

Ecumenism in Liturgy?

Changes in Finnish Orthodox Liturgical Texts Stimulated by Co-Existence with Lutherans

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The Finnish Orthodox Church forms a small minority in a predominantly Lutheran country. Since the 1950s, some changes in liturgical texts have occurred because of this Lutheran presence. This paper discusses three of them: the addition “and all Christians” in the Great Entrance, the addition “through your intercessions” in the prayer formula “Most-holy Theotokos, save us”, and the commemoration of “our Bishop Irja” during the visits of the Lutheran bishop of Helsinki, Irja Askola, in the Uspensky Cathedral of Helsinki in 2015. The author proposes that the two first cases took place in order to reconcile the Orthodox population with their Lutheran surroundings by the commemoration of their non-Orthodox friends and relatives in the liturgy, on one hand, and to explain dogmatic thought that is foreign to Lutheran mentality, on the other. The additions, however, pose theological problems and should not be used as such.

Keywords: Finland, commemoration, ecumenism, liturgy, Lutheranism, Orthodoxy, prayer, Theotokos.

Finland has often been quoted as a model example for the inter-denominational relationship between the two state-recognized churches, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Orthodox Archbishopry of Finland, an autonomous part of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. This narrative, even though widespread in both scholarly and ecumenical circles, is not without problems: not many decades ago, hostile attitudes against the other denomination were still common in both churches. Indeed, Tarja Raninen-Siiskonen has stated that “the concept of the integrating co-existence, in the spirit of mutual respect and co-operation, has been repeated in literature so often that it has become a crystallized narrative”.¹

However, history is more nuanced than this. The Finnish Orthodox population, a result of medieval Novgorodian missionary work, had traditionally lived in the eastern parts of the country: it was a border zone be-

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¹ Tarja Raninen-Siiskonen, *Vieraana omalla maalla: tutkimus karjalaisen siirtoväen muistelukerronnasta*, Helsinki, Suomalaisen kirjallisuuden seura 1998, p. 98.