the New Testament are a more original description of, witness and confession to the unique incarnation of Jesus Christ. The formation of the canon of the Bible in the third and fourth centuries shows how early tradition was used to draw a line with regard to later false doctrine.<sup>36</sup>

No more can the Bible than the decisions of ecumenical councils be regarded as a kind of normative collection which can be transferred as such to the modern day. It has been said of the problematic nature of norms that: "Such norms soon become a quarry from which other normative instances, such as the teaching ministry of the Church or subjectivity, always according to need arbitrarily hew off stones (*lata probantia* = proving statements) for their own theological doctrinal structures."<sup>37</sup> The interpretation of an individual Bible statement or synodical canon requires relating it to tradition in its entirety. The Lutheran confessions use just this method in interpreting the Bible. Lutheranism rejects the biblicist idea that the Bible can be interpreting bypassing tradition. Correspondingly, Archbishop Johannes has stated: "Faithfulness to the original legacy is in a sense always a task, because it presupposes creative obedience, so that it might be genuine obedience."<sup>38</sup>

The task mentioned by Archbishop Johannes requires of the churches a constant study of the history and teachings of the ecumenical councils. A knowledge of the councils may help the churches to return from "parliamentary synods" to the genuine conciliar tradition and thereby to rediscover the genuine truth of faith - Christ - who is himself the Truth.

33

This definition of the issue is not only characteristic of post-Reformation theology but of early church history too. The issue was studied by Maximus Confessor. In his view the Bible is the supreme authority, but only on the condition that it is interpreted in a spiritual and orthodox way. The Fathers were normative, but only to the extent that their teachings were harmonized and related to the Bible. The councils were decisive, but only as exponents of apostolic, prophetic and patristic doctrine. "Beyond the teaching of a council or of a father or of Scripture stood the authority of this reverent and orthodox but apophatic worship: 'A perfect mind is one which, by true faith, in supreme ignorance knows the supremely Unknowable'." *Jouko Pelkonen*, "Council or Father or Scripture": The Concept of Authority in the Theology of Maximus Confessor. The Heritage of the Early Church, 287-288. OCA, 195. Rome 1973.

34

*Johannes*, *Metropolitian of Helsinki*, Yksyyden ja yhteyden suhteet kirkossa eukymenisten synodien tradition valossa. Uskon ja käytännön keskinäinen suhteet ortodoksisessa kirkossa, 187-188. Kuopio 1976.

35 W/A VII, 1, 27-29.

36 On the other hand, not even "antiquity" is the criterion of truth. According to Cyprian "antiquity without truth is an age-old error" ("nam antiquitas sine veritate vetustas erroris est". Epist. 74.9).

37 *Herz Georg Pöhlmann*, Dogmatikan pätköksi, 46-47. Helsinki 1974.

38 *Johannes* 1975, 14.

# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND THE PEOPLE AS A THEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL (CONTEXTUAL) ISSUE

Heikki Huttunen

## The Gospel and its Context

The Gospel sends the Church to all peoples. Everyone has the right to hear the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and be taught Christ's commandments, so that all might receive baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity. Through mission the incarnation of the Word is actualized among new peoples, in new languages, in new cultures and in new political conditions. All languages and cultures can become instruments of the Word and bearers of Christ, when the people are baptized. Central to Orthodox missionary thinking is Christ's becoming present in new languages, through new customs and expressions; the pagan past and tradition is not entirely denied or rejected, but it becomes a vessel and channel of the Holy Tradition of the Church. Each culture is seen as containing signs of the creative work and blessing of God. It is renewed from within with Christian faith as a reflection of the light of the Resurrection. Thus the baptism of members of a particular people can change the character of the whole people, its culture and institutions to serve and proclaim the Christian faith: reference is made to baptism of a nation or culture and their transfiguration as reflections of the light of the Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of mission is to create new eucharistic communities among new peoples. They are communities gathered as a result of apostolic work, joined through the eucharist to the catholic praise and service of the Body of Christ. In them the Kingdom of God is present at a particular time and place. They become communities of love, calling all those around to join in the doxological movement of salvation towards God and back to one's neighbours in service. Thus the basic units of the Church, the dioceses, develop around the eucharist into doxological-diaconal-missionary communities. Upon them the fellowship of bishops in a particular geographical area is based on the diocese, the local church.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On the baptism of people and culture in greater detail, see Bria (pp. 7-11) and Nissiotis (pp. 121-123).

<sup>2</sup> *Yannoulakos*, 20, pp. 26-27.

The church history of Karelia is an example of how the Orthodox idea of mission was implemented over the centuries, slowly and without planning. Karelian-Kalevalan culture and the Karelian life-style gradually became a bearer of Christian faith; we can say that the Karelian people and culture were baptized. The structure of the local church, however, began to develop several centuries later, in circumstances in which the old uniform culture, to a significant extent Orthodox, was already crumbling.<sup>3</sup>

## Trinitarian ethics

The Orthodox starting-point for theological deliberation on the subject of the Church and the people is faith in God as the Trinity. God as three persons in one essence gives humans the model for a holy and life-giving ethics. We can say that the Triune God is a community of persons in which the dynamic interaction of love prevails.<sup>4</sup> The human being is called to grow into the same unity of persons borne by love. The Church as a community of people should itself realize this model and promote it in society. The likeness of God as love and unity among persons is the original purpose of the whole existence of humankind. This solidarity applies to the whole of creation: the unity of the Church is a promise of the unity of all humanity and of the cosmic harmony of all creation after the image of the Holy Trinity.<sup>5</sup>

Christianity engenders a new community, which influences the surrounding society and crosses human frontiers of time, place, language and culture. It is more than religious conviction: Christians form a community and their spirituality has a social aspect - love for everyone, the following of Christ's commandments. In this community, in its mutual sharing and love, the image of the Triune God is realized.<sup>6</sup>

Potentially everything belongs to the body of Christ. In this sense the Church comprehends the entire fullness of being, moving towards the day when Christ is all in all. The nature of the Church is cosmic and it should not be considered a merely human institution; it is at the same time an outer court of

<sup>3</sup> On the church history of Karelia in greater detail, see e.g. *Kirkinen* 1970, pp. 115-254; 1987, pp. 11-165.

<sup>4</sup> *Berdiaev*, p. 305; *Bobrovskiy*, pp. 194-197; *Harakas*, pp. 261-263; *Orthodoxos*, pp. 27-30, 61-62; *Yannoulakos*, pp. 49-65.

<sup>5</sup> *Myerendorff*, pp. 130-135; *Nissiotis*, p. 105; *Vergheze*, p. 77.

<sup>6</sup> *Flavovskiy*, pp. 67, 131-132; *Berdiaev*, pp. 271-279; *Orthodoxos*, pp. 66, 84.



heaven and an earthly structure in a historical context, and these two natures belong together in unity, as Christ as God and human being is one *hypostasis*.<sup>7</sup>

The divine and human nature of the Church is realized crucially in the eucharist. The Church realizes itself in celebrating the eucharist in a particular place at a particular time, amidst a particular people and its culture and history. The presence of God permeates human reality, sanctifying it and making the members of the eucharistic community witnesses to and servants of His glory. The mystical unity of the Church is an icon of the saved fragmentation and healed alienation of the world. Through the eucharist the members of the Church enter the unity of Christ, which comprehends everything and extends to everyone: the mystery of the altar leads to the mystery of brotherhood, sacramental solidarity with all humanity. One name of Christ is *philanthropos*, lover of humans, and He is truly present in love among people, in philanthropy.<sup>8</sup>

The salvation of the human being means the salvation of the whole creation. God wants to liberate all from the power of evil into his glory: The human being is called to become divine and human society is called to become the God's kingdom. In the Church the last things have already begun, Christ comes in a real way and at the same time secretly. The tension "now - not yet" brings to sacramental ethics a living dialectic and dynamism. The second coming of Christ is a joyful promise to those who receive Him, but a fearful threat to those who deny Him. The individual who proceeds on the road of divinisation also lives in the world and reflects his hope wherein Christ is present with all the saints.<sup>9</sup>

### Harmony of the Church and the people

The missionary vocation of Christians changed the Church's relation to the authorities when the Roman Emperor and State took the side of Christ. Even when persecuted Christians had prayed for the authorities and in their opinion had been loyal to them, but now the set-up changed completely and a Christian Emperor ruling a Christian people gained a new status. The universal Church

<sup>7</sup> *Berthaler*, pp. 277-286.

<sup>8</sup> "Le 'sacrement du pauvre' ne remplace pas celui de l'autel, comme certains chrétiens révolutionnaires le disaient volontiers aujourd'hui, il s'ennuie en lui, il en résulte, il l'exprime. Le pain eucharistique n'établit pas seulement un lien entre le Ressuscité et chacun de nous; il ne fonde pas seulement l'unité visible de l'Eglise. Il nous introduit à l'unité dans l'être de toute l'humanité. Partagé, il fait de nous des hommes de partage." *Clément*, p. 204; *Nissiotis*, pp. 109, 118; *Yovanovits*, pp. 89-109; *Zizoulas*, pp. 143-149.

<sup>9</sup> *Harnack*, pp. 263-265; *Meyendorff*, pp. 188-200; *Vergheze*, pp. 84-86.

lived in an ecumenical empire, and their range over the entire inhabited world was identical - or at least so it seemed to contemporaries. The idea of the Church-State relationship in Christian Rome is expressed in the Novels of Emperor Justinian, where priesthood and the imperial title are called two of God's greatest gifts to humankind and their common origin is emphasized. There is only one Christian society, within which there are two spheres of authority of divine origin - ecclesiastical and political, spiritual and temporal.<sup>10</sup> Their faith and values should, however, be shared ones - secular authority is not religiously neutral but implements the same ethic as the spiritual hierarchy; the State is expected to uphold and promote Christian ideals.<sup>11</sup> This is an important prerequisite for harmony between the Church and the Empire: a heretical emperor has no connection with the Church nor authority in any matters of faith and morality. On the other hand, the canons of the ecumenical councils also emphasize the inner independence of the Church with respect to even Orthodox secular authorities: the State is not capable of functioning in the Church's sphere. The empire received its legitimacy from the Church and its function was defined as *euergetia*, doing good.<sup>12</sup>

The era of Christian Rome came to an end, however, as did that of the states that attempted to continue its traditions, and it may be stated that harmony between the Church and the Empire eventually failed - it did not grow towards its ideal, the Kingdom of God. The authority of Christ cannot be identified with the social power of even a Christian state, nor can the universality of the Gospel be defined in political terms.<sup>13</sup> Modern nationalist thinking absolutizes the nation and sets it up as the supreme goal of life in society, identifying it with the interests and vocation of the Church, instead of the ideals of Church and society arising from faith in Christ and expectation of the last things, as in Christian Rome. The Christian motivation of contemporary nationalist thinking may thus lead to the heresy which the Orthodox Church calls *phyletism*.<sup>14</sup>

### The Protest of the Monastic Movement

In the fourth century the distance of the Church and Empire from the ideals of harmony led to the rapid development of Christian anchoritism into monas-

<sup>10</sup> *Florovsky*, pp. 71-75; *Meyendorff*, pp. 192-194.

<sup>11</sup> *Johannes*, p. 91.

<sup>12</sup> *Florovsky*, pp. 81-83; *Johannes*, p. 90; *Meyendorff* 1982, p. 14.

<sup>13</sup> So *Florovsky*, pp. 77, 100 and *Meyendorff* 1978, pp. 142-143.

<sup>14</sup> On phyletism see e.g. *Meyendorff* 1978, p. 199; 1982 pp. 225-229 or *Pitropan*, p. 79.

ticism. It was a spontaneous lay movement which desired to observe the ideals of a life-style applicable to all Christians. The monastic community is a protest against secular society, a reminder that Christians have no lasting city. The ethics of the monastery are not different from or higher than the ethics of the whole Church: the purpose of departing to the desert is to construct the model of a new Christian society, which all church-members should observe.<sup>15</sup>

The monastery is a community in which equality in poverty prevails. Besides prayer, an important principle is work, which is understood as activity for the common good. Work is done out of love for one's neighbour, to help the poor, to feed the hungry, to care for the outcast, not for one's own benefit.<sup>16</sup> This socio-ethical idea applies to the whole Church: Christians should participate in establishing justice; work and property are seen as a function of solidarity and love.

A state that absolutizes itself is condemned by monastic Christians: absolute power belongs to God and final justice is realized in His Kingdom; whoever sets himself up in their place is guilty of blasphemy and idolatry.<sup>17</sup>

The monastic movement has exercised a balancing influence upon the relation of the eastern Church to society. It has functioned at various times as a channel of protest and alternative life-style and at the same time developed into an important part of the Church's structure. Distance from the structures of power and the Church's own freedom also appear in the ordinances of the ecumenical councils and in the canons which forbid clergy and monks to work as public servants.<sup>18</sup>

### The present-day Finnish context

Harmony between the Church and the people and the protest of the monastic movement have both influenced Orthodox social theology and ethics. They are not in opposition as to their basis, but they proceed from the same trinitarian ethics. As the monastic institution developed from the very beginning as an organic part of the Church, Orthodox social ethics includes principles emphasising both asceticism and serving in the world, and these are not even seen as being in opposition. Against this background one may consider the relation-

ship between Church and State in the contemporary Finnish context, perceive challenges and seek answers to them from the experience of the Church.

It has become a self-evident cliché that in Finland we are living in a post-Constantinian, post-Protestant, even post-Christian era. Uniform culture has broken up in the areas of both national churches, and although some 90 % of the population belongs to them, only a fraction takes a regular part in their life. As to what this means theologically, can conclusions be drawn with regard to the changing relationship between Church and people? Can one even speak of "folk churches" any more, when society and individuals generally adopt their values elsewhere? Is state support to the folk churches still an advantage or is it a moral burden in a pluralistic country? What is the influence of new religious trends, which respond to people's spiritual search and whose supporters sometimes outnumber the smaller folk church?

The idea of harmony in Christian Rome is far from our present situation, but neither can one claim that the State is led by heretical foes of Christianity. The relationship between Church and people is a new one in our society, which is becoming more and more secular but even in its pluralism again recognizes its Christian roots. The radical time of dismantling the old is past, but there is no return to the former uniform Christian culture. The people are seeking faith and identity, in Christianity among others, and the task of the Church is to guide those who set out on the road, but this does not apply to the whole people.

In Finland there is talk of rapid change on all levels of society; attitudes vary from enthusiasm to apathetic fear. Churchmen too are asked whether the data society will bring a division into A and B citizens, whether cows and country people will be driven to extinction, what is the morality of fashionable stock exchange savings... It is true that our political and economic planning is usually ruled by a positivist attitude, which only takes note of empirically measurable values and does not recognize any other value in the human being.

The ethical problems of the individual and of society are increasing and becoming more complex. The eco-catastrophe is considered to have begun already, and both the people and citizens must learn a new ethical attitude towards environment.

Consideration must be taken of the long-term effects of one's actions in the entire world and for future generations. The same applies to many issues of justice: the global problems of humanity knock at everyone's door.

Developing biotechnology gives humans the power to decide upon life and death, while individual sexual morality has drifted far from Christian ideals. The structure of families is more and more unstable and new forms of living together may appear. These and many other ethical issues deeply affect the existence of the individual, the people and society, and the Church should be prepared to encounter them consciously and confident of its own identity.

The Church can bring something significant to the people if it holds fast to its own nature and freedom, and does not tie itself to any system or ideol-

<sup>15</sup> Florovsky (pp. 83, 88) states that Basil the Great called man "zon koinekon", a communal being and extended the ideals of the cenobitic monastery to the whole of society. See also Meyendorff 1978, p. 196; Nestorov, p. 121.

<sup>16</sup> So Florovsky, pp. 87, 133-135.

<sup>17</sup> Clement, p. 163.

<sup>18</sup> Johannes, pp. 94-95.

ogy.<sup>19</sup> The Church does not believe in the absolute results of the renewal of society, but desires justice and peace as concrete measures in the constant battle between good and evil, which will continue without a break until the Lord's coming.<sup>20</sup> Faith in a transcendental God who is present in time enables one to see the transcendental value of the human being above technical measurements and the concept of efficiency.<sup>21</sup> No law or structure is of greater value than the human being, when the starting-point is the way opened by the divine-human person of Christ towards life in the image of the Triune God, the likeness of God.<sup>22</sup>

It is time to proclaim the Gospel to the people, who have forgotten it. Can the parishes and monasteries be borne again in order to become eucharistic communities in accordance with their original mission, communities in which the experience of the Church is lived out within the reach of people? Can our people in its modern-day context renew its baptismal vows, or is there a totally new generation, language and culture and a new catechumen?

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<sup>19</sup> On this, cf. *McGarry* 1978, pp. 132-133.

<sup>20</sup> Vladimir Solovyev wrote that the task of the authorities is not to change society into paradise but to prevent it from turning into hell. Quotation in *Clement*, p. 164.

<sup>21</sup> On this in greater detail *Clement*, pp. 164-166.

<sup>22</sup> On the relationship between the Church and the political system see e.g. *Florovsky*, pp. 135, 139; *Harakas*, pp. 262-265; *McGarry* 1978, pp. 132, 141; *Nissiotis*, pp. 123-125; *Vergheze*, pp. 124, 150.

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## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND THE PEOPLE AS A THEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL (CONTEXTUAL) ISSUE

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### The Relation between the People and the Church in the Undivided Church from the Viewpoint of Salvation History

The Church has and should have a relationship with the people for theological reasons relating to the essence of the Church. The Church has been described as the people of God beginning with the New Testament, and the roots of this designation are already to be found in the Old Testament. With the coming of salvation the mountain of the Lord's Temple stands firm. It does not call only the people of Israel, but "all the nations shall stream to it" (Isa. 2:2). This eschatological event is a consequence of God's work of salvation, the focus of which is God's own people: "Listen to me, my people, and give heed to me, my nation; for the law will go out from me, and my justice for a light to the peoples" (Isa. 51:4).

In the New Testament the word 'people' ( $\delta \lambda \lambda \alpha \delta \epsilon$ ) is an honorific title of the Christian Church. God has called it out of the peoples ( $\tau \alpha \epsilon \theta \nu \eta$ ) to be his (Acts 15:24) and it is a peculiar people (Tit. 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:9), in which, by contrast with the Old Testament people of God, one's birth is not of decisive importance, but whose member one becomes through faith in Christ (Gal. 3:26-29; 1 Cor. 12:13; Col. 3:11). The people in this sense ( $\delta \lambda \lambda \alpha \delta \epsilon \tau \omega \delta \theta \epsilon \omega$ ) differs from the word  $\tau \omega \epsilon \theta \nu \omega$ , which the New Testament, following the Septuagint, uses to translate the Hebrew word for Gentile peoples ( $\square \text{ } ^{\circ} \text{ } ^{\circ} \text{ } ^{\circ}$ ). Just as in the Old Testament there is a difference in salvation history between the people called to be God's possession and the Gentiles, so it is in the New Testament, with the difference that the Gentiles may receive the Gospel (Acts 10:35, 45; 11:1, 18; Eph. 2:11-13, 17-22), wherefore Paul calls himself the apostle to the Gentiles (1 Thess. 2:16).

The idea of the church as the people of God is also found in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers. In the Epistle of Barnabas there appears the "new people" (Barn. 5:7; 7:5), which in several contexts is consciously set in antithesis to the Jews, and which is the "first and heir of the covenant" (Barn. 13:6). In 1 Clement the word people ( $\delta \lambda \lambda \alpha \delta \epsilon$ ) means the community of all believers, and although the letter strongly emphasizes hierarchical order, it does not do so in connection with this word. Later, however, the common word for "layman" ( $\delta \lambda \alpha \iota \kappa \omega \varsigma$ ) appears for the first time in Christian literature in this letter (1 Clem. 40:5), still in the hierarchical-cultic sense. In 2 Clement the word



ὁ λαός is used without limitation meaning the Church (2 Clem. 2:3, 11:4). Even more often the words meaning people in this sense occur in the Shepherd of Hermas, and in the parable of the field "people" always means the Church (58:2-3).

The Church Fathers continued on the same lines (Justin Martyr, *Apology* I: 37, 49, 53, 63; Irenaeus, *Epistola* 95; Cyprian, *De idolatria* 10 and 11). Gradually, however, the meaning of "people" in terms of salvation history gives way to allegorical typology. Augustine does this most consistently in his concept of the Church beginning with Abel (*ecclesia ab Abel*): although Abel is so mentioned, the standpoint is not one of salvation history but of neo-Platonic dualism. The people (*populus*) means the ignorant masses who are not saved, while salvation is *purgatio intellectualis* (*Serm.* 341:9; *PL* 39, 1499-1500; *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, sermo 2:1, *PL* 37, 1159; *De civitate Dei* XVIII: 51, *PL* 41, 614).

From the 2nd century onwards the Church as the people of God began to include a social and political aspect, whereby the difference of Christians was interpreted. Christians were described in the writings of Clement of Alexandria (*Stromateis* III 10, 70, V 14, 98), Tertullian (*De pudicitia* 8-9) and many others as a third people after the Greeks or pagans and Jews.

#### Thomas Aquinas' View of the Relation between Church and People

Thomas Aquinas uses of the Church the concept of the people (*populus*) when studying the nature of the Church as an institution and its hierarchical structure. Then he uses of the Church the concept *congregatio fidelium* (*Suppl.* III q. 26 a. 1c). When he wishes to show that only a bishop can distribute indulgences, he makes a distinction between three kinds of *congregatio*: *oeconomia*, *sicut illi qui de una familia sunt*, i.e. a family; *politica*, *sicut illi qui sunt uno populo*, i.e. a people or state; the Church, because *ecclesia assimilatur congregationi politicae, qui ipse populus Ecclesia dicitur*. It is otherwise characteristic of Thomas Aquinas that when the interpretation of the Old Testament covenant people in terms of salvation history, begun in the early Church, became obscured, it led to the making of a logical distinction between the suprahistorical community of grace and a politically conceived society of order.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless Thomas knows the distinction of two peoples, as the title of his work *Summa contra gentiles* demonstrates.

A study of the relationship between Church and people from the New Testament to Thomas Aquinas shows that the word "people" had two principal meanings: ecclesiological and secular. In the Old and New Testaments until Thomas Aquinas a distinction is made between two kinds of people, although

the motivation in salvation history of the difference between these concepts gradually became obscured. The people as a theological quantity is an ecclesiological concept, while people in the other sense means the group of people outside the Church who are often hostile to God's people or neutral in terms of salvation history, whose uniting factor is secular - belonging to the same people, a political and social unit governed by the authorities, a "natural" people.

#### Luther and the Lutheran Confession on the Church and the People

Martin Luther distinguishes, as does the Old Testament, the people of God in the internal and external senses (WA 40, III, p. 158). He does not, however, think in this context in terms of salvation history but typologically; because he seeks the Gospel in the Old Testament, he interprets the Old Testament as speaking of the New Testament Church.<sup>2</sup> He repeatedly emphasizes the latter: (*abscondita est Ecclesia, latens sancti*, "The Church is concealed, the saints hidden", e.g. WA 18, p. 652). The factor gathering the people of God and thus forming the Church is faith, and therefore the Church is a "spiritual people in faith" (WA 6, p. 297). This is known by the fact that the Word of God is preached there, "for there cannot be the Word of God without the people of God, nor the people of God without the Word of God" (WA 50, p. 629).

The Augsburg Confession (*Confessio Augustana* = CA) makes a distinction between the Church in the real sense and the Church in the broader sense (*ecclesia proprie dicta* and the *ecclesia large dicta*) (CA 8). The former is the "community of saints and true believers", which is hidden, while the Church in the broader sense includes "pretenders and the godless", who are mixed with the former. This view of the Church corresponds to Augustine's description of the Church, where there is the true body of the Lord and a mixed Church (*domini corpus verum atque permixtum*).<sup>3</sup> It also corresponds to Thomas Aquinas' distinction between truly belonging to the Church (*in actu*) and the possibility of belonging which all men have (*in potentia*) (*Summa theol.* III, 8, 3 ad 1).

The relationship between the people and the Church in Luther's writings and in the Lutheran confessions, as in the Middle Ages, is linked with the

<sup>1</sup> A. OETIKER, Das neue Gottesvolk in Schrifttum, Schauspiel, bildender Kunst und Weltgestaltung (Gütersloh 1950), p. 432.

<sup>2</sup> Material on this: REINHOLD SEESE, Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte II (5. Aufl. Basel - Stuttgart 1960), pp. 465-472; HOLSTEN FAGERBERG, Die Theologie der lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften von 1529 bis 1537 (Göttingen 1965), pp. 274-275; JUNA JUNTILA, Congregatio sanctorum. Traditionstheoretischen und lutherischen Confessio Augustanae ekklesiologischen perspektiivien merkitysajattelusta (STK publications 164, Jyväskylä 1989, pp. 41-58).

<sup>3</sup> MAX KELLER, "Volk Gottes" als Kirchenbegriff (Zürich - Einsiedeln - Köln 1970) p. 36.

problem of Church and society and the authorities. When all belonged to the Church, except for pagans and Turks, the relationship between the people and the Church became identified on the one hand as a question of the relationship of the Church to its members in the Church in the "broader sense", on the other hand as questions of the doctrine of régimes. The spiritual régime is the kingdom of the Gospel, i.e. the Church, while the secular régime is functioning as a citizen of the State, as a member of the family, as a trader, etc. This activity becomes a religious and theological question because the secular régime also is an activity of God. Social righteousness or civil justice (*iustitia civilis*) is willed by God and is valid before men till death, but no longer thereafter; it does not have saving significance. Since belonging to different people is willed by God, the secular questions of the life of the people have a theological dimension.

### The Folk Church as a Response to the Relationship between the People and the Church in the German and Nordic Evangelical Churches

The relationship between the people and the Church occupies a special position in the problem of the folk church (Volkskirche). The very concept "folk church" has its origin in the 19th century, and it has its roots in the Romantic doctrine of the spirit of the people, i.e. the real essence of a community with historical roots, linked by blood, civilization and religion. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) accepted this way of thinking in expounding his view of the Church, which would function as a community formed by the people, would build up links between the people, nationality and the Church and would be an alternative, even antithesis, to a state church. A folk church is, in his view, a form of church life and organization peculiar to a particular people.

The true theological father of the idea of a folk church is, however, Johann Hinrich Wichern (1808-1881), in whose view the promises of God apply not only to the individual but to the people as a whole. The folk church would serve the moral education of the people, so the people rather than the State would be permeated by Christianity. In his book *Die freie lutherische Volkskirche* (1870) Theodosius Harnack (1817-1879) expressed the opinion that the Church could indeed sever its links with the State, but never its spiritual links with the people and national life.

These interpretations had links with political and social developments in Germany. But while theological principles were derived from its conclusions (universal priesthood, infant baptism, etc.), the problem of the concept of a folk church was that by the term folk church was meant both a reality and an ideal. Thus the concept was simultaneously a historico-sociological quantity and a

theological programme, with the objective of making the Gospel a renewing force for the people and its life.<sup>4</sup>

Of importance in the Nordic countries, especially in Denmark, has been the view of N. S. Grundtvig (1783-1872) that the Word of God is a living force and the congregation the community in which it acts. The task of the Church is to see that the Word is prominent; it must not classify people. In Sweden Einar Billing (1871-1939) has been of great importance in analyzing the concept of a folk church. In his view the Church is the forgiveness of sins, and the folk church implements the universality of grace by inviting the whole people.<sup>5</sup> It manifests this objective in particular in infant baptism, where it is strongly emphasized that God does not expect any initiative from man, but from the outset comes to meet him.

When in 1923 the law of religious liberty was enacted in Finland, it was assumed that it would lead to people leaving the church. But the Evangelical Lutheran Church retained its position as the majority church. In those days influences reached Finland from the so-called "young church" movement in Sweden, where Billing played a central rôle. When at the end of the last century the so-called "biblical trend" desired to differentiate between the "church institution" and the true Church of Christ, it was noticed during the great strike of 1905 and thereafter that the views of this movement did not solve, any more than did legislation, the problem of alienation from the church. Emphasis was to be placed elsewhere; with the implementation of freedom of religion talk of a folk church had backing, and therefore reminders had to be given of the obligations of church membership.<sup>6</sup> Awareness of the Church had to be strengthened and the church itself had to be more aware of its task in religious and ethical edification; it was called "to take care of the roots of the people". In particular, Bishop Jaakko Gummens (1870-1933) spoke in favour of the values

<sup>4</sup> CHRISTOFF, *Volkskirche*. Evangelisches Kirchenlexikon (2. Aufl. 1962), pp. 2832-2833; KAIRO PUNEN, Kansankirkko kirkko-ökeudellisenä ongelmana. TA 1976, pp. 173-174, 176; WOLFGANG HUBER, Welche Volkskirche meinen wir? LuMo 1975, pp. 481-486.

<sup>5</sup> HANS CHRISTOFF DIERPE, Wächter und Späher. Studien zu Einar Billing vor dem Hintergrund theologischer Strömungen auf dem Kontinent (Lund 1975), in particular pp. 15-41. See also Gustav Wingren, Om Einar Billings teologi. STKS 1944, pp. 271-301; GÖSTA WERDIN, Kyrkoyrken i Einar Billings teologi. Acta Univ. Ups. Stud. Doctr. Christ. Ups. 5 (Stockholm 1960), pp. 59-65. - on the endeavours for reform after the Great Strike see Juhani Veikkola, Noortakirkon suuntausten muuttumisen Suomen kirkossa vuorokausi 1905 ensimmäisiin kirkkopäiviin. Suomen kirkkohistoriallisen seuran toim. 118 (Helsinki 1980), in particular pp. 375-462.

<sup>6</sup> Juhani Seppö, Kansankirkkona uskonnonympäristön todellisuus. MARKKU HEIKILÄ - ENO MURTOJÄRNE (ed.) *Kirkko suomalaisessa yhteiskunnassa 1900-luvulla* (Hämeenlinna 1977), p. 72.



of the folk church, as did Aleksi Lehtonen (1891-1951) and Eino Sormunen (1893-1972) a little later.

During the war the Church was regarded as the moral and spiritual backbone of the country, when it was necessary to concentrate all one's energies to defending its liberty. During the war the clergy also felt that they had discovered a new rapport with working men, who were regarded as the group most alienated from the church.<sup>2</sup> Until the final years of the 1950s the folk church was seen as having great opportunities.

### The Folk Church as a Target of Criticism

As has been stated, the folk church is not really an ecclesiastical or theological quantity but primarily an attempt to interpret theologically the historico-sociological situation of the church. The historico-sociological situation is defined by the fact that a particular church functions among a particular people within particular geographical boundaries. People from all social groups belong to it, so it reflects the structure and constitution of the population. By contrast, it is not necessary from the viewpoint of the idea of a folk church that the majority of the people belong to it. Nor is a folk church necessarily the same as a state church, although it does not exclude that possibility. For instance, in the Nordic countries with the exception of Finland the folk church is the same as the state church, while the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the evangelical churches of Germany are not state churches. Above all, the folk church considers dialogue between Church and State important.

The folk church moulded by historico-sociological reality contains, on the other hand, a theological interpretation of a situation; it is even a theological programme and ideal. It gives the church a task in the life of the people ("to take care of the roots of the people"), and in its attempt to gather "the whole people within the scope of God's grace" it is a practical conclusion of God's unconditional grace. "It desires to express in all its activities the open father's arms of God. For that reason as the folk church it desires to include everyone who is born a member of the people as soon as possible within the scope of God's grace, bringing each human life in infant baptism to participate in the salvific gifts of Christ. It desires to follow each human life from the cradle to the grave, to bless each phase with the Word of God and prayer. As the church of the fathers, whose activities and past are inseparably linked with the past of the people, it desires to maintain continuity.

good Christian manners and order in the life of the people", as Eino Sormunen described the folk church.<sup>3</sup>

The folk church is a church of wide contacts, interested in the culture and social development and state of the people and participating in them. The folk church does not intend to displace the ordained ministry, which according to the Lutheran confession is ordained for the reception of faith (CA 5), but it emphasizes that the ordained ministry is a ministry of service (*ministerium*), so that the people receive saving faith. If the people does not receive the Gospel, it remains without influence. Therefore the folk church sees the ordained ministry and the people as belonging together. It does not shun the participation of laypeople, that is, the people of God, in everyday life, administration and decision-making.

The theological basis of the folk church sketched above includes emphases which can be classified under three headings. The first of these is the conclusion that grace affects the church and its membership. Grace is a free gift of God, which He gives "although I do not at all deserve it nor am I worthy of it", as Luther says in the first section of the Small Catechism. This offer of unlimited grace is apparent at its best in a church system in which church membership is as open as possible. Therefore in the folk church there is less fear that the grace of God should be given to the unworthy than that anyone should be excluded from grace.

Secondly, the folk church emphasizes the wide responsibility of the church. A church association wishes to draw clear boundaries and therefore it takes care of a closed group, to which it turns. The folk church, by contrast, must know its responsibility for the alienated, too; it is not restricted to any group of people but must bear concern for the whole people. Thus it functions as an educator of the people.

Thirdly, the folk church is motivated by the background of the people and its history. National history is not only secular in the sense that God only works outside it. As the secular régime is God's sphere of activity, in which He works as Creator, so also the result of that activity - the national character with its historical background - colours the church which works among the people and bears responsibility for it. Thus the church can in a certain way identify with the people and be one application of the contextualization of the Gospel.

<sup>2</sup> ESKO KLEEMÄ, *Kirkon sisä- ja ulkopoliittinen rooli toisen maailmansodan aikana*. HIEKKILÄ - MÄKTÖMÄNNE 1977, pp. 94, 99, 101, 104-105.

<sup>3</sup> EINO SORMUNEN, *Kansankirkkomme ja luottamus sen henki* (Helsinki 1936), p. 131. See also SORMUNEN, *Paimentietä Kuopion hiipakunnalle* (Porvoo 1939), pp. 54, 67-70. In the synod discussion on the folk church, warnings were issued about confusing nationalism and faith. OSMO ALAJA, *Kansankirkko*. Suomalainen kirkonkäsitys kirkkopöytäkirjojen kuvastuksessa (Mikkeli 1952), pp. 58-63. The most recent review of the objectives of the folk church was presented on 10th October, 1979 in the report of the Committee on Church Order chaired by John Vikström. See Report of the Committee on Church Order (Pekkasalmi 1979), pp. 17-25. An important contribution to the discussion of canon law in relation to the task of the folk church is OSSI HAARAMÄKI, *Kansankirkon tehtäväjaoilla* (Pekkasalmi 1988).

But because the Word has become flesh, by the power of this Incarnation the Church too is a historical reality, which becomes concrete in the people. It cannot withdraw from the reality of the people nor withdraw into a ghetto, but has a public task. Thus in its view of the Church the folk church differs fundamentally from the Free churches. While the latter are associations of individual believers, the folk church emphasizes that, God having descended to the world of men in the Incarnation, the Church as an institution exists beforehand and is not founded by men.

### The People and the Institution

In the New Testament the central principle concerning the people of God is eschatological. The Church is the journeying people of God. Since the Church is of a pilgrim character, it means that it is on a journey somewhere, it has a goal and it has not just stationary in the landscape. In the theology of the folk church this is, however, very little, if at all, to the fore. Thus it must be stated that the eschatological factor in the ecclesiology of the folk church is poorly developed.

It is extremely important for the folk church that the membership succeed in internalizing the character of the church and their membership of it. It is essential for the future of the folk church that it succeeds in educating its members in more determined commitment to it, in other words, that the power of its members' faith grows from something other than tradition. The Church as a folk church institution cannot build this objective solely on education (*ecclesia docens*), for the Church is an institution of salvation, built on the Word and sacraments. In and with them the present but invisible Lord works. The Church is thus a mystical reality; it is the mystery of salvation (*mysterium salutis*), for in its Word and sacraments "the Holy Spirit is given, who creates faith in those who hear the Gospel - where and when God sees fit" (CA 5). The Church is thus not the consequence of personal faith but the cause; it is not the creation of believers but believers are the product of the Church. The Lutheran tradition of faith in the folk church is threatened at this point by subjectivism of Reformed origin, regarding the church as an association of the like-minded, arising from the voluntary decision of its members. The Church is, however, more than a subjective community of faith.<sup>9</sup>

The passivity of the membership of the folk church is not a consequence of the system of church tax or of anything similar, although there are points of contact. More essential is how the folk church succeeds in solving the problem of fellowship. If fellowship (*koinonía*) disappears and only the institution remains, faith disappears. But preserving fellowship presupposes that the

members of the folk church are not treated as objects of the work of the church, but that they can be its subject. Without this possibility alienation from the Church and its message grows. This observation and the practical conclusions drawn from it have been the strength of the people's church of Latin America and of so-called 'Liberation theology' that lies behind it. With them the Church and its work grow from below, not from above, not ready thought out, dictated and schematized, but growing from the experience and environment of the members of the church. The tension between traditionalism and actualism and between the institution and the person is, as it were, built in to each church. It is, however, creative tension, if the environment, situation and people's experience can receive as their guide the tried structures of the institution and fit in with it. Unless the institution channels and expresses personal experience, it remains a dried up traditionalism and institutionalism, but if experience and its expression bypass the institution and its tradition, the consequence is always from the outset individual actualism.

Thus the folk church has its problems. It has been greatly criticized, especially by those churches which are not folk churches. In particular, the ecumenical movement has repeatedly paid attention to its problems. In Finland criticism has come continually from those whose ecclesiological ideal is the Pietistic *ecclesiola in ecclesia*. Here its exponents have been the aforementioned biblical trend, the neo-Pietist movements and Osmo Tiitila, who adopted the teachings of Rudolf Sohm (1841-1917), a German scholar of canon law.<sup>10</sup> Besides an ecclesiological programme these emphases are united by an eschatological interpretation with conservative and rational elements. Cultural and social development is seen as leading towards apostasy, which cannot and should not be affected by human effort. The Church must entrench itself behind the truths of the Bible, which are in constant and ever greater conflict with general progress, and concentrate on the spiritual renewal of individuals. Only thus can one influence the whole people.

In particular, criticism of the folk church in the ecumenical movement has its basis in the worldwide theological discussion of recent decades. Although the folk church emphasizes the unconditionalness of the grace of God and its application to all men, that is, the universality of grace, it is not sufficiently interested in universality outside the geographical limits of its own people.

Today Christians and their churches throughout the world are becoming aware that the Church is an ecumenical reality embracing the whole world (*oikoumene*). So a theology of the Church which does not take this aspect

<sup>9</sup> OSMO TIITILÄ, *Sata vuosia kirkosta* (Porvoo-Helsinki 1964), in particular pp. 71-74; *Evankelion kanta evankelion kanta*. Kansallisevangelisen ohjelman (Ryhty 1973), pp. 17-18. RUDOLF SOHM, *Kirkkohistorian johdanto* (Köpen 1899). - Tiitila does not seem to have known Sohm's later writings, in which he substantially corrects his earlier thoughts and defines the Church as an ecclesio-juridical institution based on sacramental worship. See HANS DOMBOIS, *Recht der Gnade III* (Bielefeld 1983), pp. 255-262, 280-281.

seriously easily becomes incomplete. The question has been raised as to whether outside its limits it fulfils the catholicity of the Church in the quantitative sense of the term.

Social analysis raises another critical question concerning the folk church. The folk church has not always meant the legitimization of the existing forms of society, but it is understood as the antithesis of an "authoritarian church". Nevertheless, especially in democratic conditions, it is easily understood because it accepts the people as a historical fact - as part of the political system of that people and state, even as its supporter and legitimizer. A modern democratic state does not, however, need religious legitimization, but derives its authority "from below", from the people. As has been stated above, the folk church is not the same as a state church, for which this question poses even greater difficulties, but in the opinion of its critics, not even the folk church can entirely avoid it.

Another problem is the reality of the folk church compared to its ideal. Various sociological studies have repeatedly raised the question whether the folk church is truly becoming "everyman's church". Is not membership of the church passive membership and belonging to the whole Church a territorial principle or social need rather than believing in the Church? The fact that in the Church of Sweden, as distinct from all other churches, there are unbaptized members is not likely to nullify this criticism.

Sociological criticism of the folk church is based on social development. It pays attention to the fact that in the "post-Christian" era the folk church is in danger of interpreting too freely its efforts not to test people. The grace of God, illustrated by infant baptism, becomes "cheap grace" when it is appealed to in support of indifference. It would, however, be unreasonable to claim that awareness of the unity of mankind is completely covered by self-centred nationalistic feeling.

The camouflaging of the Gospel in the world of those who receive it is demanded by the Incarnation. But its reverse easily becomes adapting to this world in such a way that the salt loses its savour. In relating positively to the historical reality of being a people the folk church easily consents to preserving the national spirit, and in its preaching it adapts to the national ideology. Without realizing it itself, the folk church is in danger of identifying the people gathered by the call of God (ὁ λαός) with the people in the ethnic sense (το έθνος), which the New Testament and the early Church kept separate.

In line with this criticism, the question has been asked whether, in any case, the folk church is in danger, without realizing it, of joining so closely in the life of the people among whom it works that the interests of that people are in danger of supplanting the purpose of being a church. As concerns relations between the Finnish Orthodox Church and the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church, there is an episode in our national history which highlights this problem.

#### Case Study: The Religious Policy of the Occupation Administration of East Karelia as a Contextual Issue

In the modern history of Finland there is a chain of events which once placed great strain on relations between Orthodox and Lutherans. It can be described as a typical example of how the work of the folk church includes, without realizing it, non-ecumenical national emphases and goals.

I mean the dispute that arose between Lutheran and Orthodox priests when the Finns occupied East Karelia in the summer and autumn of 1941. The handling of religious matters was disturbed by conflict between Orthodox and Lutherans, which may have had an influence on the increase of anti-Finnish feeling among the East Karelians. When church work in the occupied area was being discussed, a plan was drawn up by the leadership that no confessional Christian work was to be done in East Karelia, but that it was to be non-confessional. Thus, for instance, candidates for baptism were to be baptized "directly" in the undefined "Church of Christ", in other words, they were not to become either Orthodox or Lutherans. In practice the plan would have led to the population of East Karelia breaking with the Orthodox faith, which had been established in the region for centuries.

The dispute reached such proportions that the military chaplain Yrjö Olman, later Archbishop Paavali, was ordered away from Petrozavodsk (Äänislinna) to Finland proper. Illustrative of the lack of conciliation among the priests of the two denominations and problematic from the viewpoint of the doctrine of régimes was that the matter was only settled when Marshal Mannerheim intervened. In April 1942 the marshal issued an order authorizing confessional religious activity. At his order religious work was re-organized and Lutheran pastors, with the exception of one, were re-assigned to other duties. Thus servants of the church did not succeed in handling the interests of their church without the secular régime restoring order. Mannerheim's reaction may have been influenced by Archbishop Herman's letter on religious policy in East Karelia. On the other hand, one must remember that it was a dispute between priests of two denominations rather than between the denominations themselves. Thus the leadership of the Lutheran church did not support the views of their military chaplains. In the opinion of Archbishop Erkki Kallia, East Karelia was to be treated as an Orthodox area, and in the wartime synods of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church demands were made for harmonious co-operation between the churches.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> VORTTO SETÄLÄ, *Suomalaisia kirkollisia idänpolitiikkaa 1917-1944* (SKHS publications 82, Helsinki 1970), pp. 129-132; ANTTI LAINE, *Suur-Suomen kabadet kasvot. Itä-Karjalan sivilisaation asema suomalaisessa miehityshallinnossa 1941-1944* (Joensuu University publication A 24, Helsinki 1982), pp. 183-184, 205-218. - The same spots of religious policy in East Karelia are remembered by those involved. See ELINA KARKALAINEN, *Arkkiepiskopi Paavali - legenda jo eläessään* (Pori-Helsinki 1973), pp. 86-99; ESKKI PIIRONEN, *Taasunien*



This wartime dispute, which was eventually solved when the Finns lost East Karelia in the summer of 1944, can be explained as a series of misevaluations. Firstly, the Finns assumed that the Christian and thus also the Orthodox tradition had so collapsed among the population of East Karelia under Communist rule that it could no longer be built upon. More important, however, was probably the fact that the planners of religious policy and the Lutheran implementers of that policy were so spellbound by nationalist ideology that they saw the task of the church as being that of helping to finnicize the population of the area. In particular, the Academic Karelia Society (AKS) was influential, not were the aims of the Patriotic People's Movement (Isänmaallinen Kansanliike=IKL) entirely alien to all of them.<sup>12</sup> Therefore they considered nationalist goals to be part of ecclesiastical objectives and were prepared to implement them with the aid of church work. It is illustrative that the said crisis came to a head over the question of baptism. Thirdly, the planners and implementers of this religious policy did not have any appreciable knowledge of the Finnish Orthodox Church, but were suspicious of its Russian tradition and doubted the reliability of its Finnish nationalism. On the other hand, the Orthodox were prepared to examine their own activities from the same national perspective, emphasizing that they were best able to join the population to Finland by strengthening its ethnic bonds.<sup>13</sup> Religion and ethnic bonds were thus united in each group's thinking, although the chances each party had of promoting the latter with the aid of the former were viewed with suspicion.

The dispute over religious policy during the military administration of East Karelia can be interpreted as a the "birth pangs of Lutheran-Orthodox friendship", as Erkki Piironen described it in the subtitle of his memoirs *Tsaaronien Karjalassa* (In Karelia of the Tsar). But it is also an illuminating example, when one thinks of the contextual problem of the folk church. Quite obviously both the Lutheran and Orthodox sides were working towards a crushing of Communism with the aid of church work. The parties had different views as to whose work would be most likely to bring about that goal. The goals were not political, nor the churches' aims those of a servant, in the sense that they would be conceived of as differing from each other, the latter being cynically used to realize the former. Rather both objectives were seen as one

and the same - the national was not distinguished from the religious. It was a question of the "against the devil and the Russki" type of thinking, which was what the AKS, IKL and some Lutheran pastors had in common. Its background lay in the aims of 19th century Fennoman (Finnish nationalist) pastors, whose opponents then were the Swedish-speaking upper class. The Lapua movement and the AKS propagated in the name of "Finnish Christianity" a religiously coloured Finnish nationalist ideology. The distinction between the people of God and the people as an ethnic concept became blurred.

For this reason the objectives and activities of the folk churches in East Karelia were influenced in later ecumenical discussion by non-theological factors. Their existence was not even seen, and therefore they were understood as legitimately theological. Support for this interpretation was found in recent history - the undeniable Bolshevik persecution of the Church and of faith in God in general, the unification of the Finnish people under the pressure of the Soviet Union's bid for world supremacy, the understanding of the Finnish people as the chosen people of God during the trials of the Winter War, and the events of twenty years before, when in 1919-1921 Finnish volunteers launched an attack on Dyina and Oloneits, an eventually unsuccessful crusade of Western civilization and nationalist fervour against the Bolshevik administration. In all of these, powerful convictions were not always religiously motivated, but in many cases approached absoluteness and, without being aware of it, adopted religious justification.

## Conclusions

In spite of the problems of the folk church, it must be stated that it has nevertheless been a workable ecclesiastical system. It has historical roots which cannot be ignored. Better than any other conceivable system in these conditions it has offered the possibility of contacts between people and church, society and the community of faith. Its faults are obvious. However, changing the system would eliminate a good number of these faults while introducing new ones. It is not easy to regard the relationship between people and church as more workable in some other kind of system, such as that of the Free churches. In addition, in the second or third generation the Free churches meet the problem of transmitting the tradition and of the continuity of the church. After the death of the generation which experienced times of revival - in such times free churches have usually originated - it is not obvious that succeeding generations will continue where their fathers and mothers left off.

<sup>12</sup> *Karjalassa* (Pekelämäki 1982), pp. 16-20, 29-30, 31-33, 35, 43-47, 51-53. See also VEIKKO PIIRONEN, *Atkkipiispa Hermannin elämä* (Pekelämäki 1986), pp. 78-79.

<sup>13</sup> LAINE 1982, pp. 88-91, 206

<sup>14</sup> Military chaplain Erkki Piironen (Orth.) emphasized that Orthodoxy is patriotic and wished that "attempts were made to join East Karelians to our fatherland Finland through our church". Chaplain general Johannes Björklund (Luth.) had the same goal when in August 1941 he expounded the objective "Karelia as Lutheran as possible". LAINE 1982, pp. 215, 205.

different solutions. The relationship between people and church organized in the manner of a folk church is thus for the moment a workable practical solution in a particular historical situation. It can and should be analyzed theologically, but an ecclesiological principle should not be made out of it.

However, a church system that works satisfactorily cannot be considered acceptable for merely pragmatic reasons. The folk church must above all be a church. As such, it is good to remember that the tradition of the church can be received only when there is appropriation, renewal and translation into contemporary language and modes of thought. "The Church is always to be reformed" (*ecclesia semper reformanda*) is thus not a specifically Lutheran principle. As tradition is not the opposite of life, but a process which remains a part of life, so reform is an essential element in the Church. This applies also to the ecclesiastical system and the folk church.

## THE FINNISH ORTHODOX - LUTHERAN DIALOGUE

### COMMUNIQUE VALAMO 1990

The second theological discussions between the Finnish Orthodox Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland were held on October 8th-10th, 1990 at New Valamo. The meeting was hosted by the Finnish Orthodox Church and the chairman of its delegation, Johannes, Archbishop of Karelia and all Finland.

The members of the delegation from the Finnish Orthodox Church were Archbishop *Johannes*, Bishop *Ambrosius*, Chief Assistant *Jarmo Hakkarainen*, the Revd. *Heikki Huhtinen*, B.D. and the Revd. *Olavi Merras*, B.D.

The leader of the delegation from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland was the Rt. Revd. *Kalevi Toivainen*, Bishop of Mikkeli. Its members were the Revd. *Lorenz Grönvik*, D.D., Dean *Voitto Huotari*, D.D., the Revd. *Hanna T. Kampuri* and Docent *Eeva Martikainen*.

The secretaries to the conference were the Archbishop's secretary, *Makarios Lehtimäki* and *Mina Vallaho*.

The Rt. Revd. *Paul Verschuere*, Bishop of Helsinki, from the Roman Catholic Church of Finland, was present as an observer.

At the opening ceremony of the conference the speakers were Archbishop Johannes and Bishop Kalevi Toivainen, who emphasized the importance of the common legacy of undivided Christendom for the study of the binding nature for the different churches of the canons of the early Church. Both speakers also pointed out that the Lutheran and Orthodox churches each belong to a world-wide church community and that they also participate in the international Lutheran - Orthodox theological dialogue. Bishop Toivainen also emphasized that the issue of mixed marriages is very important to churches which have served the same nation and people for centuries.

During the conference the delegations took part in the worship of the monastery. In addition, Lutheran services of vespers and the eucharist were celebrated in the monastery church with local people also participating.

Two subjects were under discussion. The first was *The Relation between Doctrine and the Canons and the Ecumenically Binding Nature of the Canons*, on which Jarmo Hakkarainen and Hanna Kampuri delivered papers. The second subject was *Orthodox - Lutheran Inter-marriage as a Pastoral Issue*. An introduction to this subject was given by Voitto Huotari and Olavi Merras.

In discussing the first theme both parties stated that the canons of the Church arise from faith even if they were formulated in response to the challenges posed by a particular historical context. They continue to support the life of faith and love in the Church and they are comprehensible only from the standpoint of faith. It was considered important to produce as comprehensive an ecumenical study as possible of the binding nature of the canons in the present practice of the churches and their significance for different churches.

With regard to the second theme it was decided to issue the following recommendations:

1. Although legally there is only one marriage ceremony, ecclesiastically it may be performed according to either the Lutheran or Orthodox tradition without, however, intermingling them. Both parties consider important the blessing and sanctifying of marriage and emphasize the importance of prior discussion between those who are to be married and the pastor who is to perform the ceremony. The discussion should deal with the nature of Christian marriage and also with the possible baptism of children and religious education.
2. Orthodox and Lutheran parishes should support prayer life in the spirit of both traditions in homes where there is a mixed marriage and also encourage the participation of families in the services of both churches.
3. The children of the same family should be baptized as members of the same church. In early childhood support should be provided for the child to grow into the church tradition in which he or she has been baptized; at a later age he or she should be introduced to the ecclesiastical heritage of the other parent. Both parties hope that any change in family circumstances (e.g. divorce or death) will not affect the denomination of children under 15 years of age.

The discussions were held in an open and constructive spirit. It was stated that the aim is still to deepen mutual knowledge and understanding and to clarify possible misunderstandings.

It was tentatively agreed that the next discussions will be held on 7th-10th September, 1991, hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. It was agreed that the themes of the conference will be *The Church as a Worshipping Community* and *"Our Churches' Concept of Man and the Present Day."*

New Valamo, 10th October, 1990

## OPENING SPEECH

Kalevi Toivainen

Your Holiness Archbishop Johannes, Most blessed Bishop Ambrosius, Honoured Archimandrite Panteleimon, honoured members of the delegation of the Finnish Orthodox Church, honoured Fathers.

On behalf of the delegation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, I greet you and express our gratitude that we may begin the second round of negotiations between our churches at the illustrious and memorable monastery of Valamo. When I think of this monastery, its history and its present significance for Orthodox faith and the Orthodox Church in particular, I wish to apply the words of the Psalm: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: May those who love you be secure". (Ps. 122:6)

We are happy that we may continue these discussions in the boldness of faith and in mutual trust. God in his inscrutable wisdom has set up these two churches for service among the same people. It has been thus for centuries and therefore we are not unknown to one another. But in order for our common witness to be genuine and convincing in all the activities of our churches, we must still grow in mutual knowledge and attempt to eliminate anything which adversely affects the conviction of our witness.

As Lutherans, we are aware that the Orthodox churches as a rule understand themselves as churches of the undivided apostolic and early Church tradition. In the words of the Russian economist and theologian Sergei Bulgakov, the Orthodox Church is conscious of itself as the "Church of Christ upon earth". We also know that in identifying itself with the early Church and apostolic tradition the Orthodox Church does not lack historical and theological arguments to support it.

The Orthodox and Lutheran churches, as, of course, the Roman Catholic Church, meet each other in wishing to hold fast to the christological and trinitarian confession of the early Church, in other words, to believe and confess Christ and the Holy Trinity in the same way as the undivided Church believed and confessed them. We thus have a common purpose. But our meeting here conceals an ecumenical problem which affects both our churches' self-understanding and the way they understand each other. Thus we have matters for discussion and a common basis for it in our faith.



The first subject of this round of discussions, the status and significance of the canons of the ecumenical councils, is historically and ecumenically of central importance. For example, the Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D. (canon 3) and the Council of Chalcedon in 454 A.D. (canon 28) gave rise to discussion between the eastern and western churches for centuries on the question of their interrelation and status, while the Council of Chalcedon (canon 28) raised the question among the Orthodox churches of whether its statement on autocephaly is to be interpreted functionally or literally.

For us Lutherans the early Church tradition is not merely old and thus from a time which is gone for ever and does not concern us anymore. Our common purpose is, however, also to discuss such contemporary issues as arise from the fact that by the will of God we serve among the same people. This time we wish to consider the problems and opportunities arising from intermarriage between members of our churches. In this theme we are concerned with so-called mixed marriages, often met with in Central Europe and a much discussed ecumenical issue.

As both of our themes this time show, we are moving, on the one hand, on the familiar ground of our relationship, and on the other, on universal ecumenical ground. At our discussions there are present observers from the Finnish Ecumenical Council, at whose presence I express my joy. They remind us that while we discuss with each other, we may and should keep in mind the world-wide inter-church dialogue, in which our own churches participate in different ways. The organization of local discussions and the relation to wider ecumenism in general is a question which still awaits an answer, but we should be aware of its existence.

May God grant his grace and blessing to our discussions here.

## OPENING SPEECH

Archbishop Johannes  
of Karelia and all Finland

Address of welcome by His Eminence Archbishop Johannes at the opening session of the second meeting of the Finnish Orthodox-Lutheran theological dialogue at New Valamo on 8th October, 1990.

Venerable Arch-prelates. Dear fathers, brothers and sisters in Christ.

I feel joy and gratitude in being able in the name of the Orthodox archdiocese of Finland to welcome the participants and observers at the second series of doctrinal discussions between our national churches to share in our common work at New Valamo. When we began these doctrinal discussions last year, this took place in both a positive and realistic spirit. Positive was the fraternal atmosphere of goodwill. Realistic was the fact that we in no sense imagined that we would solve great problems and achieve fundamental changes. If we can continue in the same spirit, prospects are good for the sequel. All those present understand this and we need not emphasize it to ourselves. All the more is it necessary to underline this for all those who in one way or another expect great news, perhaps even sensations. We shall not offer these nor can we, if we take into account the limitations of the situation: each delegation is part of its own great ecclesiastical fellowship and cannot alone or on its own initiative take decisions substantially affecting church relations. The lack of great steps does not, however, exclude smaller steps in practical matters. This is what we aim at, as well as a strengthening of mutual knowledge and understanding. This is a sufficiently important and valuable field of work.

I consider the themes of our discussions particularly important and, as far as church relations are concerned, of vital significance. I see the consideration of the subjects of the relationship between the doctrine of the Church and the canons and of the ecumenically binding nature of the canons as providing a particularly suitable basis for further study of the theology and pattern of thought of the undivided Church, that is, the legacy which once united Christendom and which should form the basis on which now to build fellowship and unity. Of exceptional interest in this connection is the issue of the ecumenically binding nature of the canons, that is, their significance for the whole of Christendom. It is also especially noteworthy that it was the Lutherans who wished this subject to be included. To my knowledge it has been a very rare subject in ecumenical doctrinal discussions.

The issue of mixed marriages as a pastoral matter is particularly important in the Finnish Orthodox Church. Today the majority of the marriages of the members of our church, over 90%, are with Lutherans. To the very great extent there is need for us to consider and clarify the many problems and opportunities connected with this. In this area we have within certain limits relatively good opportunities of taking practical steps constructively to further co-existence between the religious traditions, although certain basic difficulties remain. Let it be noticed, however, that the theme is framed so as to concentrate attention on the pastoral side of the issue without really considering great theological differences in view of marriage and the religious marriage act.

Honoured participants, good friends. We are living at a time of great changes and upheavals, which in many ways have with surprising speed both provided opportunities and posed demands for the churches. Now the churches' voice is once again sought and their contribution is once again awaited, particularly in the area of the values of life. What can the churches give and on what basis can they respond to even the most important expectations? By knowing their legacy and remaining faithful to it, not in a vacuum but in the contemporary world. Our modest discussions provide some basis for this, when we study the issues with sincerity in a realistic way and in a spirit of goodwill. I wish blessing on our work and our mutual fellowship.

## THE RELATION BETWEEN DOCTRINE AND THE CANONS AND THE ECUMENICALLY BINDING NATURE OF THE CANONS

Jarmo Hakkarainen

### 1. The Relation between Dogmas and the Church

Hardly any concepts of Orthodox theology stand in such close relationship to each other as dogma and the Church. It is impossible to think of the Orthodox Church without its dogmas or of Orthodox dogmas detached from its ecclesiastical connection. There is a close unity between dogmas and the Church deriving from their common characteristics.

(a) The first connection between them is due to their common supernatural premiss - God. God has revealed truth contained in dogmas and He has also founded the Church, whose task it is to preserve, interpret and communicate to later generations the truths revealed to it. Tradition would never have originated, nor would it exist today, if the Church itself were not the source and initiator of that tradition.<sup>1</sup>

(b) The connection between the Church and dogmas also appears in their common history. The history of dogmas is and always has been the history of the Church. The Church means the uninterrupted, living history of dogmatic theology.

The Church is not only the community of believers in Christ who follow His commands. It is also the community of those who live and exist in Him and in whom He Himself dwells and lives through the Holy Spirit. The Church of Christ is one in the eucharist, for the eucharist is Christ Himself, and He lives sacramentally in the Church, which is His body.<sup>2</sup>

(c) The connection between the Church and dogmas also appears in their common goal, which is the proclamation of the truth to the world so that the truth might free and save man.

Truth cannot be independent truth divorced from God, since Christian truth is not a part of life but life itself in its entirety.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dumitru Stancilo, *Orthodox Dogmatics* Band I, Zürich, 1985, pp. 54-57.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. Aleksiadis Galanis, *The Sacramental Life of the Orthodox Church*, 42, A Companion to the Greek Orthodox Church, New York, 1984.

<sup>3</sup> Christos Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, New York, 1984, p. 77.

The Church cannot deny the moral and social obligations of Christians in this world. But on no account does it limit its truth and morals to social behaviour or conventional obligations. The Gospel teaches Christians to give to the world a practical testimony to the new life of the Kingdom of God through good works.

This practical testimony means a revelation of the truth; it is the realization of the image of God in human persons.<sup>4</sup> "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 5:16). The Bible's emphasis on the necessity of good works means that the truth must be lived in practice and not as a conceptual theory.

## 2. The Relation between Doctrine and the Canons

The Church is the unity of charismatic life. Pentecost continues in the Church through the apostolic succession. According to Orthodox theology, the sole representative of ecclesiastical authority is the episcopal synod. However, it is not only the "canonical skeleton" of the Church, but the ordained ministry (hierarchy) itself is primarily a charismatic force, the ministry of the sacraments, the divine economy.<sup>5</sup>

The ordained ministry is not only a canonical ministry, nor merely part of the institutional structure of the Church, but a constitutional matter related to the understanding of the Church as a body, an organism. The members of the priesthood are not only the authorized officials of the community, nor only representatives of the parish community, but representatives of Christ Himself. In them and through them Christ, the high priest of the New Covenant, fulfils and completes His eternal pastoral and priestly ministry.

In the undivided episcopate Pentecost becomes universal and continuous. On the other hand, in its bishop each local church is linked to the catholic fellowship of the Church.<sup>6</sup> The apostolic succession is the mystical foundation of church unity rather than being based on the canons.

In ecumenical, that is, general, and local councils, and through the wisdom of holy men and women the Orthodox Church has issued a great number of canons and ordinances to regulate church life. They not only regulate relations concerning the administrative structure of the Church and human organization

but also the conditions for the participation of each member in the church body or for personal resignation.<sup>7</sup>

The existence of canons and other regulations in church life must be interpreted correctly, because otherwise it weakens the truth of the Church, which is that of personal specialness and freedom forming a basis for true life in the fellowship and relationship of love. When we speak of the Church, we speak of a community. The canons serve church life; their function is to guide church members on the way to salvation and to make following that way easier.

Ecclesiastical legislation is one part of church life. It does not as such represent the entire essence of the Church. The Church has its canons, but its treasures contain other things, such as theology, spirituality, mysticism, worship and morality.<sup>8</sup>

The canons were issued to be of a healing, not a legal or juridical nature. Their purpose was not to condemn people but to define the healing, therapeutic function of the Church's pastoral guidance - the way in which the Church guides people into the fullness of life's opportunities.

The canons clearly stress that the convocation of councils was seen to be necessary for the good of the Church and the resolution of conflicts.<sup>9</sup>

As an organic body the Church cannot live without certain disciplinary definitions concerning issues of faith. Such order is an inevitable and essential part of the activities of a living Church. In order for the Church to develop many of its truths must be clarified.

Councils serve these needs. Uniformity of external organization and doctrine is an essential condition for church unity. It is of the greatest importance for the whole of church life. In this sense Tertullian (d. c. 220 A.D.) speaks of the "unity of order",<sup>10</sup> and Cyprian (d. 258 A.D.) refers to order as "adaptation to the Lord's commands".<sup>11</sup> This demand for unity, even in the disciplinary and external organization of local churches, became a necessity. During the first three centuries Christians did not need to define more clearly the limits of church life. Martyrdom preserved the harmony of church life and confirmed the truth of salvation.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>5</sup> Georges Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View*, Belmont, 1972, p. 65.

<sup>6</sup> *Enchiridion of Meletios*, *The Nature and Character of Ecumenical Councils according to the Orthodox Church*, p. 352.

<sup>7</sup> *Kanones*, op. cit., p. 174.

<sup>8</sup> Lewis Passanov, *The Canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church*, p. 139, A Companion to the Greek Orthodox Church, New York, 1984.

<sup>9</sup> Metropolitan Johannes, *Kirkkoisäen perintö*, Pöskesmäki, 1984, p. 24.

<sup>10</sup> *Apologetics*, 39, PL 1, col. 467.

<sup>11</sup> *Epist.* 25, PL 4, cols. 288-289.

<sup>12</sup> *Kanones*, op. cit., pp. 177-178.

Martyrdom is the loftiest canon of church life, a practical testimony separating the new creation of Christians from worldly life. In that sense it is a standard for understanding the canons later issued by the Church. The martyrs of the Church manifested the truth of the Church, which is fellowship and a relationship with God.

This is not ideological fanaticism or ideas of faith aimed at improving the common life. Martyrdom is a picture of existence entirely contrary to individual survival. The historical model of martyrdom is Christ on the cross. Therefore each of the Church's canons has the same martyr-like aim: the fulfilment of life as community and humility before God's love according to the model of self-denial and the life-bringing cross.

It is impossible to understand the existence and function of the canons in the Church without taking into account their ascetic nature.<sup>13</sup> The canons express the requirements for participating in the ascetic and dynamic life of the Church.

Byzantine Christians saw the canons as requirements for the understanding of personal freedom, the true revelation of the beauty of life. The standard for understanding the canons is that of spiritual maturity, but in order for us to understand the canons of the Church we must find their level of historical and spiritual life and the theology which formed them.

In the writings of the Fathers and the canons of the councils the most important concern was to express clearly and protect man's salvation from death. The canons make a clear distinction between true life and death, and therefore they serve man's liberation from illusions of life, his spiritual healing through pastoral care. The canons provide people with the opportunity of confirming the Church's doctrinal truth and the fullness of church life as a personal victory and achievement of freedom.

### 3. The Ecumenically Binding Nature of the Canons

THE ORTHODOX CHURCH has not delivered to believers an entire system of canonical legislation.<sup>14</sup> The fullness of divine truth and life continues in the Church, and no juridical system can ever sufficiently express the living reality of Christians.

What then is the true meaning of the canons? When we make the acquaintance of the texts of the canons we notice that they are usually connected with ecclesiastical situations and distortions of the past. In order to understand them fully it is essential to study the historical circumstances in which the canons

originated. Then we clearly perceive the eternal and normative value of the canons.<sup>15</sup>

The councils and Church Fathers describe the canons as a kind of medicine for healing the church body of specific illnesses. This healing is a product of eternity and belongs to the abiding nature of the Church. It was and is a testimony to the unchangingness of the Church's inherent value, a testimony to the internal organization and structure of the Church, based on the apostolic witness and empowered by the constant presence of the Holy Spirit. Neglect of the Church's canons leads finally to the degeneration of church life, that is, ecclesiastical heresy.<sup>16</sup>

In the Orthodox Church a basic rule is fidelity to the sacred canons and the entire truth proclaimed by the Fathers, which they wish to preserve and complete.<sup>17</sup> Dogmatic definitions deal with the inner truths of faith, which are unchanging and obligatory for all. But is it limited merely to dogma? Besides dogma we also have canonical decisions, which regulate the external organization and structure of the Church. What attitude should one take to these canonical decisions? The second canon of the fifth-sixth ecumenical council of Trullo is of importance in this respect, above all because hundreds of rules, which originally were only of local force and significance, have through this canon obtained ecumenical significance and binding authority for the whole Church. In this canon it is stated that "no one has permission to falsify or abrogate the aforementioned rules".<sup>18</sup>

The first canon of the seventh ecumenical council (Nicaea 787 A.D.) states even more forcibly: "unshakable are the ordinances published by the holy trumpets of the Spirit, the highly esteemed Apostles and the six holy ecumenical councils and in addition the local councils and holy fathers".<sup>19</sup> The canon adds: "for illumined by the one and same Spirit they have laid down what is useful".<sup>20</sup>

The organic structure of the Church as the Body of Christ requires a special organization arising from the very essence of the Church. The forms of the Church's historical existence have varied considerably, but despite all

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.

<sup>14</sup> John Meyendorff, *Orthodoxien kanonien lain nykyajassa*, *Orthodoxia* 28, Kuopio, 1979, p. 134.

<sup>15</sup> John Meyendorff, *Orthodoxy and Catholicity*, New York, 1966, p. 108.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Johannes, Metropolitan of Helsinki, *Yksyyden ja yhdenmukaisuuden suble Eumenisten Synodien traditio valossa*, Kuopio, 1976, p. 178.

<sup>18</sup> *Orthodoxien kirkon kanoit selityksineen*, Finnish translation by Aanti Inkinen, *Pietäminen*, 1980, p. 318.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 438.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*



changes we may perceive a certain enduring nucleus in all historical periods. This nucleus is dogmatic teaching on the Church, that is, the Church in itself.

The historical forms of church life are dependent upon the dogmatic teaching of the Church. From this it follows that changes in dogmatic teaching concerning the Church lead to a distortion of doctrine in the organization and structure of the church body.<sup>21</sup> The task of the Church is not to change the forms of its historical life suddenly or arbitrarily, nor can it conform to temporal life or passively follow its times. The close relationship between the life and essence of the Church is expressed in the canonical rules.<sup>22</sup> Both the canons and dogma reveal the truth to us.

The canons issued by the ecumenical councils are expressions of a desire to apply the dogmas of faith to the times and concrete, often practical problems of the Church and its members. Both the canonical definitions and the dogmatic definitions are divinely inspired. The difference between dogma and the canons lies in the fact that dogma represents absolute truths, while the canons are applications of those truths in the historical existence of the Church.

This temporal viewpoint does not, however, diminish the nature of the divine inspiration of the canons, for they express divine truth in time. If the historical circumstances had remained unchanged, no changes would have been made to the canons of the Church.

As truths of divine inspiration, the canons are indisputable, but in a relative, not absolute sense. The dogmatic truth emphasized by the canons cannot change, but the application and expressions of the canon may vary in the living history of the Church. During the creative conciliar period the Church expanded, replaced and changed the meaning of old canonical rules.<sup>23</sup> Thus true obedience to the canonical tradition of the Church does not mean that something previously given is merely repeated literally. Creative fidelity<sup>24</sup> presupposes that the preserved tradition is clarified and explained. The tradition of the Church is not continuity of human memory nor enduringness of customs. It is living tradition. The Church is not bound by the letter but by the Spirit of Truth.

The authority of ecumenical councils is not primarily canonical authority in the formal and special meaning of the term, although canonical ordinances and sanctions may be included in decisions of ecumenical councils on matters of faith. It is charismatic authority based on the help of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>21</sup> Nicholas N. Afanasiev, *The Canons of the Church: Changeable or Unchangeable*, St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly 11, 1967, p. 58.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>24</sup> On creative fidelity, *Johannes*, Metropolitan of Helsinki, *op. cit.*, pp. 195-197.

The Church studies modern life as a theme for creativity. For this reason the doctrine of the unchangeableness of the canons would express the rejection of an attitude of creative activity in relation to modern life. The canons express the truth of the organization of church life, but rather than expressing the truth in absolute form, they relate to historical existence. Such a definition recognizes for all canons absolute validity as a practical help and as expressions of doctrinal truths at a particular historical period.

Some of these canons are obsolete due to their intention, that is to say, they are bound to the particular period in which they originated. Those who attempt to stress that all canons are legally absolute and obligatory have to face the fact that the Church forgot some of them centuries ago. On the other hand, those who wish entirely to deny the value of the canonical tradition thus say farewell to the whole Church.

# THE RELATION BETWEEN DOCTRINE AND THE CANONS AND THE ECUMENICALLY BINDING NATURE OF THE CANONS

Hannu T. Kappuri

## Introduction

The second theme for discussion at the Mikkeli conference was "The Authority and Significance of Ecumenical Councils". In that context it was stated that the Lutheran principle of *sola scriptura* does not mean placing the Bible and the legacy of the councils in antithesis. The Lutheran Reformation attempted to return to both the Bible and the legacy of faith of the early Church. The principle of *sola scriptura* points to the fact that the Bible is *primitive* tradition in relation to *later* tradition. The Bible cannot be regarded, any more than the legacy of the councils, as a kind of timeless normative collection, but the interpretation of an individual Bible statement or conciliar directive presupposes relating it to the totality of tradition.

At Mikkeli there arose the question of the relationship between the doctrinal and canonical pronouncements of councils. This problem goes back to the question of the relationship between faith and law, one of the central issues of Christian faith. During his life on earth our Saviour constantly came into conflict with the Pharisee's interpretation of the law. During the apostolic age the question of the relationship between Christianity and the law of Moses was an important practical issue. The problem became concrete in the issue of the circumcision of Gentile Christians, i.e. the "judalization" of Gentile Christians. At the Council of Jerusalem there was confirmed as church policy the teaching of Peter and Paul that the law does not save: "Now therefore why do you make trial of God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will." (Acts 15:10-11).

Criticism of legalism did not, however, mean that Christ and his disciples rejected the law. On the contrary, Christian faith meant a radicalization of the law. "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished" (Mt. 5:17-18). "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell" (Mt. 5:29). "Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law" (Rom. 3:31).

However, the teaching of Christ meant something new in relation to the law. The law is not the supreme principle of the Christian life, nor does the law make alive (Gal 3:21). Christ demonstrated that love is above the law by placing himself under the law "by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances..." (Eph. 2:15). In Christ Christians are children not of the slave Hagar but of the free woman Sarah: "...these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother" (Gal 4:24-26). Christ alone is the end of the law (Rom. 10:4) and liberation from the law (Rom. 8:2). Christians are not under the law but under the law of Christ (1 Cor. 9:21). For this reason Christianity repudiates both legalism and antinomianism, the rejection of the law.

Although the apostolic council freed Gentile Christians from the law of Moses, at the same time, however, it urged them to abstain from what had been sacrificed to idols, from blood, from meat from which the blood had not been drained and from unchastity (Acts 15:29). The New Testament contains many similar exhortations. These instructions are not, however, a new law but directions for Christian life. These instructions were particularly necessary because the Gentile Christians needed teaching.

With the development of the episcopal office after the apostolic age it was especially the bishop's task both to teach the apostolic faith and to direct the life of churches and Christians. In the second century bishops began to hold regional conferences to decide on issues relating to doctrine and church order.

When Constantine the Great raised Christianity to the position of a state religion there arose a special need for meetings of all bishops. It was important politically to demonstrate the unity of the Church, since Constantine wished the Church to act as the spiritual foundation of the empire. The Council of Nicaea (325) issued a creed and twenty canons. With regard to the decisions of the Council of Nicaea it has been stated that its dogmatic definitions were for decades a controversial subject, but the Nicene canons by contrast never formed a real issue of controversy.<sup>1</sup> The Nicene Council has been the model for later ecumenical councils.

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Peter (L. Hultén), *Eccelesiology in the Canons of the First Nicene Council*, 119, SVTQ 1983.

## Doctrine and the canons

The relation between doctrine and the canons is often defined as being that the canons are the application of unchanging doctrine to concrete situations.<sup>2</sup> Canon law is determined in this view by Christian faith. Archbishop Johannes also states that "the canons are ultimately related to faith and that central matters of faith may be treated in the canons and not solely in separate definitions and doctrinal expressions".<sup>3</sup> Some of the canons confirm the creeds of earlier councils (e.g. II, 1 and Trullo 1) and the relation of these canons to doctrine is clear.<sup>4</sup> Many of the canons deal with relations with heretics and the basic issue in these canons also is that of true doctrine. The 19th canon of Trullo instructs that biblical interpretation must conform to the tradition of the Fathers. The relation of this canon to doctrine is also easy to perceive.

Many canons deal with church order (the relation between bishop and clergy and between bishops etc.). Although ecclesiology is not specifically explicated in the councils' creeds, it is, however, evident that these canons presuppose a particular ecclesiological view, based also on a particular view of the ministry (e.g. "monarchical episcopacy"). In the case of these canons too one may perceive the clear influence of doctrine upon the canons.

<sup>2</sup> "... Canon Law is simply the attempt to apply dogma to practical situations in the daily life of each Christian. Thus in a relative sense the Canons form a part of Holy Tradition". Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 214. Hammondsworth 1973.

Archbishop Johannes agrees with this definition in his book on the tradition of the ecumenical councils p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> *Johannes: Ykskyyden ja yhdenmukaistuksen subite kirkossa ekumenisten synodien tradition valossa*, 26. Kuopio 1976.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. the first canon of Trullo states: "...now therefore we, by divine grace at the beginning of our decrees, define that the faith set forth by the God-chosen Apostles who themselves had both seen and were ministers of the Word, shall be preserved without any innovation, unchanged and inviolate."

Moreover the faith of the three hundred and eighteen holy and blessed fathers who were assembled at Nice under Constantine our Emperor, against the impious Arius, and the gentle diversity of deity or rather (to speak accurately) multitude of gods taught by him, who by the unanimous acknowledgment of the faithful revealed and declared to us the consubstantiality of the Three Persons comprehended in the Divine Nature, not suffering this faith to lie hidden under the bushel of ignorance, but openly teaching the faithful to adore with one worship the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, confuting and scattering to the winds the opinion of different grades, and demolishing and overturning the poetic toys fabricated out of sand by the heretics against orthodoxy. "The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church. Their Canons and Dogmatic Decrees. Ed. by Henry R. Percival. A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Vol. XIV, 359. Michigan 1979.

Although the seventh canon of the Council of Nicea (325 A.D.) itself bases the status of the Bishop of Jerusalem on custom, one may suppose that the content of the canon was influenced by the part played by Jerusalem in the life of Christ. In that case one may see in this canon too links with christology. But, for instance, the famous and controversial twenty-eighth canon of the Council of Chalcedon bases the status of the bishops of Rome and Constantinople on purely political arguments.<sup>5</sup> Although the canon deals with the issue of the ministry, the matter addressed by the canon (the honorary primacy of Rome and Constantinople and the relation between them) does not receive its content from doctrine but from the political context.

The contextual nature of some of the canons can be illustrated by examining the twelfth canon of Quinisextum (Trullo), where celibacy is required of bishops. The canon refers to the fifth canon of the so-called Apostolic Regulations, where it is stated that a bishop may not send away his wife. The twelfth canon of Quinisextum states that it does not nullify the fifth canon of the Apostolic Regulations, but a new canon is issued so that the episcopate should not cause offence in the eyes of its flock. The new canon is based on the precept of the apostle: "Give no offence to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God" (1 Cor. 10:32). The rule of celibacy for bishops is an interpretation of this principle in a new situation where the church required celibacy of its bishops. In other words, a married bishop caused offence in churches where monasticism had become the supreme ideal of the Christian life. The thirteenth canon, which was issued in a situation where celibacy was regarded as the ideal, defends marriage as an ordinance of God and for this reason celibacy is not required of the clergy. In this situation the forty-eighth canon of Quinisextum was also issued, offering a practical solution for bishops' problems.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> "Following in all things the decisions of the holy Fathers, and acknowledging the canon, which has been just read, of the One Hundred and Fifty Bishops beloved of God (who assembled in the imperial city of Constantinople, which is New Rome, in the time of the Emperor Theodosius of Happy Memory), we also do enact and decree the same things concerning the privileges of the most holy Church of Constantinople, which is New Rome. For the Fathers rightly granted privileges to the throne of old Rome, because it was the royal city. And the One Hundred and Fifty most religious Bishops actuated by the same consideration, gave equal privileges to the most holy throne of New Rome, justly judging that the city which is honoured with the Sovereignty and the Senate, and enjoys equal privileges with the old imperial Rome, should in ecclesiastical matters also be magnified as she is, and rank next after her..." 28th canon of Chalcedon. *The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church. Their Canons and Dogmatic Decrees. Ed. by Henry R. Percival. A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Vol. XIV, 359. Michigan 1979.*

<sup>6</sup> "The wife of him who is advanced to the Episcopal dignity, shall be separated from her husband by their mutual consent, and after his ordination and consecration to the

The changing of the rule concerning the marriage of bishops was the result not of a change in doctrine but of a change of situation. The twelfth canon of the Quinisextum states that it does not attempt to nullify the fifth canon of the Apostolic Regulations but bases the change on the benefit of the Church ("Because therefore it is very important to us that everything be done for the benefit of the flocks to be shepherded...").

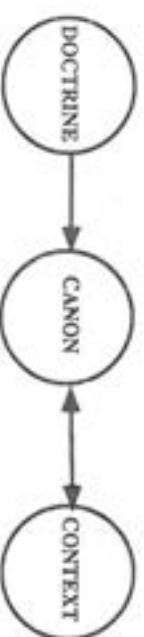
This example shows that many canons cannot be interpreted in isolation from their context. In other words, a rule issued for a new situation - an application - may differ significantly from a rule issued in a previous situation in spite of the fact that the underlying doctrine is the same. One cannot for this reason abstract an eternal code from the canons. The significance of the canons is not formal but content-related; in other words, contemporary church life should express the same faith that appears in the canons. Archbishop Johannes refers to this when he states as follows: "In connection with many statutes referring to various punishments the conciliar fathers may consider it necessary to revise previous regulations. This happens for either compassionate or other reasons, which demonstrates that they truly consider it their right and duty to investigate the appropriateness of issued rules, at least in some respects. The sole purpose is then that the original object of the rule in question should be better attained; in order to achieve this it may be necessary to introduce changes in previous attempts to arrive at the same result and to serve the same ultimate purpose."<sup>7</sup>

What, then, is the relationship between doctrine, canon and context? In general terms we may state that the interrelationship between doctrine and canon proceeds from doctrine to canon. Doctrine determines the content of the canon. Changes in the instructions contained in the canons (e.g. the celibacy of bishops, relations between patriarchs) do not, however, mean a change in doctrine, since doctrine, once delivered (apostolicity), is unchanging. For this reason there is no influence of the canons upon doctrine.

The examples adduced so far demonstrate the clearly contextual nature of some canons. Influence upon the canons does not therefore proceed only from doctrine to canon but also from the context to the canon; in other words, the context affects the content of the canon. The interdependency of canon and context is, however, two-way, since the intention of the canon is to influence the context, in other words, either to confirm the prevailing situation or to bring about a change in it. The canon is not, however, merely contextual, since very often the canon has a doctrinal basis. The relationship between doctrine

(divine revelation), canon and context (practical benefit to the Church) is apparent in, for instance, the following statement by the members of the council: "For all these, being illumined by the same Spirit, defined such things as were expedient".<sup>8</sup>

The interdependency of doctrine, canon and context may be illustrated in general terms by the following slightly clumsy diagram:



It is evident that the relationship between doctrine and canon is analogical to the Chalcedonian definition of the relation between the two natures of Christ.<sup>9</sup> Doctrine and canon must therefore not be confused,<sup>10</sup> but neither must they be

<sup>7</sup> *Mosaic II* (787), 1st canon.

<sup>8</sup> "Following, therefore, the holy fathers, we confess one and the same Son, who is our Lord Jesus Christ, and we all agree in teaching that this very same Son is complete in his deity and complete - the very same - in his humanity, truly God and truly a human being, this very same one being composed of a rational soul and a body, coessential with the Father as to his humanity, being like us in with us - the very same one - as to his humanity, being like us in every respect apart from sin. As to his deity, he was born from the Father before the ages, but as to his humanity, the very same one was born in the last days from the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, for our sake and the sake of our salvation: one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only Begotten, acknowledged to be unconfusedly, unalterably, undividedly, inseparably in two natures, since the difference of the natures is not destroyed because of the union, but on the contrary, the character of each nature is preserved and comes together in one person and one hypostasis, not divided or torn into two persons but one and the same Son and the only-begotten God, Logos, Lord Jesus Christ - just as in earlier times the prophets and also the Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us about him, and the symbol of our Fathers transmitted to us." *The Christological Controversy*, 158-159. Ed. by Richard A. Norris, Jr. *Sources of Early Christian Thought*. Philadelphia 1980.

<sup>10</sup> "The Church indeed has rules, but she has much else besides. She has within her treasures of another order and another value than her canons. She has her theology, her spirituality, her mysticism, her liturgy, her morality. And it is most important not to confuse the Gospel and the *pedalion*, theology and legislation, morality and jurisprudence. Each is on a different level. To identify them would be to commit a kind of heresy. The canons are at the service of the Church. Their function is to guide her members on the way to salvation and to make following that way easier. The Church's legislation is only one aspect of her life, and above all does not

episcopate she shall enter a monastery situated at a distance from the abode of the bishop, and there let her enjoy the bishops provision. And if she is deemed worthy she may be advanced to the dignity of deaconess."

<sup>1</sup> Johannes: *Yksyden ja ylösnäköisyyden suhte kirkossa ekumenisten synodien tradition valossa*, 198. Kuopio 1976.



separated from one another. Confusing doctrine and canon does not take into account the interaction of canon and context. Separating doctrine and canon, on the other hand, does not take into account the influence of doctrine on the canon.

The difference between the creeds and canons appears in the so-called principle of economy, by which is meant in patristic theology God's plan of salvation for mankind; in the case of the canons it means the reconciling of the law and God's economy. John Meyendorff states: "We have accepted the principle that disciplinary canons are changeable in every aspect which does not involve the substance of the faith. This is the very basis of the principle of *oikonomia*, as defined by St. Basil and Patriarch Photius".<sup>11</sup> It would hardly be possible to apply the principle of economy in subscribing to creeds. For this reason the councils took a very strict attitude towards heretics.

### The canons and Lutheranism

We must state that the Lutheran Reformation did not express an opinion on our subject. For this reason there is no direct answer to the questions we are considering to be found in the basic documents of Lutheranism - the Lutheran confessions. Even if there were, it would be doubtful whether it could be detached from its own context and applied to the present day as an eternal answer to the ecumenically binding nature of the canons.<sup>12</sup> I shall therefore attempt to outline some kind of answer while remaining faithful to the legacy of both the councils and the Lutheran Reformation (which I thus consider traditions on the same continuum).

In the Lutheran Reformation the central theme was the same issue of the position of the law in the Christian life as is, for instance, explained by the Apostle Paul in his letters. Lutherans accused the Church of Rome of rendering unnecessary Christ's act of salvation and requiring observance of the

stipulations of the law as a condition for salvation.<sup>13</sup> Lutherans criticized legalism and emphasized that man cannot be saved by observing the law.<sup>14</sup> This has often given rise to the idea that Lutheranism represents antinomianism, the teaching that Christians no longer need the law.<sup>15</sup> Clarification of the relationship between the law and salvation did not, however, mean in Lutheranism rejection of the law. "We unanimously believe, teach and confess on the basis what have said that, strictly speaking, the law is a divine doctrine which reveals the righteousness and immutable will of God, shows how man ought to be pleasing and acceptable to God, and threatens the transgressors of the law with God's wrath and temporal and eternal punishment".<sup>16</sup>

Thus Lutheranism does not separate (*separatio*) law from doctrine, although a distinction (*distinctio*) is made between law and gospel. The law is doctrine, and Luther even states that the Ten Commandments are the sum of doctrine. "Anyone who knows the Ten Commandments perfectly knows the

<sup>11</sup> "... new ceremonies, new orders, new holy days, and new fasts were daily instituted, and the learned men in the churches exacted these works as a service necessary to merit grace and sorely terrified the consciences of those who omitted any of them. From this opinion concerning traditions much harm has resulted in the church. In the first place, it has obscured the doctrine concerning grace and the righteousness of faith, which is the chief part of the Gospel and ought above all else to be in the church, and to be prominent in it, so that the merit of Christ may be well known and that faith which believes that sins are forgiven for Christ's sake may be exalted far above works and above all other acts of worship... In the second place, these precepts obscured the commands of God, for traditions were exalted far above the commands of God. In third place, traditions brought great dangers to consciences, for it was impossible to keep all traditions, and yet men judged these observances to be necessary acts of worship." *The Augsburg Confession*, XXVI, 1-12. The Book of Concord, The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert, Philadelphia 1959.

<sup>12</sup> "For this reason the canonists have twisted ecclesiastical regulations. They did not understand why the Fathers had enacted them, namely, not that we should seek righteousness through these works but for the sake of social tranquillity there should be some order in the church." *Apologetica* IV, 288. The Book of Concord, The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert, Philadelphia 1959.

<sup>13</sup> "Hence we reject and condemn, as pernicious and contrary to Christian discipline and true godliness, the erroneous doctrine that the law in the manner and measure indicated above is not to be urged upon Christians and true believers but only upon unbelievers, non-Christians, and the unrepentant." *Solida Declaratio*, VI, 25. The Book of Concord, The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert, Philadelphia 1959.

<sup>14</sup> *Solida Declaratio* V, 17. The Book of Concord, The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert, Philadelphia 1959.

<sup>11</sup> represent her essence. The Church is the Mystical Body of Christ; however, her presence in history necessarily brought forth a juridical system and juridical institutions." *Leontis J. Patareos, Canon Law in the Church Today*, 105. Demetrios J. Coenantes ed., *Orthodox Theology and Diakonia. Trends and Prospects. Essays in Honour of His Eminence Archbishop Iakovos on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, Brookline, Mass. 1981.

<sup>12</sup> *John Meyendorff*, *Living Tradition*, 108. New York 1978.

<sup>13</sup> The contextual nature of some of the canons, as expounded on page 3, is the reason why the Lutheran Reformation adopted a different position from the councils on the issues dealt with by the canons.

entire Scriptures. In all affairs and circumstances he can counsel, help, comfort, judge, and make decisions in both spiritual and temporal matters. He is qualified to sit in judgment upon all doctrines, estates, persons, laws, and everything else in the world."<sup>17</sup>

Lutheranism thus emphasizes that observing the law does not justify a man. But the task of the law is not to justify but to protect human life. For this reason the law has a positive significance, for Christians also. "Hence, because of the desires of the flesh the truly believing, elect, and reborn children of God require in this life not only the daily teaching and admonition, warning and threatening of the law, but frequently the punishment of the law as well, to egg them on so that they follow the Spirit of God, as is written, 'It is good for me that I was afflicted that I might learn thy statutes' (Ps. 119: 71)."<sup>18</sup>

The task of canon law is to maintain church order. In other words, canon law does not regulate man's relationship with God but temporal matters in the Church.<sup>19</sup> In the defence of the Augsburg Confession it is said of ecclesiastical regulations that "They did not understand why the Fathers had enacted them, namely, not that we should seek righteousness through these works but that for the sake of social tranquillity there should be some order in the church."<sup>20</sup> Lutheranism has emphasized the principle that doctrine and traditional rules must not be in conflict with one another. Such a situation can be reached if traditional rules are interpreted formalistically.<sup>21</sup> But criticism of formalistic interpretation of traditional rules does not mean that they are to be abandoned.

<sup>17</sup> *Large Catechism*, prologue, 17-18. The Book of Concord. The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert. Philadelphia 1959.

<sup>18</sup> *Solida Declaratio* V, 17. The Book of Concord. The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert. Philadelphia 1959.

<sup>19</sup> "The holy Fathers did not institute any traditions for the purpose of meriting the forgiveness of sins or righteousness. They instituted them for the sake of good order and tranquillity in the church." *Apologia* XV, 13. The Book of Concord. The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert. Philadelphia 1959.

<sup>20</sup> *Apologia* IV, 288. The Book of Concord. The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert. Philadelphia 1959.

<sup>21</sup> "Our opponents say that universal traditions should be observed because they are supposed to have been handed down by the apostles. How devout they are! Apostolic rules they want to keep, apostolic doctrine they do not want to keep." *Apologia* VII & VIII, 38. The Book of Concord. The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert. Philadelphia 1959.

Traditional rules are preserved if they are still of benefit to the Church and if observing them is not imagined to be a way of earning salvation.<sup>22</sup>

The Lutheran Confessions mention the first (Nicea 325 A.D.), third (Ephesus 431 A.D.) and fourth (Chalcedon 451 A.D.) ecumenical councils. This observation should not, however, be interpreted as meaning that Lutherans accept only these three councils. The confessions do not contain any special statement of opinion with regard to ecumenical councils but these councils are referred to when dealing with individual issues of a problematic nature. For example, in criticism of the supremacy of the Pope appeal is made, *inter alia*, to the sixth canon of the first ecumenical council: "The Council of Nicea decided that the bishop of Alexandria should administer the churches in the East and the bishops of Rome should administer the suburban churches, that is, those that were in the Roman provinces in the West. Originally, therefore, the authority of the Roman bishops grew of a decision of a council and is of human right, for if the bishops of Rome had his superiority by divine right, it would not have been lawful for the council to withdraw any right from him and transfer it to the bishop of Alexandria. In fact, all the Eastern bishops should forever have sought ordination and confirmation from Roman bishop."<sup>23</sup>

Above all, references to councils reveal the intention of the Lutheran Reformation to commit itself to the faith once for all delivered to the Church. In this context it may be mentioned that the famous correspondence between the Lutheran theologians of the Faculty of Theology in Tübingen and Jeremias II, Patriarch of Constantinople, the issue of the canons is not considered. In this correspondence the Lutherans state that they accept and defend the decisions of the councils in so far as they are not in conflict with the Bible.

To summarize, we may state that a) Lutheranism rejects both legalism and antinomianism; b) Lutheranism regards ecclesiastical legislation as necessary; c) Lutheranism appeals to ecumenical councils in matters of both faith and canon law; d) Lutheranism has not defined its attitude with regard to the number of ecumenical councils; e) Lutheranism has not formally defined its attitude with regard to conciliar canons.

<sup>22</sup> "If our people drop certain useless traditions, they have excuse enough now that these are being required as a means of meriting justification. For such an idea of traditions is wicked. We gladly keep the old traditions set up in the church because they are useful and promote tranquillity, and we interpret them in an evangelical way, excluding the opinion which hold that they justify." *Apologia* XV, 37-38. The Book of Concord. The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert. Philadelphia 1959.

<sup>23</sup> *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope*, 12. The Book of Concord. The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert. Philadelphia 1959.

## The ecumenically binding nature of the canons

With regard to the authority of ecumenical councils it has been justifiably stated that it is based solely on some formal principle (the Emperor, the number of delegates, etc.). The most important factor constituting the ecumenicity of a council is its *later* general reception.<sup>24</sup> The councils were accepted only gradually. In the case of the creeds the reception has not changed, nor did the councils themselves change the creeds of earlier councils. In the case of the canons the present-day reception is not, however, uniform in the churches.

Referring to the Orthodox churches Archbishop Johannes states, "On the basis of what we have stated above with regard to the significance of the canons and their real status we must admit, if we consider the entire canonical legacy, that procedures in the present-day churches - in a very wide sense - are not in every respect in harmony with the opinion confirmed and prescribed by the councils. On the contrary, there is an evident and lasting conflict with the viewpoints accepted by some councils. It is of particular interest and importance that at least part of this conflict is generally regarded in a manner which makes it apparent that it is not considered a wrong that necessarily needs to be eliminated. The latter point deserves particular note because it appears to mean that in so far as there is a problem, it is on the level of principle and not merely of practice."<sup>25</sup>

The present-day variable attitude towards the canons does not mean that the validity of the canons of ecumenical councils was originally under dispute. The reception of the councils also applies to the canons. Differences of viewpoint concern the relevance of some of the canons today. For instance, T. Ware states "It must be confessed, however, that at the present day many of the canons are difficult or impossible to apply, and have fallen widely into disuse. When and if a new General Council of the Church is assembled, one of its chief tasks may well be the revision and clarification of Canon Law".<sup>26</sup> According to Ware "The doctrinal definitions of the Councils possess an absolute and unalterable validity which canons as such cannot claim; for doctrinal definitions deal with eternal truths, Canons with the earthly life of the

Church, where conditions are constantly changing and individual situations are infinitely various. Yet between the canons and the dogmas of the Church there exists an essential connexion...".<sup>27</sup> According to L. Patsavos "Therefore, while some canons continue to reflect doctrine in practice, others do not and must be seen in historical context in order to be understood".<sup>28</sup>

We may therefore state that in Orthodox theology also the relation to the canons has polarized. On the one hand, the letter of the canons tend to be absolutized, and, on the other hand, none of the canons are seen as having significance for today.<sup>29</sup> John Meyendorff refers to this same problem: "Those who try to affirm the legal absoluteness in all the canons are facing the fact that the Church has forgotten some of them for centuries. Those, on the contrary, who try to discount the entire tradition of the canons are actually dismissing the Church itself. The canonical fundamentalists and the liberals are both wrong in principle, in their very approach to the canons. The contemporary polarization between these two groups reflects an acute crisis of theology."<sup>30</sup>

The difference of opinion with regard to the obligatory nature of the canons has raised the question of undertaking a revision of the canons. Revision of the canons is, however, difficult for many reasons. First of all, it is difficult to decide formally what in the canons is determined by the context and what derives from doctrine. The clearest criterion would appear to be the uniformity or multifariousness of practice, but this criterion does not alone reveal schismatic practice. Revision is also difficult in cases when the canon is based on purely non-doctrinal factors, since interpretation of the context may differ considerably. Revision of the canons is also made difficult by the disintegration of the Christian Empire centuries ago. It is also clear that those who absolutize the letter of the canons deny the need for and possibility of revision of the canons.

<sup>24</sup> Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 214, Harmondsworth 1973.

<sup>25</sup> *Lewits J. Patsavos*, Canon Law in the Church Today, 107. Demetrios J. Constantelos ed., *Orthodox Theology and Diakonia. Trends and Prospects. Essays in Honour of His Eminence Archbishop Iakovos on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, Brookline, Mass. 1981.

<sup>26</sup> "On the other hand, there are those who absolutize the letter of the canons. But as has already been remarked, 'no one seems to absolutize all of them.' Then there are those who deny the relevancy of the entire body of canons in its present state. Obviously, both views leave little room for a conciliatory approach but rather tend to polarize." *Lewits J. Patsavos*, Canon Law in the Church Today, 107. Demetrios J. Constantelos ed., *Orthodox Theology and Diakonia. Trends and Prospects. Essays in Honour of His Eminence Archbishop Iakovos on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, Brookline, Mass. 1981.

<sup>27</sup> *John Meyendorff*, *Living Tradition*, 103. New York 1978.

<sup>28</sup> "Die Gültigkeit und Autorität einer Konzilsentscheidung und damit eines Konzils hängt nicht von irgendeiner Stelle ab, die dieses Konzil autorisiert hat, sondern von seiner *Rezeption* durch die *rechtgläubige Gesamtheit*." *Georg Kretschmar*: Die Konzile der Alten Kirche, 73. Die ökumenischen Konzile der Christenheit. Herausgegeben von Hans Jochen Margull. Stuttgart 1961.

<sup>29</sup> *Johannes*: *Ykseyden ja yhdennakaisiuden suhte kirkossa ekumenisten synodien tradition valossa*, 180. Kuopio 1976.

<sup>30</sup> Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 213-214. Harmondsworth 1973.



However, revision of the canons is necessary if it is desired to restore the relation between doctrine and church practice to a healthy basis. Separation of doctrine and canons leads to *ecclesiastical Nestorianism*. *Confusing* doctrine and canons, on the other hand, leads to *ecclesiastical Monophysitism*.

On the other hand, revision of the canons will not lead to uniformity in ecclesiastical practice, nor need it. Lutheranism emphasizes the principle expressed in the Augsburg Confession: "For the true unity of the church it is enough to agree concerning the teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. It is not necessary that human traditions or rites and ceremonies, instituted by men, should be alike everywhere. It is as Paul says, 'One faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all', etc. (Eph. 4: 5, 6).<sup>31</sup> This principle cannot, however, be interpreted as meaning that Lutheranism represents relativism in matters of church order. The principle expressed in the Augsburg Confession rejects ecclesiastical Monophysitism.

The question of the ecumenically binding nature of the canons is above all an obligation for all churches to study the content and spirit of the canons. It is evident that in this matter an international ecumenical project is necessary. Without the assistance of such a project it is difficult to clarify the ecumenically binding nature of individual canons.

There is evidently wide consensus as to the generally binding nature of the canons, the positive relationship between doctrine and ecclesiastical practice.

## MARRIAGE BETWEEN ORTHODOX AND LUTHERANS AS A PASTORAL ISSUE<sup>1</sup>

Olavi Meras

### An Orthodox Viewpoint

"This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church." (Eph. 5:32, from the epistle reading of the Orthodox wedding ceremony)

Today approximately 96-98% of marriages entered into by members of the Finnish Orthodox Church are with non-Orthodox. This group of non-Orthodox is in fact a very large one, composed of members of Christian churches and fellowships, members of non-Christian communities (e.g., Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Jews, Muslims) or those on the civil register who profess no religion, even unbaptized persons. As a pastoral issue marriage between Orthodox and non-Orthodox forms a very wide-ranging problem, of which the greatest though clearly limited area is marriage between Orthodox and Lutherans.

In Finland marriage between Orthodox and Lutherans is not only a post-war and contemporary phenomenon. In the period of autonomy the Russian Orthodox Church had issued instructions for marriages between Orthodox and Lutherans in the diocese of Viipuri. According to the church directive the marriage should be celebrated in the churches of both spouses. The regulation concerned Orthodox who were Finnish citizens. Russian citizens had their own instructions.<sup>2</sup>

In 1917 in the traditional Orthodox area of Border Karelia 8.9% of all marriages were mixed marriages, and by the beginning of the 1930s approximately half were mixed marriages. Of particular note, however, were the parishes of Salmi and Mantinsaari, where mixed marriages began to decrease during the 1930s at an annual rate of 0-20%.

The increase in mixed marriages arose from the prevailing employment policy and the procedure followed in land sales. Labour came from elsewhere in Finland, and due to pressure from the authorities farms were not sold to poor Orthodox families but to wealthier Lutheran folk from elsewhere. In mixed marriages the bride was usually Orthodox, which, one would suppose, would have increased the chances of passing on the Orthodox cultural tradition

<sup>31</sup> *Confessio Augustana* VII. The Book of Concord. The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert. Philadelphia 1959.

<sup>1</sup> This article has been translated from the version published in the "Eskumötenen vuosikirja 1990". SEEN 1990.

<sup>2</sup> Nastolnaya Kniga, Kiev 1913 3, p.1209.



through the mother. Since, however, the children were almost always baptized into the faith of the father, such marriages increased Lutheranization. Thus, the attitude of the local population to mixed marriages was not very favourable before the war.<sup>3</sup>

### Marriage as a Sacrament of the Orthodox Church

The theological, liturgical and canonical tradition of the Orthodox Church uniformly emphasizes the absolute once-for-all nature of marriage on the basis of the teaching of Ephesians chapter 5. As a holy sacrament, mystery or secret, marriage reflects the unity between Christ and the Church. In this view, there can only be one marriage, an eternal bond which even death cannot sever. Marriage as a sacrament glorifies and sanctifies the physical union between two people, man and woman, and the legal contract associated with it: human love leads to God's eternal kingdom.

The celebration of marriage manifests the fact that the life of a man and woman together has its own inherent value. Life together should act as a factor bringing renewal of humanity and sanctification of man. Only when understood from this viewpoint is marriage a sacrament, a holy secret, the gate to which is the blessing of the marriage. Another important matter is that marriage includes the sanctification of motherhood, which is sometimes also called a sacrament.

In the marriage service, the Eucharistion, this is expressed as follows: "All holy Lord, receive our prayer, who beseech your help, and being present here, bless with your invisible protection this marriage and give to these your servants - a peaceful life, long life, understanding, long-lived descendants, the blessing of children. Grant them to see grandchildren, protect their life together free from intrigues - - - Remember, O Lord our God, your servant - - and your maidervant - - and bless them. Grant them good children and unanimity of soul and body." "You, Lord, now lower your hand from your holy abode and join together your servants - - for you unite man and woman. Unite them in unanimity, crown them as one and grant them the joy of good children." "Lord our God, who in your saving economy of grace, by your presence at Cana of Galilee, considered it right to show marriage to be honourable, protect now in peace and unanimity your servants - - whom you have allowed to unite. Make their marriage honourable, keep their conjugal life pure and their pilgrimage together unspotted, and grant them to reach happy old age with pure hearts, observing your commandments." "The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, all holy, in substance one Trinity, the source of life, one God and Lord,

bless you and grant you many days of life, good children, progress in life and faith - -".<sup>4</sup>

There are numerous studies and articles concerning marriage as a sacrament of the Orthodox Church. They usually expound the theology of marriage and its historical and legal background. In our days there has been a desire to restore the significance and status of marriage to its rightful place. It is quite common among church-members for marriage to be treated as a private ceremony, so that marriage as a sacrament of the church has been submerged under the external trappings of the wedding ceremony. In a world that lacks food, throwing rice over the bride and bridegroom has become more important than the giving of an icon to the bridal couple as a sign of blessing for the home. Aleksander Schmemmann says rather sarcastically, "Nowadays we do not even remember that marriage, like everything else in this world, is subject to the consequences of the Fall and that marriage does not need to be blessed and declared - after rehearsal and with the aid of a photographer - but restored to its original status as before the Fall. If we regard marriage solely as a transaction between the couple getting married, as a matter affecting just them and not the whole Church and therefore the whole world, we shall never understand the real sacramental significance of marriage - the great mystery to which the Apostle Paul refers when he says, 'I mean Christ and the Church'.<sup>5</sup>

In inter-church discussions marriage as a sacrament has been little discussed. Thus marriage has been spared the disputes in which discussions on baptism, the eucharist and the ordained ministry have become entangled (the problems of the BEM document), if we ignore the question of the right of ordained ministers to perform weddings. Nor has it divided Christians into different camps, but the Church's blessing on the union of man and woman, and prayer for success in the bringing up of children, has always been part of the beginning of Christian marriages. The problem is when we begin to consider whether life together is merely a life-style blessed by the Church or a sacrament, mystery or holy secret. Do we approach the issue from a functional angle or do we consider marriage as an essential phenomenon?

A sacrament is a personal meeting between the believer and our Saviour Jesus Christ. It is true that each of us is in union with Him when we turn to Him in prayer, but a sacrament is a special kind of encounter where a third party is involved (a "third wheel") - the Church. The presence of the Church in transmitting the grace of the Holy Spirit bestows on marriage the right to be called a sacrament - a divine, holy mystery.

The sacrament of marriage is based on the free expression of intent by the bride and bridegroom that their life is united in Jesus Christ and that marriage

<sup>3</sup> *Kaia Heikinen: Karjalaisuus ja etninen itseajantulo, Joutsen 1989, p. 59.*

<sup>4</sup> *Eucharistion 1974, pp. 88-104.*

<sup>5</sup> *Schmemmann, Aleksander: Maailman elämän edessä, 1974, p. 94.*

is an expression of faith and of life growing from faith. Unfortunately, over the years this view has become obscured, and the Church has had to bless marriages entered into for a great variety of reasons. At its most blatant this appears in countries where only church weddings are legal. In those countries where legal marriage is registered by society, it has been possible to attempt to restore the ecclesiastical and sacramental approach to marriage. Where church and civil weddings are alternatives there is the danger that the church wedding has only a beautiful ritual form, which is replaced by a very prosaic civil wedding. In spite of everything one may ask how the Church can help and be present in the marriage of a member when it cannot be contracted as a sacrament nor blessed in church. The Church cannot leave its members on their own.<sup>6</sup>

Marriage has both a horizontal and vertical aspect. In the marriage ceremony prayer is also offered for the couple's temporal success. Drawing a parallel between marriage and monasticism, emphasis is also placed upon marriage as an upward path. Each mode of life is a salvific event of equal value, a realization of theosis. Man and wife united in marriage entrust to each other the responsibility for each other's salvation. They become each other's spiritual guide (starets), loving not only their spouse's earthly image but also the image of God in him or her. Uniting these two things in the matter of salvation also has its dangers. Man and wife are exposed before each other. Each of them in different ways brings his or her own sins and temptations into their married life. They are allowed to see both the good and evil hidden from others. In marriage the couple is called to seek perfection. But they can never achieve it unless they invite Jesus Christ the Saviour into their marriage and see their way in life in the light of the Bible. The spouses' fellowship in Jesus Christ (en Khristo) makes the relationship between man and God a divine mystery. Only in this way can marriage become a sacrament, a mystery of life, in which Christ is present. Marriage can rightly be called the Church in miniature and a reflection of the mystery of the Holy Trinity.<sup>7</sup> The prerequisite for the sacramental nature of marriage is the unity of faith and membership in the Church, the eucharistic community. In marriage not only is man's worldly and temporal happiness blessed, but also his entire being is taken up into fellowship with God (theosis). "... take their crown into your Kingdom and keep them unblemished, pure..." The history of the marriage ceremony in the Orthodox Church tells how marriage endorsed by society was once brought to be blessed with the eucharistic fellowship of the Church and to be taken into the fellowship of the Church.

## Marriage and the Rules of the Church

The regulations of the Orthodox Church on marriage have their origin in religiously very fixed circumstances. The marriage regulations protected the essence of the church community from external social models of life. The best-known ordinance is probably the 72nd regulation of the fifth-sixth ecumenical council of Constantinople held in 691-692 in the Trullo hall. This regulation provides the opportunity of examining marriage as a practical issue and pastoral and social questions relating to marriage.

The regulation runs as follows: "Let no orthodox man have permission to be joined to a heretical (heterodox) woman nor an orthodox woman to a heretical man. If, however, it appears that something like this has happened, let the marriage be considered invalid and let the illegal cohabitation cease. For incompatible things should not be mixed nor should a wolf be joined to a sheep nor the lot of sinners to participation in Christ. If anyone breaks our ordinances, may he be excluded from church fellowship. But if some while still in unbelief and as yet not part of the orthodox flock are joined in lawful marriage, and then one of them, having chosen what is noble, has hastened to the light of truth, and the other has remained in the bonds of error, not desiring to fix his eyes on the divine verses, but the unbelieving wife considers it best to live with her unbelieving husband, or conversely the unbelieving husband with the believing wife, then according to the divine apostle they should not separate. For the man who does not believe is sanctified through his wife and the wife who does not believe is sanctified through her husband."<sup>8</sup>

The unity of faith, that is, the spouses' profession of the same faith, is emphasized by the 10th and 31st canons of Laodicea, the 21st canon of Carthage and the 14th canon of the fourth ecumenical Council, the Council of Chalcedon.<sup>9</sup> On the basis of all these regulations one may state that marriages between Orthodox and non-Orthodox, e.g. a Lutheran, form a problem from the point of view of the internal regulations of the Orthodox Church, the canonical legislation. The regulation of the Council of Trullo refers to 1 Cor. 7: 12-16. The exegetical teaching of the Church does not understand this passage in such a way that a marriage between an Orthodox and a non-Orthodox should without question be confirmed by the blessing of the Church. E.g. Tolkovaya Bibliya points out that the marriage of a convert from paganism should not be annulled, although in religious terms marriage and the

<sup>6</sup> Zernov, *Nicolas: Sunset Years*, 1983, pp. 111, 112.

<sup>7</sup> Zernov, *Nicolas: Sunset Years*, 1983, pp. 114, 115.

<sup>8</sup> *Orthodoxien kirkon kanoonit* (Canons of the Orthodox Church), 1980, pp. 408, 409; *Myenendoff*, John: *Avioliitto, ortodoksisien näkökulma*, 1978, pp. 93, 94.

<sup>9</sup> *Orthodoxien kirkon kanoonit* p. 266; *Päikallisyksimöiden kanoonit* (The Canons of Local Synods), 1983, pp. 30, 31, 56.

family are seen as a unit.<sup>10</sup> The regulations of the Church emphasize above all religious homogeneity.

Although the 72nd rule of Trullo places a general prohibition on marriage between Orthodox and non-Orthodox, a distinction is made in the interpretation of the canons of the Church between marrying a heretic and marrying a schismatic. Thus the regulation concerning marriage is strictest with regard to the marriage of clergy. Because the canons do not usually contain a reference to marriage between an Orthodox and a schismatic, the practice of ecclesiastical economy has developed to accept marriage to a schismatic. This group includes members of Christian churches which are not in eucharistic fellowship with the Orthodox Church. The requirement has been, however, that no obstacles are placed in the way of preserving the Orthodox faith of the family, that the children are baptized in the Orthodox Church and that their Orthodox Christian education is taken care of.<sup>11</sup>

In the light of Church regulations marriage is not a private matter but the public walk of two people before the face of God as members of the Church community. Emphasizing religion as a private matter has the effect of obscuring the importance of the whole family's belonging to one church. In Africa it would be impossible for spouses to belong to different churches. There religion and church belong to the social identification group. This has been stated by, for instance, Orthodox Christians from Kenya who have visited Finland and been surprised at the Finnish practice of mixed marriages. Perhaps in the future there will be reason to emphasize the religious uniformity of the family (although it would perhaps not increase trends towards the Orthodox Church). In this context I am thinking of those families where daughters are baptized in the mother's denomination and sons in the father's. In such a family religion most probably becomes completely irrelevant.

### Mixed Marriage or Ecumenical Marriage?

The term *ecumenical marriage* came into use about ten years ago. I see two factors in its origin. 1) The attempt to find a substitute for the rather crude expression 'mixed marriage'. 2) Using the term to give a religious and romantic tone to the doctrinally very difficult concept of 'mixed marriage'. I have nowhere found a valid explanation of the expression *ecumenical marriage*, although in the western world, for instance, due to circumstances marriage between Orthodox and non-Orthodox is quite common. Nor have I observed

<sup>10</sup> Logothetis, A. P.: *Tokovaja Biblija*, 1913, Tom II, pp. 50, 51.

<sup>11</sup> Paterson, Lewis J.: *Mixed Marriages and the Canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church*. - The Greek Orthodox Theological Review 1978.

any well-known modern Orthodox theologian using the term *ecumenical marriage*.

The word *ecumenical* has many senses. The best known are 1) a reference to the efforts towards Church or Christian unity, 2) an ecumenical or general church council 3) an ecumenical patriarch. Thus from the point of view of the common usage of this word *ecumenical marriage* is a strange term. *Ecumenical marriage* - a general or universal marriage, may generally be a marriage ratified in society, whereby marriage is ratified as a legal contract. Then the term *ecumenical marriage* would not have a religious or Christian content. Theologically it is difficult to find justification for the term *ecumenical marriage*, if indeed there is any kind of justification at all for it in this context. The expression does not correspond to the reality that the family does not form a uniform religious community. The use of the term *ecumenical marriage* brings conceptual confusion and glosses over problems, and from the Orthodox point of view it is not desirable. The expression is not derivable from any concept, designation, event or matter in past or present church life. The use of such a term would undermine the Church's view of marriage and lead to a blurring of the concept of ecumenism in church circles. As an expression of Christian marriage the term *mixed marriage* is better than *ecumenically disordered marriage*. In emphasizing the significance of sacramental marriage the Orthodox Church by no means denies Christian unity. On the contrary, it defends real and complete unity and does not accept cheap substitutes, including confusing the issue by the use of terms.<sup>12</sup>

### Orthodox-Lutheran marriage as a pastoral issue

When an Orthodox and a Lutheran plan the joining of their lives in marriage, they rarely think of the fundamental religious issues relating to the wedding celebration. Marriage and the wedding are seen and experienced as a social event with its festivities and gifts. There is nothing to be condemned or ashamed of in nuptial joy, joyful weddings and a happy married couple. Joy is a part of human life and a festive wedding is an event which sustains the young couple for years ahead. In the Bible weddings are often presented as an example of something joyful and positive. Few consider the practical and substantial religious issues raised by belonging to different churches or try to look beyond them. The Orthodox Church respects lawful marriage between Christians from different churches, although the Church's sacramental ideal of marriage cannot be realized in them. In church circles there is also concern for the success of family life and that respect be shown for the rights of members of the Christian family.

<sup>12</sup> Meyendorff, John: *Avvotitio, ortodoksinen alkukouluma*, 1978, p. 49.



In the Finnish Orthodox Church there have not been many public statements concerning marriage and the family. By contrast, in the USA issues concerning marriage and the family have often been raised. For example, we may mention the Greek Orthodox autonomous archbishopric, which at its synod has regularly expressed concern over the position of the family in a secularized and materialistic society. These public statements are entirely transferable to Finnish conditions. They express concern over couples' living together, over divorces, altered views of morality, a common outlook on life that maintains family contact, the position of children and material well-being at the expense of the family, "because only a Christian family with high ethical standards can guarantee a healthy and prosperous society." "We must really awaken from the deep sleep of the materialistic view of life. We need a spiritual and ethical revolution. We must also continue our efforts to discover ourselves as men and women created by God. These efforts with God's help will assist us to achieve greater self-discipline and make us more responsible in our commitment to build a better society in accordance with the will of God." "The Church must always continue its efforts to protect and preserve the high ethical standards of the Christian family, without which a healthy and ethical society does not exist."<sup>13</sup>

Although the Church is concerned for the well-being of marriage and the family, the Orthodox problem relating to marriage between a Lutheran and an Orthodox begins with the Orthodox wedding. The problem is endogenous in the Orthodox Church. The form of the marriage service is the same for all, for completely Orthodox couples as for Orthodox-Lutheran couples. The form of service is based on the service of the eucharist, in which in the early centuries of the Church couples confirmed their union by receiving communion together. The gradual secularization of marriage and the imperial edict issued in 10th-century Byzantium to the effect that all marriages should be celebrated with ecclesiastical rites led to the separation of marriage from the eucharist and to present practice. Marriage blessed by the Church was also marriage blessed by society. Freedom to choose one's view of marriage disappeared.

In the Finnish Orthodox Church the practice observed under Russian rule was continued. In addition, Finnish matrimonial legislation brought its own problems. In its decisions taken in the 1930s the episcopal meeting emphasized the following: "According to the canons of the Greek Orthodox Church marriage must always be solemnized ecclesiastically, both when both spouses profess the Greek Orthodox religion and also when only one of them, the man or woman, profess this religion, the other belonging to either the Evangelical Lutheran Church or some other Christian denomination. Let civil marriages of church members be entered in the main parish register, and the clergy exert in each individual case the persons concerned to supplement their marriage with

ecclesiastical solemnization in accordance with the regulations of this church." "According to matrimonial law marriage must be solemnized ecclesiastically according to the regulations of the denomination to which the bride belongs, but the Greek Orthodox Church, since marriage is a sacrament according to the doctrine of that church, does not recognize the marriage unless it be solemnized ecclesiastically according to the regulations of the said church."<sup>14</sup> Today the civil servant investigating impediments to marriage or performing the marriage ceremony may be either a Lutheran pastor or an Orthodox priest, and the measures may be taken in either the bride's or the bridegroom's parish.

An ordinance issued in 1970 in accordance with ordinances concerning the Orthodox Church issued during Finnish independence states: "If spouses, of whom one or both profess the Orthodox faith, have been married before the civil authorities, or if a man who professes the Orthodox faith has been married in another denomination, let their marriage be sanctified according to the regulations of the Orthodox Church, when they so request and it is permitted by the regulations of the church."<sup>15</sup>

This clause in the ordinance is outdated and demands a text in line with modern practice as laid down by matrimonial law. Next, it must be stated that if one of the spouses is on the civil register, the marriage cannot be solemnized ecclesiastically. Thirdly, it is to be noted that in the Orthodox Church there are nearly two hundred days in the year when, according to church regulations, marriages cannot be solemnized. This created a difficult situation for the clergy and for churchgoers in independent Finland, where Lutheran-Orthodox marriages became more and more common. Nor has the situation changed today. The new matrimonial law in particular grants someone with a weak sense of being Orthodox every possibility of circumventing all such regulations of the Orthodox Church concerning marriage, if he desires a church wedding and there is no obstacle to such in the Lutheran Church. Perhaps it is all to the good, for otherwise the Orthodox parish would function solely as the keeper of a social register. An Orthodox who wishes to change his common-law marriage into matrimony does not understand why the Orthodox Church will not marry him to his Lutheran spouse on December 28th, because it is Christmas time, when relatives and friends are free of pressures of work and better able to come to the wedding, "and since the restaurant is already booked". Nevertheless, the Finnish Orthodox must consider how to bring matrimonial practice into line with the regulations of the church, while still being modern and up-to-date.

In a corresponding situation Archbishop Herman created present practice by giving the following directions in his pastoral letter of 3rd December, 1929: "Since the holy canons of the church forbid the solemnization of matrimony

<sup>13</sup> *Marantz, Stanley S.: Let Mercy Abound, 1983, pp. 151-165.*

<sup>14</sup> *Solov'ev, Sergei: Suomen kirkkajärjestelmä 1935, p. 211.*

<sup>15</sup> *Asetus ortodoksisesta kirkkokunnasta 6.3.1970/179, 18.*



only during the great fast (Laod. 52), thus observing the practice of the ecumenical patriarchate, allowing the clergy, if circumstances so require, to marry couples every day of the year except on the following days, when the solemnization of matrimony is still forbidden: 1) From 12th December to 6th January, 2) during the great fast and the whole of Holy Week, 3) during the fast of the Mother of the Lord 1st-15th August and the feast of the Cross 14th September.<sup>16</sup>

There has also been discussion as to what kind of Orthodox marriage ceremony should be performed after the Lutheran one, whether it should be in a shortened or full form. Shortening the service has usually meant omitting the betrothal section before the actual marriage service, so that the Lutheran marriage retains its significance. In this connection the Orthodox episcopal conference issued at the end of the 1970s a directive and order of service for blessing a Lutheran marriage or one between an Orthodox and someone on the civil register. The ceremony is one of prayer for the newly-weds, not an actual wedding. This service of prayer does not seem to have become general, since in the opinion of churchgoers an Orthodox wedding should be an Orthodox wedding, whether or not it be preceded by a Lutheran wedding. The general opinion of churchgoers is that it is the wedding that is a sacrament, not the actual marriage.

### The everyday routine and celebration of mixed marriages

As a priest in parish work I have come across Orthodox-Lutheran marriages in many ways. In describing everyday life and festivals I might begin with a comment I have heard from time to time: that it was good that father left the Orthodox Church in the 1940s, so that the family need not be ashamed and the children belong to the 'Russki' church. After the war a baby was born into an entirely Orthodox family with many children. Because of its poor health there were fears that it would die. The family wanted the child to receive Orthodox baptism, but this was not possible because no priest was available. A Lutheran pastor agreed to perform the baptism on the condition that the father and other children joined the Lutheran Church. This took place and the child was baptized. A very strange Orthodox-Lutheran marriage came into being. The children did not grow up as members of any church. When they had grown up, the father returned to the Orthodox Church, and for years by his deathbed I listened to the very bitter story of his life. It is difficult to find such a devout mother of a family, who cherishes the traditions of the Orthodox Church, as there was in this family.

<sup>16</sup> Solov'ev, Sergei: Suomen kreikkalaiskatoninen kirkkokunta 1935, p. 211.

### The Church Books and Mixed-Marriage

Orthodox fathers have by no means always been good people and good Christians. They include complete "scoundrels". One Orthodox father and Lutheran mother had half a dozen children. The father did not care for his family. The Lutheran mother, who would have had the right to have the children put on the same register as hers, did not do so, but consciously wanted an Orthodox upbringing for her children, and in that she succeeded. During the period of Russian rule it was possible in Finland to baptize a child as an Orthodox, if there was an Orthodox godparent, and an undertaking was given to raise the child as an Orthodox.<sup>17</sup> I have noticed such practices in, for example, old baptismal registers of the Helsinki congregation. According to modern Finnish legislation concerning the keeping of population registers a minor cannot be on the parish register on his own. Why? I have not yet received an answer. It is remarkable that a minor can be on the civil register without its parents. Several years ago a Finnish-Greek marriage ended in divorce. The Finnish Lutheran mother, with her children who had been baptized as Orthodox in Greece, came back to Finland. She wanted to register the children as members of the Orthodox congregation. This could not be done, because the children did not have an Orthodox guardian. There were Orthodox godparents, and the mother wanted the child to be brought up as an Orthodox. She did not feel ready herself to join the Orthodox Church. According to the regulations of the Orthodox Church there was no impediment to such church membership. The mother's bitterness was understandable.

### Different Traditions

The internal dynamics of an Orthodox-Lutheran marriage are rather variable, if both spouses feel active interest in their own church. They might celebrate Lutheran Christmas and Orthodox Easter. The end result might be, as in one case, a union of Karetianism and the Y. W. C. A. Both the spouses take care of their own religious life. Shared religious interest is directed very loosely towards church organizations or interdenominational societies.

One contemporary phenomenon is that an Orthodox wife may be very interested in her own church. The wife may be Orthodox, but a Russian-speaker by background, which her husband and his family attempt to invalidate. The wife's Orthodox religion does not exist. And she tries secretly to take part in the activities of the Orthodox congregation. The husband is a Lutheran agnostic, who is not interested in anything. No religious upbringing

<sup>17</sup> Nasotnaya Kniga, 1913, p. 979.

is possible in the family. If they try to discuss anything to do with the church or religion, there is an enormous argument. The wife attends services and takes part in parish activities, but she has no chance to observe Orthodox customs in her everyday life. Orthodox acquaintances act as a link with the Orthodox world. With them she lives a different life from the one she lives with her husband.

There is also a growing group of Orthodox women who have put in a long day's work as the mother of a family and whose Lutheran children have left home when they grow up. Having done their life's work for their Lutheran husband and family they have time for themselves and are now returning to their roots as lonely Orthodox. They had hoped to be able to live a shared spiritual life with their children. When their wish should have been fulfilled, social pressures gave them no chance. Later the children, who do not always understand the spiritual sacrifice their mother has made for them, may merely say how interesting childhood was, when there was father's church and mother's church. Although the family is no longer an obstacle to taking part in the activities of their own church, as church-members these mothers have remained lonely Orthodox and need pastoral support.

Orthodox mothers are usually loyal to their Lutheran husbands and children. One mother said that the family did not like her taking part in the activities of the Orthodox church and attending services, etc. In the background can be seen clear suspicion towards the Orthodox Church. This mother has made her decision. She carries out well her duties as the mother of a family, prepares Sunday lunch for her family, does not attend services in the Orthodox Church, but neither has she joined the Lutheran Church. Another mother would like to take part in the youth work of the Orthodox church. For her it would be a "nice hobby". But her husband and children belong to the Lutheran Church. Such seems to be a compensation for having to give up her Orthodoxy for the benefit of the family.

I feel deeply for those Orthodox grandmothers who in my home town, following the traditional custom of grandmothers, brought their Lutheran grandchildren to the Orthodox church and the eucharist of our Lord. This is what their grandmothers had done when beginning the religious upbringing of their grandchildren. They did not even realize or want to understand what they were doing with a Lutheran child. Gradually they became frustrated when they perceived that the traditional role of a grandmother no longer worked and the dividing religious wall at the same time grew larger and larger. A gulf formed by an Orthodox-Lutheran marriage had grown between the generations.<sup>18</sup>

Is a Lutheran mother's position easier when the husband and children belong to the Orthodox Church? If religion and Orthodoxy interest the family,

these mothers bring their Orthodox children to church children's nurseries and grow into Orthodoxy, even if they never become members of the Orthodox Church. The religious background of the family has become the Orthodox Church. A Lutheran-Orthodox marriage need not be a problematic phenomenon, but a positive way of life for responsible people.

Many office-bearers in Orthodox churches are men with wife and children belonging to the Lutheran Church. In 1957 the Orthodox episcopal meeting recommended that persons with Lutheran children should not be elected as parish officers. Thirty years have passed since that directive was issued. There have been at least two changes of generation in parish offices. In our day it may sometimes be difficult to find people willing to take on such tasks. In many places the officers are men or women who are the only one in their family to belong to the Orthodox Church. Nevertheless, I have found in them active, devout and faithful church-members, who in their Christian lives are an example to Christians of different churches. Thus an Orthodox father, too, can significantly influence the religious expression of the family. Without love towards one's own church and the support of the Lutheran part of the family many jobs in the parish would remain undone.

*Religious education* is one of the difficulties of a Lutheran-Orthodox marriage. Having a child baptized in the Orthodox Church may be an easier solution compared with the grumbling of the child on his way to school that "I'm not going to Orthodox religious education classes". He or she has no friends there. And if there is religious indifference in the family, the family's youngster quickly takes the reins into his own hands in the matter of religious education. And since in addition organizing Orthodox religious education in schools is viewed with reserve, and the religious education class is at an awkward time in the timetable, then the solution is clear. Go along with the majority, for there are such at home, too. The religious problem created by a mixed marriage recurs. Homes hope that Orthodox religious education will compensate for all the religious education which it has not been possible to provide in the home due to circumstances. And the teaching in turn runs like water off a duck's back when there is no hoped-for feedback at home. Orthodox religious education becomes a dry theoretical subject, the usefulness of which is questioned.

The Orthodox catechetical school, the refresher course on Christian doctrine, poses a challenge to church workers, because most of the pupils are children of Orthodox-Lutheran homes, whose experience of Orthodox everyday life and knowledge of ecclesiastical customs may be rudimentary or distorted. The Orthodox catechetical school has more and more concentrated on offering Orthodox ecclesiastical and religious experience than on increasing the amount of knowledge. Such experience is best offered by the catechetical camp school, where for a short period of time one lives in the midst of the Orthodox tradition. Teachers at the catechetical school are required to have not only

<sup>18</sup> Some of the examples are based on discussions I had during a retreat organized by Lahli Orthodox Church. Most of the participants in the retreat were women.

ecclesiastical knowledge but also the real skill and tact to educate their charges as Orthodox without offending their Lutheran fathers or mothers.

*Ecclesiastical ceremonies* form a broad pastoral field in Lutheran-Orthodox marriages. The Orthodox priest comes to the Lutheran-Orthodox home to a family celebration to baptize a baby, bless the home or congratulate someone on his birthday or anniversary, or perhaps otherwise invited to the home as a priest. Even the baptism of the child of a Lutheran mother as an Orthodox demands the removal of many prejudices and misunderstandings. It is easy to meet an Orthodox-Lutheran home at a baptism or other event in the home. It is a celebration where the prayer and blessing of the Church fill the entire home.

The atmosphere at the funeral of the only Orthodox member of a family is not a very easy one. The Orthodox burial service is strange to those present. The only Orthodox at the funeral may be the priest and the deceased. The Lutheran spouse and children of the deceased meet the Orthodox priest in their grief. They are nervous as to whether they know how to behave at the funeral, they are afraid of the incense and the burning candles in their hands. Keeping the lid of the coffin open is strange to them. Afterwards, regrets are expressed that they did not acquaint themselves with the Orthodox faith and church of the spouse, father or mother, grandparents, uncle, aunt, etc. during his or her lifetime. The funeral would have been easier. It has been surprising to discover how the burial of an Orthodox removes obstacles which existed between Lutheranism and Orthodoxy while he or she was alive. Religion is then something in common, the Orthodox form of which brings its own riches into a person's life. The Lutheran relatives notice how little after all they knew about the spiritual culture and Orthodox faith of the deceased. The grieving Lutheran part of the family often wishes much more carefully to observe the Church's tradition in remembering the dead compared with Orthodox who have lost their tradition. The remembering of the deceased in prayer is grieving, in which the Church is involved when the Lutheran spouse of one of its members has passed from time to eternity. The Church remembers in intercessions at its services all members of the family, be they Lutheran or Orthodox, alive or departed.

I have above presented the ideals and principles of the Orthodox view of marriage and some delicate issues arising in practice. Everyday life, in which Orthodox meets Lutheran in marriage, has been to the fore. This includes light, shadow, joy in a shared life, in success gratitude to God, mutual support in adversity, sorrow and grief, mutual guidance as citizens of the kingdom of God. There have been mixed marriages in the past. In our pluralistic society, where the Orthodox are a small minority, mixed marriages form a large and ever-increasing proportion of all marriages solemnized in our churches, and unfortunately also of marriages of church-members outside the church. We all know that most of these lead to the setting up of happy families. It would be

unwise and utopian to attempt to annul them. And these marriages often turn out to be more enduring and happier than those of nominal Orthodox, where neither spouse has ever heard of the purpose of Christian or Orthodox marriage. In blessing an Orthodox-Lutheran marriage the Church shows its pastoral love for one of its members and his or her future family.

"Remember, O Lord, the people praying here as well as those who for the right reasons have not come here, and have mercy on them and on us in your great mercy. Fill their storehouse with all goodness. Keep their marriages in peace and in harmony. Raise the little ones, teach the young ones, support the old, encourage the downcast, gather the dispersed" (From the liturgy of Basil the Great).



# ORTHODOX-LUTHERAN INTERMARRIAGE IN FINLAND<sup>1</sup>

Voitto Huotari

Finland has been the meeting place of the Western and Eastern Christian traditions in Northern Europe since the Middle Ages. The Western tradition which, since the Reformation, has been Lutheran, has been far and away the more dominant. However, a small minority of Finns has belonged to the Orthodox Church. In 1989, 89 percent of the population of almost five millions belonged to the Evangelical-Lutheran Church, and 1 percent to the Orthodox Church, both of which are official churches in Finland. Since the Second World War, the majority of Orthodox members has been scattered in eastern and southern Finland whence they were evacuated from Karelia, the areas surrendered to the USSR. Up to 90 percent of them have entered into matrimony with Lutherans. Today, the total number of Orthodox-Lutheran mixed marriages in Finland is 23,000.

Religion is not a crucial factor when people marry, since the divergence in church affiliation is not linked with any national, political or socioeconomic differences. Because more than 90 percent of the marriages of Orthodox members are mixed marriages this creates an important problem for the Orthodox Church. In contrast, those in the Lutheran Church who have entered into mixed marriages form only a very small marginal group.

My research project sought to discover how mixed marriages affected (1) religious participation and identification; (2) the socialization of children; and (3) family behaviour. The research material was collected by interviewing both partners individually in 221 mixed marriages. In addition, Lutheran and Orthodox people in homogeneous marriages were also investigated. These people were chosen in a system of matched pairs of those who were living in the same place; were of the same age; were of the same sex; and had been married for the same length of time as the respondents in mixed marriages. Research was conducted in three places: Helsinki, representing a secularized, metropolitan environment; Northern Savo, a rural area in central Finland, where the Lutheran tradition is strong, and to which the Orthodox came as evacuees after the Second World War; and Ilomantsi, a rural area in eastern

Finland where Orthodoxy is traditional and where there has always been a higher proportion of Orthodox believers than elsewhere.

## Religious Participation and Identification

Solidarity with their own church and with the church of the spouse is evidenced by religious practice and the approval accorded to the beliefs of each church. Religious activity was investigated on the basis of attendance at divine service (Table 1), listening to radio programmes and praying. However, for most people, the nearest Orthodox church was further away than was a Lutheran church. There were also fewer Orthodox services on the radio. In consequence, these practical considerations rendered the Orthodox less active than the Lutherans. But the level of individual devotions was more or less equal with about 30 percent engaging in prayer each day; a further 20 percent once a week; and the remaining 50 percent less frequently or never.

Among the Orthodox, mixed marriages weakened solidarity with their own church. The Orthodox in mixed marriages participated less in the divine services of their church than did the Orthodox who are homogeneously married. The same phenomenon could be seen in personal devotional life. Icons, centrally placed, were encountered in both homes and churches, but icons appeared less frequently in the homes of mixed marriages, and praying and making the sign of the cross were less usual than in homes where both partners were Orthodox. On the other hand, the Lutherans' sense of solidarity with their church increased in mixed marriages. Lutherans in mixed marriages participated more actively in the services of their church than did other Lutherans.

Similar results were obtained from the investigation of the extent to which beliefs were accepted, on the one hand among the Orthodox and, on the other, among Lutherans. The acceptance of Orthodox beliefs weakened, but conversely, Lutheran identification and denominational consciousness were reinforced under the influence of a mixed marriage. This reinforcement of Lutheran commitment may be explained in at least two ways. Because Lutheran culture and attitudes are dominant and self-evident in Finland, the special features and principles of Lutheranism remain largely unarticulated in any degree of detail. In mixed marriages, Lutherans have to become aware of the existence of different religious traditions, and this may awaken interest in a clearer and closer understanding of their church background and in the activities of their own church. Alternatively, a Lutheran in a mixed marriage has diverged from the majority, and may now seek to emphasize continued commitment to that majority by becoming more actively engaged in Lutheran Church affairs.



From the research, six types of mixed marriage could be identified:

1. marriages in which the partners were passive in both directions;
2. marriages in which the partners kept to their own denominations and were active only in that quarter;
3. marriages in which the wife was involved in the activities of both churches, but the husband in neither;
4. families orientated towards Lutheranism, where the whole family participated in the activities of only this church;
5. families orientated towards Orthodoxy, where the whole family participated in the activities of only this church;
6. ecumenical families, where both partners participate in the activities of both churches.

The types appear already to take their shape during the first years of marriage.

### Children's Religious Socialization

For mixed marriages, the choice of church and the transfer of religious tradition to the succeeding generation constitute central problems. In traditional ways of thinking, children were to follow the denominational affiliation of the father; but, on the other hand, the mother had, in practice, a more central role in religious socialization. In contemporary law, children follow their mother's denomination, unless parents have given their consent to the contrary in writing.

In theory, one might suppose that half of the children of mixed marriages would become members of the Orthodox Church, and half would join the Lutheran Church. In practice, however, 30 percent of the children were christened and brought up according to Orthodox practice, and 70 percent as Lutherans. In general, children of the same family belonged to the same church. Where the father was Lutheran, 95 percent of the children were Lutheran. Where the father belonged to the Orthodox minority, only 50 percent of the children did so. The old, patriarchal tradition operated in the determination of the church to which the children belonged but even more important was the pressure of the majority. Because in only a small proportion of mixed marriages has the Orthodox Church been chosen as the church affiliation of the children, the Orthodox Church in Finland is declining. Also, 75 percent of parents had taught their children an evening prayer, with no difference between Orthodox and Lutherans in this respect. The sign of the cross, an inseparable part of Orthodox prayer, was taught to children in 75 percent of families where the marriage partners were both Orthodox, but in

only 25 percent of mixed marriages. The transmission of the Orthodox tradition thus weakened perceptibly under the influence of mixed marriage.

### Influence of the Community on Religious Behaviour

#### *Social Appreciation*

After the Second World War, when Orthodox members were evacuated from Karelia, near the eastern frontier, to other parts of Finland, prejudice and opposition between the two churches occurred. The official position of the Orthodox Church did, however, gradually improve, and today that church is well respected in Finland. It is often the subject of positive discussion in the press, radio and television, and it has been favoured by prominent personalities and artists. The coexistence of Western and Eastern Christianity is regarded as a visible enrichment and a special characteristic of church life in Finland. This change in the social acceptability of the Orthodox Church is to some extent reflected in the choice of church affiliation for children of mixed marriage: whereas in the 1940s only 17 percent of such children were brought up as Orthodox, in the 1980s, this is the case for about 30 percent.

#### *Secularization*

There are also regional differences in the choice of church for the upbringing of children. The Orthodox tradition is most usually chosen in eastern Finland, where the number of Orthodox Christians is greater than elsewhere. In Helsinki, this Orthodox majority is at its smallest. In the big towns, religious indifference appears to have led people to identify with the majority, and this same phenomenon was to be seen in other religious activities and identification.

#### *The Pressure of the Majority*

Besides change in the social appreciation of Orthodoxy and the influence of secularization, the pressure of the majority has also influenced religious behaviour in mixed marriages. In eastern Finland, in Ilomantsi, there are more Orthodox than elsewhere and the pressure of the majority is smaller. On the one hand, some people are ecumenically-orientated towards both churches and, on the other hand, there is a greater proportion of families orientated towards Orthodoxy. The pressure of the majority was more in evidence in the countryside of Northern Savo where the Orthodox had arrived as evacuees.

There the behaviour of the Orthodox was most evidently linked to insecurity—a circumstance that might be explained by anxiety.

In some investigations of the minority the so-called diaspora effect has been observed—persons who belonged to the minority sought to emphasize their deviant identity. Among the Finnish Orthodox this was visible only in homogenous marriages in Northern Savo, where they had come as evacuees. Here, among this group, activities within the Orthodox faith and ways of thought characteristic of Orthodoxy were most in evidence. On the other hand, the Orthodox who had made mixed marriages in this area had merged into the Lutheran majority more fully than anywhere else.

### *Differences Between the Sexes*

The religiosity of the women was found to be stronger than that of the men, and gender was also a better indicator of intensity of religious affiliation than was church affiliation. Nonetheless, changes appeared more swiftly in the behaviour of women than of men. Among the Orthodox, a mixed marriage produced change in religious identification more quickly among women than among men. Because the greater proportion of all marriages were mixed, a diminishing identification with Orthodox activity weakened the position of the Orthodox Church. Moreover, Orthodox character underwent change under Lutheran influences arising in mixed marriages. The reasons for this acculturation were not solely to be found in mixed marriages, but stemmed from the different relationships of the Orthodox and the Lutherans to the wider society which is, from its foundations, Protestant.

### *The Appearance of Church Differences in Family Behaviour*

The church affiliation of marital partners when contracting marriage is of very little significance in Finland. Family and relatives rarely express to intending partners their preferences respecting church affiliation, since church differences are unconnected to national, political or economic differences. The influence of religion is not apparent until the time of marriage itself.

Even though the Orthodox and Lutheran Churches share common Christian ground in respect of marriage and family ideals, there are nonetheless some differences, reflected in more general eastern and western ways of thought. Investigations in the USA and Europe have noted that confessional mentalities are linked to differences in patterns of thought and behaviour. In this investigation of marriages between Orthodox and Lutherans, differences in family attitudes, sexual morality, patriarchalism and authority of parents were brought out. Equal proportions of Lutherans and Orthodox accepted premarital

sexual relationships and sexual relations outside marriage, and approved the use of contraceptive devices. Although the Orthodox approach to these subjects was more traditional than the Lutheran, the influence of the Protestant cultural background of Finnish society and of the acculturation that had been effected was evident in the attitudes of the Orthodox. As against this, the Orthodox, and especially the men, were more patriarchal in relation to women, and more authoritarian towards children than were the Lutherans. Even so, the difference between the attitudes of men and women was greater than the difference between Orthodox and Lutherans. The women maintained marital sexual morality more fully than did the men, but their attitudes were less patriarchal and authoritarian. As expected, the marital sexual morals and patriarchal attitudes were stronger in the older age groups, and more usual in the countryside than in the towns. In some investigations in the USA and in Europe, it has been observed that mixed marriages are more easily broken than marriages between people of the same creed. In this study, mixed marriages fell into two categories: on the one hand, marriages that were more easily broken than normal, and, on the other hand, marriages that appeared to be closer than normal. The risk of divorce in mixed marriages between Lutherans and Orthodox was noticeably greater than among homogenous Lutheran marriages. Yet, on the basis of data from interviews, the partners in mixed marriages regarded their own families as less divided than those resulting from homogenous marriage. This rather clear division of mixed marriages into two directions may be attributed to the pressure of the environment which is concentrated more strongly on those marriages that deviated from the dominant pattern. This pressure appeared to result either in the dissolution of the marriage, or to the marriage partners' need to form a closer than usual family connection.

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**Table 1**  
Attendance of Lutheran divine service and Orthodox liturgy (in percentages)

	Orthodox		Lutherans	
	Control group (211)	Mixed marriages (221)	Mixed marriages (221)	Control group (219)
<b>Lutheran divine service</b>				
Never	6	4	1	-
Less frequently than every year	78	47	32	48
Once or a few times a year	15	48	61	48
At least once a month	-	1	6	4
Total	100	100	100	100
<b>The Orthodox liturgy</b>				
Never	-	4	25	54
Less frequently than every year	36	41	47	44
Once or a few times a year	47	52	27	2
At least once a month	17	3	1	-
Total	100	100	100	100

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