

A REPORT ON THE HOMOSEXUALITY DEBATE
IN
THE ORTHODOX CHURCH OF FINLAND



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THE BROTHERHOOD OF SAINT KOSMAS OF AITOLIA, JOENSUU FINLAND

CONTENTS

1. Prologue	4
2. Introduction.....	4
3. The report.....	6
3.1. Prelude for the debate	6
3.2. From a random topic into a permanent one	8
3.3. Ecclesiastical bomb: the movement <i>Community</i> and the Orthodox	10
3.4. Inquiry to the Episcopal Synod and the <i>Orthodox Rainbow Society</i>	14
3.5. Journal <i>Aamun Koitto</i> 1/2007 and the letter delivered to the Archbishop.....	15
3.6. Reactions to the letter delivered to the Archbishop.....	16
3.7. Other Orthodox protests	18
3.8. Finnish Episcopal Synod on the presence of the Orthodox in the movement <i>Community</i>	18
3.9. Orthodox book on homosexuality	20
3.10. Conference of sexual minorities in Järvenpää.....	23
3.11. After the Järvenpää conference	25
3.12. “Open atmosphere for discussions”	26
3.13. Scope of influence of the Orthodox members of the movement <i>Community</i> in the Finnish Orthodox Church.....	28
3.14. Ecclesiastical way of thinking is changing.....	30
3.14.1. Ecumenism	30
3.14.2. Ordination of women.....	32
3.14.3. Divorces of the clergy.....	33
3.14.4. Freemasonry.....	34
3.14.5. Orthodox Pascha.....	35
3.14.6. Orthodox Baptism.....	36
3.15. Conclusion.....	36
4. Appendices:	38
4.1. A letter to the Holy Episcopal Synod of the Finnish Orthodox Church in Joensuu, 29th of September, 2005. Mr Markus Paavola, Mr Hannu Pöyhönen, Mrs Anna Pöyhönen, Mr Jukka Mäntymäki	38
4.2. Collage of the website of yhteys.org.....	39
4.2.1. Front page	39
4.2.2. Declaration	40
4.2.3. Activities	43
4.3. “Welcome to the Website of Orthodox Rainbow Society”	44

4.4.	Statement 10.4.2007 by <i>Orthodox Rainbow Society</i> on the discussion on homosexuality	45
4.5.	Interviews of Fr. Heikki Huttunen and Fr. Timo Lehmuskoski in <i>Aamun Koitto</i> (1/2007) on homosexuality.....	47
4.6.	Some corrections to the dialogue on homosexuality by Mr. Hannu Pöyhönen, Doctor of Theology (<i>Aamun Koitto</i> 3/2007)	54
4.7.	“A Letter To His Eminence Archbishop Leo of Finland and All Karelia” 14.03.2007 by Mr. Hannu Pöyhönen, Mr. Markus Paavola, and Mr. Heikki Alex Saulamo	58
4.8.	The article “Double Life” by Jyrki Härkönen.....	61
4.9.	“The Question About Homosexuals is Complicating Relationships Between the Orthodox in Russia and Finland” by <i>Orthodox Rainbow Society</i>	62
4.10.	“An Expression of Concern and Call for Finnish Orthodox Church to Hold to Orthodox Doctrine and Sacred Tradition” by Russian-speaking members of the Finnish Orthodox Church	63
4.11.	The movement <i>Community</i> and the Orthodox	65
4.12.	“An orthodox layman is allowed to registerate his relationship with a person of the same sex”; Interview of archbishop Leo in the newspaper <i>Kotimaa</i> 13.11.2008	66
4.13.	Interviews about the book “Homosexuality in the light of Orthodox Tradition” in <i>Aamun Koitto</i> 5.12.2008	67
4.13.1.	Tapani Kärkkäinen: The question of homosexuality divides opinions.....	67
4.13.2.	Archbishop Leo: Church is cautious.....	68
4.13.3.	An anonymous orthodox priest: “An embarrassing book”	70
4.13.4.	Simo Haavisto: “Sexuality is not a topic of dogmas”	71
4.13.5.	Hannu Pöyhönen: “A Question of Life and Death”	71
4.14.	“Truth is not to be denied”; comment by Fr. Timo Soisalo in Journal <i>Aamun Koitto</i>	72
4.15.	“Courage to Follow the Law of Love”; European forum of lesbian and gay christian groups in Finland 2009	73
4.16.	“Yoga of Truth”; seminar in the <i>Orthodox Culture Center Sofia</i> in Helsinki	77
4.17.	“Come to Culture Centre Sofia: The Wall of Masons confronts the evil”	78
4.18.	“Do not be conformed to this world” Ilkka Soini, specialist physician Vantaa; Published in the issue 16/2007 of journal <i>Aamun Koitto</i>	79
4.19.	Joining the Church – is Rebaptism Needed? Father Johannes Karhusaari	81
5.	A Notice on using the Report	83
6.	Briefly on <i>The Brotherhood of Saint Kosmas of Aitolia</i>	83
7.	Contacts of <i>The Brotherhood of Saint Kosmas of Aitolia</i>	83

1. Prologue

A debate on sexual ethics goes on in the Orthodox Church of Finland, and a lot of information circulates about this debate, especially abroad causing confusion, because it is suspected that this information has been exaggerated in some ways. Moreover, those who have reacted to the problems of the local Church in various ways have been viewed in unfavourable light, and they have often been labelled as fanatics. For this reason, the board of our association has decided to create this report to be published on its website. The debate of the Orthodox here in Finland will be presented, including documents that will cast more light on it. We hope this will help the reader to have a better understanding about the matter.

The Introduction that follows, is a summary of the debate; after that comes the report itself, on the course of the events. After the report, you'll find the documents that will cast more light on the matter.

2. Introduction

Since 1990, those pursuing liberal sexual ethics have maintained a debate on homosexuality in the Orthodox Church of Finland in the mass media. In 2003, some priests of our local Church were involved in the process of establishing the movement *Community* operating in an ecumenical spirit, which pursues full equality of homosexuals in Church, up to priesthood. In the same context, the *Orthodox Rainbow Society* (a society promoting equality of homosexuals), was established in Finland in 2006. According to the report of the Society itself, also includes employees of our local Church.

In the autumn of 2005, four lay theologians of the Finnish Orthodox Church sent an inquiry to the Orthodox Episcopal Synod, asking about the possibility of Orthodox priests to participate in the work of the movement *Community*, due to the new openings in sexual ethics, but the Episcopal Synod didn't react to the inquiry in any way. In early 2007, three Orthodox lay theologians visited Archbishop Leo and discussed the topic with him, giving him a memorandum on their views. Through the Orthodox members of the movement *Community*, this memorandum leaked to the public, and the movement compiled a distorting press release on it, distributing the press release through

Suomen tietotoimisto (the Finnish News Agency) to the press of Finland. At the turn of 2007–2008, the Bishops of the Orthodox Church of Finland discussed the memorandum both in their Episcopal Synod and in their report, sent to the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and stated that sexual ethics represented by the movement *Community* doesn't fight against Orthodox tradition, and there is no need to prohibit Orthodox priests from participating in the activities of the movement.

In the end of 2008, the *Brotherhood of Saint Kosmas of Aitolia* published a book called *Homosexuality in Light of the Orthodox Tradition*. It consists of quotations from the Bible, the Church Fathers, and the Elders of our own times. The book was strongly attacked in the press representing our local Church and in the Internet. Soon after the book was published, Archbishop Leo stated in the official press of the Finnish Lutheran Church that registered same-sex couple relationships aren't a problem in regard with Orthodox laymen; neither do they prevent their full-scale participation in the sacramental life of the Church. This interview was quoted in many secular daily newspapers and in Orthodox journals, and the views presented in it caused a lot of offense among both the clergymen and the churchgoers.

A completely new stage was experienced in the spring of 2009, when the *Orthodox Rainbow Society* and the movement *Community* arranged a conference of European Christian homosexuals in the town of Järvenpää near Helsinki. The contribution of the Orthodox was so strongly present in the program that it is well-grounded to assume that it took place with the blessing of the local Bishop. Originally it was lanned that Metropolitan of Helsinki Ambrosius would himself participate in the conference, but the offense caused by the event among the Orthodox, even abroad, finally forced him to stay out of it.

The ideology of the movement *Community* spreads intensively in the Orthodox Church of Finland, because the members of the movement and its supporters have for a long time been in control of the media of the Church, and they occupy many key positions in our local Church.

The aim of pursuing liberal sexual ethics isn't a random phenomenon in the Orthodox Church of Finland: at the same time, there are voices in the Church, demanding a change of view on ordination

of women and the Freemason Movement. The timing of Pascha celebrated in the Orthodox Church of Finland differs from that of the other local Orthodox Churches; and in ecumenical movement, the boundaries between confessions have become badly obscured. All this indicates that ecclesiastical consciousness is undergoing fatal changes in Finland. The solution to the question on homosexuality plays a pivotal role here. It will seal the future direction of our Church, as well as the question, whether the Orthodox Church of Finland will continue its existence as a genuinely Orthodox local Church.

3. The report

3.1. Prelude for the debate

It seems that the wave of questioning the traditional view of the Church on homosexuality began in issue 3/1990 of *Logos*, a journal directed to the young readers of the Orthodox Church of Finland. This issue of the journal was in general dedicated to the topic *The Church and sexuality*. In the editorial of the journal, the Editor-in-Chief (Kimmo) Tapani Kärkkäinen wrote, for instance: “In our special feature issue, we haven’t searched for the most usual views that might perhaps have been easiest to digest. We consider that those views gain publicity, anyhow.” These words illustrate the debate on sexual ethics desired by the Editor-in-Chief of this journal in our local Church, because this debate hasn’t even in its initial stages been interested in the responses provided by the Tradition of the Church, but in the demands posed by our secularized time and modern society. In the article of the issue *Tell me what I may do with my body*, Kari Kaskela and Johannes Myyrä question Christian sexual ethics as a whole and turn the individual into an ethical norm as such: “When we define the ‘permitted’ forms of sexuality, we turn our own activity into a norm for the other. Jesus urged us to love our neighbor, not to standardize his/her behavior – . When we require the Church to have a clear-cut sexual morality, we forget to ask who the Church is. Who is allowed to speak as the Church? Does an employee of the Church, who has graduated from a seminary, speak more in the name of the Church as we ourselves do? Are we again pushing the responsibility away from ourselves?”

The journal also included an extensive interview of an Orthodox homosexual, many views of whom are very problematic from the viewpoint of the philosophy of the Church. The anonymous

interviewee says: “I feel that my sexual orientation isn’t an essential feature in my relationship with God or the Church. My homosexuality is outside the things related to spiritual struggle and salvation, or, perhaps it could be better described as something neutral – – . In my opinion, sexual orientation is as insignificant for salvation as being left-handed. But questions related to sexuality and power, violence, responsibility and human dignity are related to theosis and salvation. However, in my opinion, in these issues, it is not important, whether the sexuality of a person is oriented to the other gender or the same.” The interviewee denies the bans on homosexuality set in the Old Testament by stating that in his opinion, the Law of the Old Covenant isn’t in effect in any way during the New Covenant any more, and he states that according to current Bible researchers, the corresponding parts in the Epistles of St. Paul are related to prostitution, rather than to homosexuality, and says: “No matter what, I have never recognized myself from the picture drawn by St. Paul. I don’t believe that Paul talks about the kind of homosexuality related to my life, for instance. It’s possible that Paul simply doesn’t know what he is talking about.” The interviewee evaluates the work of the spiritual fathers of our local Church in the following way: “ – – my own spiritual father knows about my homosexuality and he knows that I live permanently with another man, and in my opinion, he has adopted a very wise attitude in this matter. Once I brought this matter up in the beginning of my confession and we talked about it for a while, and then my spiritual father said: ‘Well, let’s talk about the sins now– –’, meaning that I should now proceed to my sins. On the other hand, I have heard that some priests pose acts of penance to homosexuals. Therefore, it would be good to have a public discussion on this topic and the clergy to receive instructions and information so that no violence of such a kind would be carried out in the name of pastoral care.”

Already a quick glimpse to the debate on homosexuality in Finland shows that we face two tragic facts: firstly, those who have joined the Orthodox Church as adults haven’t sincerely wanted to adopt the Church’s way of thinking and to adapt their lives to it; and secondly, in this and in many other things, the Finnish Orthodox haven’t been courageous enough to display the teaching based on their Tradition. Therefore, we are all partly guilty of the current situation prevailing in our local Church, even though the greatest responsibility is shouldered by the highest leaders, because when someone has been given much, much will be required in return; and when someone has been entrusted with much, even more will be required (Luke 12:48).

3.2. From a random topic into a permanent one

After *Logos* had opened the game, the question on homosexuality was brought up several times in the life of the Orthodox Church of Finland in the 1990s. John, who at that time served as the Archbishop, said in *Aamun Koitto* (the chief journal of the Orthodox Church of Finland), issue 20/1995: “According to the statement of the Editor-in-Chief of *Aamun Koitto*, the editors have recently once again received inquiries about the view of our Church, for instance, because Sweden has recently decided to legalize same-sex unions.” In his reply, he referred to the clear-cut statement issued by the Episcopal Synod of our local Church, issued on 31 August 1992, and stated: “Upon the request of the Editor-in-Chief, I present a few principles related to this question, even though it has been examined even before, and one might hope that it would even otherwise be clear for all those who know something about the Orthodox views on sacramental marriage.”

Issue 4/1997 of *Aamun Koitto* brought homosexuality up in a particularly striking manner. Tapani Kärkkäinen published in it an exceptionally extensive article *Orthodox Church blessed male unions*, using John Boswell’s book *Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe* as his source. The article was widely disapproved among the Finnish Orthodox, as reflected by the comment published in the Letters to the Editor page of issue 7/1997 *On the course of Aamun Koitto*. In it, Mika Kangasaho first wonders the unsuitable timing of the article chosen by Kärkkäinen, and writes: “The contribution of *Aamun Koitto* in Christian construction during the Great Lent is extremely peculiar. In the issue 4/1997, a lot of pages were dedicated to an article certain to attract a lot of attention by its speculation on eventual homo-erotic dimensions of male unions blessed by the Church and even on the nature of love between the Apostles and Christ. Is this an attempt to bring journalistic ins and outs to *Aamun Koitto* and to attract indignation, especially when the writer of the article doesn’t apply any kinds of scientific criticism on his sources, as required by the topic?” This article inspired an expert comment from Greece (*On Brotherly Unions*), but *Aamun Koitto* didn’t publish it, even though it was neutral in its tone and written in good Finnish. This text is nowadays readable on the website of our association in the Topical Discussions part. Kärkkäinen’s uncritical and shocking article, which he himself now calls a synopsis of the book, unfortunately still exists on the websites of the movement *Community* and the *Orthodox Rainbow Society*, for instance.

The Act on Registered Partnership being discussed in the Parliament of Finland inspired Professor Erkki Terho to write an article in *Logos* issue 3/2001 with the headline *Orthodox Church and Homosexuality*. Having first presented the Tradition of the Church in a meritorious manner, he then nullifies it with his own subjective views: “In studying the Bible, I have also paid attention to the fact that Jesus didn’t say anything about homosexuality. In the Bible, the condemning view announced by God is in the Old Testament, when the cultural situation was completely different from that of our times. In interpreting the condemning words in the Epistles of St. Paul, we should keep in mind that Paul was an educated Jewish erudite and along with spreading the Gospel, it was his duty to fight against all pagan Hellenic influences. The Holy Fathers of the Church were mostly ascetic monks, and thus they didn’t have any prerequisites to understand the formation of human sexual identity.” This article inspired good comments in the next issue of the journal (*Logos* 4/2001) from theology student Jarmo Ihalainen (*Homosexuality isn’t innate*) and Master of Theology Markus Paavola (*Tradition of the Church and homosexuality*). In *Logos* 5–6/2001, Jyrki Härkönen tried to negate the latter of them with his contemptuous style, although this comment was theologically particularly competent.

Tapani Kärkkäinen brought the topic up again in *Logos* 1/2002 in his editorial called *Act on Registered Partnerships causes headache in the Church*. Having stated that the disputed Act on Registered Partnerships has come to effect in Finland, and the first partnerships of Orthodox homosexuals and lesbians have already been officially confirmed, he started asking, how the Church reacts to them: what happens, if an employee of the Church registers a same-sex partnership; or will the priests even in the future bless the shared home of a homosexual or lesbian couple, as they, according to him, have always done! Stating that the Orthodox Bishops have commented the Act already when it was under preparation, emphasizing the unique nature of a marriage between man and woman, but simultaneously adopting a positive view on the attempts to diminish all kinds of injustice in society, he says provocatively: “Now the Bishops have kept silent. Is that a sign that there is nothing to add?” In the final part of his editorial, Kärkkäinen also says: “And in this issue, we publish an article on the view of the Early Church on sexual relationships between women. Thus, it is the message of *Logos* that information and once more information is needed to serve as a basis for the discussion.” The said article had been written by Jyrki Härkönen and it was based on Bernadette J. Brooten’s book *Love Between Women; Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism*.

Härkönen's article, which provides as little real information to serve as the basis of the discussion as Kärkkäinen's previously mentioned article, is still found in Finnish on his personal website under the headline *Jyrki Härkösen kirjasto (Jyrki Härkönen's Library)*.

3.3. Ecclesiastical bomb: the movement *Community* and the Orthodox

The provoking statement made by Kärkkäinen was like a battle cry. Due to the fact that the Bishops hadn't touched it in any way, matters far-reaching for our local Church started happening in 2003 after our Church had received its new Archbishop. At that time, the movement *Community* with a Christian tone, which operates on an ecumenical basis, was established in Finland to promote the rights of sexual minorities. Some Orthodox and expressly some Orthodox priests played a very visible role in founding the movement. While the number of the Orthodox is slightly over 1 % of the entire population of Finland, 9 of the 33 founding members of the movement *Community* were Orthodox, including four priests and four spouses of priests... The Rev. Heikki Huttunen has been the soul of the Orthodox and one of the central figures in the movement, just as editor Hellevi Matihalti, a member of the movement *Community* herself, implies in issue 1/2007 of *Aamun Koitto* journal, saying that he "was among the first ones to sign the declaration of the movement *Community*". The active role of the Orthodox was also praised by the Chairwoman of the movement *Community*, female Dean of the Finnish Lutheran Church Liisa Tuovinen in the Guest Writer column of *Helsingin Sanomat*, the major daily newspaper of Finland, on 19 July 2009: "The Orthodox have played a strong role in the movement from its very beginning."

However, for those who are committed to the Orthodox Tradition, the goals of the movement *Community* are completely unacceptable: 1) Homes of gay and lesbian couples will be blessed, when requested; 2) gays and lesbians working in parishes can register their same-sex partnerships without fear of consequences; 3) Churches will adopt measures to ensure that gay and lesbian couples may receive blessing to their registered same-sex partnerships, when requested. Moreover, from the point of view of the Orthodox doctrine, the allegation of the declaration, according to which "the Bible doesn't contain any part, which would condemn a faithful marital relationship based on respect and commitment between people of the same sex", sounds extremely radical. The statement of the signatories of the declaration: "— we are confident that, in accordance to the promise given by Jesus,

the Holy Spirit will guide us towards the truth” is close to blasphemy in its context, because the Orthodox Church has never experienced its Tradition as one which as if evolves through evolution from a vague start into a culmination; since Pentecost, the Church has been a pillar and basis of Truth. It is impossible that the dogmatic or ethical teaching of the Church could through the Holy Spirit evolve into a complete opposite in the course of time!

At first, the work of the movement *Community* was chiefly indirect in the Orthodox Church. For instance, a seminar on *Orthodox Church, Sexuality and Minorities* was arranged on 25 May 2003 in the Church of St. Herman of Alaska located in the capital region. Orthodox priests and members of the movement *Community* Heikki Huttunen and Timo Lehmuskoski spoke in this seminar. In the seminar, Huttunen said that in his view, “holy fathers pay very little attention to homosexual orientation in their theology on sexuality” and Lehmuskoski, on the other hand, stated emphatically: “Homosexual orientation isn’t a voluntary choice by man, and therefore, in my opinion, it has to be considered an act of God”. After this, theologically simplified and daring claim, *Aamun Koitto*, which reported about the seminar in its issue 16/2003 continued: “Even though gays and lesbians cannot have a church wedding, they, in Timo Lehmuskoski’s view, have an opportunity for reciprocal love and growth – recovery in the sense of accepting themselves as they are. They, too, have to direct their lives towards God.”

In the same year 2003, the movement *Community* was involved in compiling the anthology *Sin or Blessing. Homosexuals, Church and Society* (in Finnish). The book also includes an article written by the Rev. Heikki Huttunen and editor Tapani Kärkkäinen together under the headline *Orthodox Church and Homosexuality*, in which they violate Orthodox theology and desecrate it. They turn Christian ethics a phenomenon dependent on times, with an individual in its center. According to them, “the fathers and mothers of the Orthodox Church characterized it as a way of mysteries, because its route isn’t visible for the beginner in advance”. Like Khristos Yannaras, they divinize sexuality and present it as a “way into Transfiguration” – a view that was sharply criticized by the great elders of the Holy Mount of Athos, Paisios and Theoklitos from the Monastery of Dionysios. The writers even say that “sexuality leads to the sources of being a human being and basic experiences”... However, the most fatal mistake is made by the writers, when they start explaining their views of

sexual ethics by appealing to the Holy Trinity, turning the Live and Holy God into a human idea and a melting pot of the phenomena of the fallen world. They say: “The Trinitarian community allows difference inside the local community. Ethical examination of human sexuality should be characterized by this diversity and respect for ‘the other’, because it is a question of harmonizing difference and of a variety of identities and expressions. Trinitarian community is also equal: none of the hypostases is above the others. Different identities find their justification inside it.” Hiding their obscure message into the bright robe of sublime theology they say: “The concept of the Christian faith as the ultimate and exhaustive cosmology doesn’t do justice to the spirituality of the fathers and mothers of the Eastern Church, in which apophatic theology often plays a role more important than that of cataphatic theology and hesychastic silence is as important as prayer expressed in words.” Even though the writers also present criticism expressed in the Orthodox Church against homosexuality, they state in the end: “On the other hand, some participants of this debate have an understanding that even homosexual encounters and relationships may have something of the original purpose of sexuality present in them, and that even in those, amidst human shortages and vulnerability, there is a chance to reach something of the divine-human love opened by Christ.” On the basis of these and several other points, we could say that the characterization of the editors of the book – according to which the articles in the book share the “conviction that sexual difference isn’t a threat posed on the Church or society, but the love contained in it is a blessing for both” – can also be applied to Huttunen’s and Kärkkäinen’s article. In this way, their article has immortalized the ideology of the movement *Community* into Orthodox theology and its views spread unofficially as the comment of our local Church on homosexuality!

In summer 2005, the journal of the Orthodox Parish of the City of Helsinki, *Ortodoksiviesti* 6/2005 published a writing *Discussion on Homosexuality*. It was signed by four priests, three deacons, three lay theologians, three wives of priests, and two Orthodox editors. All of them, with the exception of two, were members in the movement *Community*. In the article, the signatories commented the possibility of registering same-sex partnerships: “This matter is to some extent discussed in the world. The official views of the Churches emphasize the special meaning of heterosexual partnership and marriage, and are negative about homosexual partnerships and their public registration. Medical research, according to which sexual orientation isn’t a voluntarily chosen feature, has encouraged

many theologians to think about the matter from other points of view, too. According to Orthodox anthropology and the basic concepts of ethics, a matter that cannot be solved by man himself cannot be a sin, at least not on a personal level. Respect for others and the divergent, which is one of the crucial ethical models posed by Trinitarian God to man, applies to the sexual orientation of another being, too.” After the peculiar view presented in the last sentence, the writers continue and present another claim that is theologically at least equally daring, but don’t wish to reveal, to whom they refer: “The return of Orthodox theology to Eastern patristic sources, which has occurred in the past century, has also influenced on the general view on human sexuality. Attempts have been made to get rid of the western view of original sin and negation of sexuality related to it, and to emphasize the view on the original goodness, beauty and potential holiness of sexuality. Some Orthodox theologians have stated that this touch of beauty and holiness is present in all human sexuality, independent on its orientation.”

In her own article published in the same journal, Kersti Juva, who always respectably appears under her own name, expresses her delight of the fact that even the Orthodox Church of Finland has finally started talking about homosexuality. However, she wonders about the coldish tone used by some writers in this context, as well as the way to read the Bible, which, according to her, is unfamiliar for Orthodox Tradition, and which is borrowed from Protestant fundamentalists. In reality, she only means with this that the Revelation of the Bible, according to them, is binding in matters related to dogma and ethics, even in our times. She ends her article in a peculiar and simplified comment: “The core of the faith is unchanging, but the way, in which it is manifested, is alive and changing. The time has come for the Finnish Orthodox to see that we gays and lesbians are quite the same sinners as all the others, and that there are as few (or many!) grounds to condemn all homosexual relations as there are for hatred of Jews.”

In the beginning of October 2005, a seminar was arranged at the church of St. Herman of Alaska in Tapiola in the city of Espoo, which examined the Church as a community of different people (*Aamun Koitto* 21/2005). In the seminar, many immigrants told about their experiences, but one of those who had been requested to speak was a young man, who lives as a gay and who appeared under his own name. He said that many homosexuals suffer from great anxiety and a feeling of alienation, because

many churches don't accept sexual minorities in their context, but he gave the Rev. Heikki Huttunen and the Orthodox community of Tapiola special credit in this context.

3.4. Inquiry to the Episcopal Synod and the *Orthodox Rainbow Society*

When information on the membership of the Orthodox in the movement *Community* was gradually spreading, four Orthodox lay theologians sent on 29 September 2005 an inquiry to the Episcopal Synod on the possibility of Orthodox priests to be involved in the work of the movement. The Episcopal Synod discussed the inquiry about a month later in their meeting, but surprisingly didn't ever convey any information or a response to those who had made the inquiry. According to Archbishop Leo, the discussion on the matter in the Episcopal Synod, however, led into a situation, in which the Orthodox members of the movement *Community* added the following text to the declaration of the movement: "We the undersigned members of the Orthodox Church commit ourselves to the values of the movement *Community* and work for them within the framework of the Holy Tradition and canonic tradition of our own Church. We hope that the Orthodox who belong to sexual minorities could find their spiritual home in their own parish and that an open and objective discussion on issues related to sexuality would promote tolerance and love for one's neighbor in our Church." However, due to the fact that the Orthodox members of the movement *Community* didn't define their relationship to the goals of the movement in any way, the enclosed addition didn't diminish the problematic nature of their presence in the movement *Community*. The credibility of the enclosed addition is also diminished by the fact that they had originally signed exactly the same operation principles and goals as the others had done.

The *Orthodox Rainbow Society* was established in 2006, obviously as a counter-reaction to the inquiry made to the Episcopal Synod. This may also have been based on the inactivity of the Episcopal Synod in meeting the efforts of changing sexual ethics. The members of the *Orthodox Rainbow Society* characterized its founding in the following manner: "We are a group of Orthodox homosexuals. – – The recent discussion on homosexuality in the Orthodox Church of Finland has convinced us to come out as a society, in order to make our own voice heard in the discussion related to ourselves." According to the *Orthodox Rainbow Society*, its goals include, for instance, the following: "to make sexual minorities visible in the Church as persons created by God in His own

image; to promote open and pertinent dialogue and constructive interaction in the Church, seeking and serving Her truth; to clarify the views on homosexuality in the Church in accordance with present-day knowledge; to communicate and cooperate with other Christian LGBT groups and support groups in Finland and abroad”.

Already without a more detailed analysis of the goals of the society, we could say that the work of an association encouraging homosexual way of life in the lap of a local Orthodox Church raises this matter to a completely new level again. Neither the Episcopal Synod nor any individual Bishops have expressed any criticism against the work of the *Orthodox Rainbow Society* although, according to the statement of the Society itself (Statement 10 April 2007), employees of our local Church participate in its work.

3.5. Journal *Aamun Koitto* 1/2007 and the letter delivered to the Archbishop

Aamun Koitto, the chief journal of the Orthodox Church of Finland “excelled itself” once again in the beginning of 2007 by bringing up the ideology of the movement *Community* in a strong manner. Editor Hellevi Matihalti interviewed five men in the journal, and four of those thought that the traditional teaching of the Church should be revised; only one said that he holds to the tradition. Two of the above-mentioned four interviewees were Orthodox priests of the movement *Community* (Heikki Huttunen and Timo Lehmuskoski), and two young Orthodox, who live as homosexuals. One of them appeared under his own name. The views of the two Orthodox priests were both pastorally and theologically problematic. Heikki Huttunen in particular brought up his prejudiced and theologically shaky views. Due to this issue of the journal Doctor of Theology Hannu Pöyhönen wrote a comment to *Aamun Koitto* 3/2007, in which he concentrated on criticizing the views of Heikki Huttunen. A sign of the objectivity of his comment is the fact that he received from a very high-ranking and theologically knowledgeable Orthodox a surprising letter of gratitude, which said: “I have yesterday read your article in *Aamun Koitto* and with this letter I wish to thank you for your comments. In my opinion, they were well-grounded in every way.”

Aamun Koitto 1/2007 helped many Orthodox to finally learn how far the things had gone towards the direction of complete approval of homosexuality in the local Orthodox Church of Finland. For that

reason, Doctor of Theology Hannu Pöyhönen and two other Orthodox theologians (Master of Theology Markus Paavola and Master of Theology Heikki Alex Saulamo) booked an audience at Archbishop Leo. When they went to meet the Archbishop on 14 March 2007, they left him a memorandum about the matters they brought up in the discussion. The following part in particular gave general offense in various circles: “According to us, the employees and clergy of the Orthodox Church cannot support the goals of the movement *Community*, at least in public forums. We seriously claim that the leaders of our Church should demand them to remove immediately their names from the site mentioned. Unless this happens, our consciousness demands us to act differently.” The last sentence in this paragraph was felt as a threat. However, in order to understand the sentence, it is important to keep in mind that the earlier inquiry made to the Episcopal Synod hadn’t led into any visible action, not even by sending a reply!

3.6. Reactions to the letter delivered to the Archbishop

Reactions to the letter delivered to the Archbishop came quickly, even though the Episcopal Synod discussed it only a year later. It was conveyed to the movement *Community* at an almost real-time speed, because the writers of the letter also sent it to the Orthodox priests and theologians who are members in the movement, including an accompanying note to it, because there were no intentions to act secretly behind their back. On 26 March 2007, the movement *Community* issued a press release with the headline Finnish Orthodox Bishops and clergy threatened for leniency on homosexuality, sending it to the mass media of Finland through the *Suomen tietotoimisto* (the Finnish News Agency). The press release says, for instance: “Archbishop Leo, primate of the Orthodox Church of Finland, has received a letter threatening with wide publicity, if the bishops of the church do not demand the removal of Orthodox signatures from a public statement on homosexuality. Personal letters with the same content have also been sent to the Orthodox serving the church, who have signed the declaration.” As an interesting detail, let us mention that on the basis of the last line in the press release (“Additional information: hellevi.matihalti@welho.com), it is most likely that the press release had been compiled by the same person in charge of the problematic issue 1/2007 of *Aamun Koitto...*

Apparently on the basis of the press release of the movement *Community*, editor Taneli Kylätasku, who also belongs to the movement, contacted Doctor of Theology Hannu Pöyhönen in order to interview him to *Kotimaa*, the chief newspaper of the Lutheran Church of Finland. In issue 13/2007 of *Kotimaa* (published on 29 March 2007), in which the interview was published under the headline *The Orthodox supporting the movement Community are threatened with a scandal*, the interviewee had enough of determination and succeeded in correcting the sensational allegation about threatening with a scandal: “We don’t threaten; a scandal will emerge all by itself, if the information about the Orthodox priests who have signed the declaration reaches the other Orthodox Churches.” However, the allegation of the press release of the movement *Community* still exists in the headline of the interview, and thus it had a strong influence on the minds of the readers of this newspaper, which has a wide circulation.

On the basis of the letter delivered to the Archbishop, Jyrki Härkönen compiled two fairly peculiar articles on his own website under the headlines *The Question about Homosexuals is Complicating Relationships between the Orthodox in Russia and Finland* and *Double Life*. In the latter article, he slanders the signatories of the letter in a fierce and even implicating manner. The articles are still found at his personal homepage in the section *Jyrki Härkösen kirjasto* (Jyrki Härkönen’s Library), as well as on the website of the *Orthodox Rainbow Society*, where they are even translated into English. The peculiar end of the article *Double Life*, which the writer calls a column, illustrates the writer’s view best: “There might be one good consequence in this gay hunting. The Parliament might finally realize that times of state churches are over. Why should they finance an institution which is with this kind of devotion concentrating on the destruction of our multicultural and tolerant democracy?”

3.7. Other Orthodox protests

The events in early 2007s also attracted wholesome reactions in the Orthodox believers of Finland, other than the counter-argument published in *Aamun Koitto* 3/2007 and the letter delivered to the Archbishop. For instance, the Russians living in Finland expressed their strong concern in both *Ortodoksiviesti* 5/2007 and *Aamun Koitto* 11/2007 – in *Ortodoksiviesti* in Russian and in *Aamun Koitto* in Finnish. The article was signed by five people, and they concluded it in the words “We urge all the Russian-speaking members of our Church to note these problems. The era of silence has come to an end. For the sake of our children, many of whom were baptized in this Church; for the sake of the future of the Church, which faces the danger of spiritual and moral isolation in the Orthodox world, we will use all the possible chances to express our view in order to bring this madness into an end. Finally, to our great regret, we have to state that if these kinds of developments keep going in the future, we will find it problematic to remain under the Omophor of the Orthodox Church of Finland.”

Moreover, Vicar Veikko Lisitsin of the Orthodox Parish of the city of Kotka wrote a long article in the free-of-charge journal *Analogi* (4/2007) published by four Orthodox parishes in southern Finland under the headline *Against Spiritual Blindness*. In the final part, he emphasizes: “The Church doesn’t accept same-sex marriages, priesthood of homosexuals, female ordination, or Bishops and priests, who act against these doctrines of the Church! Especially now, when positive views on these matters have increased in society, the teachers of the Church and the parents and teachers of children must take seriously the correct position and teaching of the Bible and the Church in these matters. Otherwise this Society and churches are in a strange situation: they act against the basic teaching of the Bible and the Church! In my opinion, those Bishops, priests, deacons and employees of the Church, who teach and act against the views and teaching of the Church in these matters, should consider resignation from their posts.”

3.8. Finnish Episcopal Synod on the presence of the Orthodox in the movement *Community*

This time, even the Episcopal Synod adopted a position to the letter sent to the Archbishop, even though it did so only on 18 March 2008. In the text it sent to the writers of the letter and also published,

the Synod says in the beginning: “The Episcopal Synod examined the comment on the movement *Community*, which has been compiled by Orthodox priests and laymen operating within its circles. The comment supports the rights of representatives of same sex to act as full-fledged members of the Church and considers that any kind of discrimination is sin. In the text they have compiled, Markus Paavola, Hannu Pöyhönen and Heikki Saulamo criticized that the comment of the Orthodox signatories doesn’t in any way dissociate them from the general goals of the movement. In their opinion, the relationship of the priests who have signed the declaration to the goals of the movement *Community* is a particular problem.” After this, the text continues in a fairly surprising manner: “The Episcopal Synod states that the members of the clergy have committed themselves either to marital life or celibacy. It is the demand and ideal starting from the personal decision made by each member of the clergy. The teaching of the Church cannot be revised on the basis of signing any declaration. It is valuable that the Orthodox who have signed the declaration state this: ‘We aren’t creating any new practices into the life of the Church or draw parallels between homosexual partnership and marriage’.” However, in this brief statement, the Episcopal Synod didn’t reply to the question that had been presented, but circumvented the problem they felt embarrassing – and in light of the introductory chapter, they did it intentionally. At the same time, the Episcopal Synod publicized a misleading view on the content of the letter, as if its writers had accused the priests belonging to the movement *Community* of unethical living.

The first sentence in the response of the Episcopal Synod reveals indirectly that the Orthodox priests and lay members of the movement *Community* had – upon the express demand of the Bishops – finally delivered them a new statement, in which they tried to solve the problem of their membership in the movement. The delay of this statement also explains why the reaction of the Episcopal Synod was delayed so much. The statement presented to the Episcopal Synod is exactly the same that is nowadays found on the website of the movement *Community* under the headline *Community* and the Orthodox. The text unofficially approved by the Episcopal Synod is a humanistic goodwill declaration to all minorities, and it doesn’t in any way determine the relationship of the Orthodox members to the concrete goals of the Movement. And now, when the Orthodox appear in the movement *Community* as a section of their own (*Community* and the Orthodox), each random visitor of the website immediately collides with the presence of the “Orthodox” in the movement, which

makes the matter expressly emphatic and official! At the moment, the Orthodox are the one and only clearly named group in the work of the movement *Community*, while earlier they in a sense were lost among the others...

The Episcopal Synod has discussed the participation of the Orthodox in the movement *Community* also on 22 November 2007 in a report they sent to the Ecumenical Patriarchate. In it, they express their approval of the sexual-ethical line of the Movement. The report states: “In the opinion of the Episcopal Synod, the declaration as such is not against Orthodox anthropology or sexual ethics. Equally, it commits to the support and work for full participation of everyone, including sexual minorities, in Christian churches. But it has been written in sociological style, and for this reason it may cause confusion among those Orthodox Christians who take some kind of fundamentalist approach.” It is sad that the report repeats the allegation of the movement *Community* on “threatening letters” received by the Orthodox members of the Movement and the Archbishop, and, on top of everything, in fairly strong words. This is also peculiar, because the topic had been discussed before the session of the Episcopal Synod in Helsinki between the Archbishop, Metropolitan Ambrosius and three lay theologians who had issued the letter to the Archbishop, in which this misunderstanding had been corrected. At that time, the Bishops expressed that they well understood the criticism of the writers of the letter and its necessity.

3.9. Orthodox book on homosexuality

Due to the fact that the question about the relationship of the Orthodox Church to the movement *Community* and the values pursued by it had in the spring of 2008 once again returned to the starting-point, the *Brotherhood of Saint Kosmas of Aitolia* decided to publish a book, in which quotations on homosexuality and sexual ethics would be compiled from the Bible, the Church Fathers, the canons of the Church and esteemed Elders of our times. This book, which was called *Homosexuality in light of Orthodox Tradition* (Homoseksuaalisuus ortodoksisen perinteen valossa, in Finnish), was publicized in the end of October 2008, and the publisher sent it free-of-charge to all the priests of our local Church.

Only a couple of weeks after the book was published, Archbishop Leo issued on 13 November 2008 a statement in *Kotimaa*, the chief organ of the Lutheran Church of Finland, in which he stated that he accepts homosexual partnerships for Orthodox laymen. This statement, which, in truth, seems to reflect more the views of the Archbishop's Theological Secretary, who is a member in the movement *Community*, rather than the Archbishop's own views, spread in various versions in both Orthodox journals and in nation-wide newspapers, causing a lot of confusion among the clergy and laymen of our local Church.

Less than a month later (5 December 2008), the chief organ of the Orthodox Church of Finland *Aamun Koitto* published an issue, in which Tapani Kärkkäinen, editor-in-chief of the journal, a member in the movement *Community*; Archbishop Leo; an anonymous (!?) representative of the Orthodox clergy; and an Orthodox layman who appeared under his own name and confessed his being a homosexual, criticized the said book and its views in fairly strong words. It was also the intention to interview the compiler of the book Hannu Pöyhönen to the journal, but his interview didn't reach it in time, or, rather, the editorial board didn't consider that they could have published it in its entire extent. On the basis of this issue of the journal, *Aamun Koitto* received numerous Letters to the Editor, and "for equality", two of them were published in issue 1/2009 – one of them defended the book under the headline Truth is not to be denied, and one opposed it under the headline In the darkness of tradition. In addition to the first-mentioned comment, written by Fr. Timo Soisalo, the journal didn't later give any room to other comments, which included constructive criticism about the line of the journal and our local Church.

Moreover, the *Orthodox Rainbow Society* reacted in real-time to the book, publishing a review on the book on its website already on 5 November 2008. In the review, the Society warned sensitive people against reading the book. Although in its nature, the book is a compilation of the eternal teaching of the Church, the anonymous writer of the review resorted to exaggerated defamatory rhetoric characteristic of extremist movements: "A question arises, whether it is the goal of the book to destroy the sin of homosexuality from the earth by driving all those with that orientation into suicide?"

The degree of activity of the Orthodox pursuing a new kind of sexual ethics can also perhaps be seen in the fact that soon after the book was published, the website of the movement *Community* received a new section under the headline “*Community*” and the Bible. It consists of a lengthy exegetic article, which in its spirit and results is a genuine reflection of Western exegesis of our times: the article revokes all the points negative about homosexuality, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, and adopts the parts of the Bible, which talk about love neutrally on a general level, as its guiding principle. This exegetic section is extremely problematic for Orthodox theology, because with the argument of love it revokes the Bible as a whole as well as the Tradition of the Church, even though, according to Christ, love is the thing that makes God’s revelation significant. The new section that appeared on the website provides one more ground to the demands that our Bishops must oblige the Orthodox priests and lay theologians to withdraw from the movement *Community*. Even though the Orthodox priests and Orthodox lay theologians of the movement *Community* haven’t defined their view on the official exegesis of the movement, it is sad to note that in their speeches and writings they repeat these views, which are against the Tradition of our Church.

In the spring of 2009, the *Orthodox Diocese of Helsinki* arranged a supplementary education course in Theology for its clergy in Cultural Center Sofia on 13–14 May. On the latter day, only one topic was examined: homosexuality. There were two lectures on this topic, given by Vicar of the Lutheran Parish of Leppävaara in Espoo, Docent Kalervo Salo; and Professor Emerita of Exegesis at the Faculty of Theology of the Helsinki University, Doctor of Theology Raija Sollamo. In his lecture, Vicar *Kalervo Salo* said that he knows the book written by Doctor of Theology Hannu Pöyhönen, and stated that in the Lutheran Church, they rely on everyone’s own morality and ability to find an answer for their own problems. He also said that in accordance with the Lutheran thinking, the Parliament acts as appointed by God and that its power is given by God, also when the Parliament, for instance, decides about registered partnership. Professor *Raija Sollamo*, who is Lutheran, too, and also a member in the movement *Community*, analyzed the parts of the Bible which are negative about homosexuality, and questioned their binding nature, appealing to timeline and viewpoints of contemporary science. According to her, there are diverging ingredients in the Bible, too. Thus, she characterized the friendship of David and Jonathan as a homoerotic relationship that included hugging and kissing. Moreover, she stated that Jesus was in such a close interaction with His disciples

that it is easy to think that it had not been only a relationship between the teacher and the pupil. In the end of her speech, she still emphasized the defense of same-sex partnership as a sign of true Christian love, and suggested that the Church shouldn't discuss the question, whether same-sex partnership is justified or not, because it is decided by the Parliament, and the Church should just think how it could support the homosexuals in their marriages. It is noteworthy that none of those present in the lecture expressed any kinds of criticism against the views brought up in the lectures. On the contrary, the Orthodox priests present in the event emphasized in their comments that those who oppose the blessing of the lives of same-sex partners are fundamentalists and imbalanced, and that they suffer from homophobia. Therefore, it seems that this "supplementary course in Theology" was intended to convey the opposite view of the leaders of the Diocese to its clergy against the book published by the Brotherhood of Saint Kosmas of Aitolia, which had been delivered to all the priests of the Diocese of Helsinki, too.

3.10. Conference of sexual minorities in Järvenpää

The question on homosexuality in our local Church rose to a completely new level along with the international conference of European Forum of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Christian Groups held in the town of Järvenpää on 20–24 May 2009. It had the topic of Courage to Follow the Law of Love. One of the official organizers of the conference was the *Orthodox Rainbow Society*, as the Activities section of the website of the movement *Community* tells ("movement *Community* was the official organizer of the annual conference of the European Forum in 2009, together with, for instance, *the Arcus network*; *Malkus*; and *Orthodox Rainbow Society*."). Moreover, the presence of the Orthodox Church of Finland – assumedly with the blessing of the local Bishop – was strongly felt in the everyday program of the conference. The following headlines, which in some cases are very confusing, have been selected in the official English-language program of the conference:

—Together we give a voice to our praise of Creation. Practicing the akathist to the Praise to God for all creation, a service which is easy to learn. All who want to sing welcome. Orthodox cantor and music teacher Tuomas Sidoroff (21 May at 17:00–18:30 hours).

— General Secretary, Father Heikki Huttunen, Ecumenical Counsel of Finland, Orthodox Church of Finland: Human sexuality in the Orthodox theology (22 May at 10:00–13:00 hours) [The movement *Community* characterizes Heikki Huttunen as a keynote speaker of the Järvenpää conference].

- Our response to persecution – growing towards spiritual strength. Johan Slätis (22 May at 15:30–17:00) [a student of Orthodox theology at Joensuu University].
- Can male priest love and live with a man? Discussion with an introduction by an Orthodox priest working in southern Finland (23 May at 09:00–10:45 hours).
- From invisibility to visibility. Spiritual and communal ways to establish a rainbow identity in an Orthodox context. Introduction to the theme by *Orthodox Rainbow Society* members (23 May at 11:30–12:45 hours).
- Orthodox vespers (20 May, 21 May and 22 May, always in the end of the evening).

Metropolitan Ambrosius also intended to attend the opening of the conference himself, but due to the great national and international commotion caused by the matter, a few days before the conference he probably considered it best to stay out of it. The Rev. Johannes Karhusaari, who has slightly earlier been nominated the priest in Järvenpää, appeared instead of him in the opening, as told by the press release of the movement *Community* on the opening on 21 May 2009: “Father **Johannes Karhusaari** (boldface in the press release) from the Orthodox church in Järvenpää presented greeting words in the opening. He hoped that the Orthodox who belong to sexual minorities could find their spiritual home in their own parish and that they could fully participate in the liturgical life, prayers and sacraments of the church.” However, obviously due to ecclesiastic diplomacy, it wasn’t desired that Johannes Karhusaari’s name would be visible in the official program of the conference, which sounds rather peculiar.

The program revealed in advance many features, due to which it should have been possible to realize that the visible presence of the Orthodox Church in the conference was a mistake. One of these was the lecture of a Bishop of the Lutheran Church of Finland, Doctor of Theology Wille Riekkinen *How to define theological stand on homosexuality*, and the *Dancing Conference* that was arranged as the evening program of the first day of the conference. Even the official Russian news agency *Interfax* noted the conference in a press release it published on 21 May 2009 under the headline *Clerics of Constantinople Patriarchate to participate in a gay conference in Finland*. In it, *Interfax* quoted some details of the program in a rather ironic tone.

However, the conference became very problematic for the Orthodox Church of Finland, above all, for the reason that those who participated in the conference received a completely false picture about the attitude of the Orthodox Church toward homosexuality. It is well-grounded to believe that the modern approach of the Orthodox has encouraged many participants to such an extent that in their home country they may approach a local Orthodox Church, where they are very likely to face a surprise, colliding with a conservative and “intolerant” spirit. At worst, the approach of the Orthodox Church of Finland may increase in other local churches external pressure to re-evaluate their traditional teaching on sexual ethics. As a defense, we might perhaps state that the Orthodox Church of Finland wasn't an official participant in the conference. However, it is self-evident that every participant of the Järvenpää conference felt that the approach of the Diocese of Helsinki was the approach of the entire Orthodox Church of Finland. We can with good grounds ask, whether one of the local Churches has the right to convey a message against patristic teaching – and, on top of all, in such a striking manner?

3.11. After the Järvenpää conference

Even though the Orthodox Church of Finland gained a lot of criticism and negative publicity about the international conference of sexual minorities in Järvenpää, it seems that the line of those pursuing new liberal ethics won't change. An anonymous student of orthodox theology was on 28 May 2009 interviewed in *Kotimaa*, the chief organ of the Lutheran Church of Finland, who declared that it is the goal of the *Orthodox Rainbow Society* to “get some Orthodox parish to open its doors to vespers directed for sexual minorities and open for everyone a few times per year”. According to the interviewee, these rainbow services, as he calls them, have so far been arranged in the Lutheran church of the Kallio district in Helsinki. The said interview *Anonymity protects against threats* was, according to the student, published as an interview of an anonymous person, due to “a small group pursuing a hard-line counter-campaign” which every Orthodox and all the Lutherans who have followed the news items published in *Kotimaa* about this topic links to the Brotherhood of Saint Kosmas of Aitolia. This “small group pursuing a hard-line counter-campaign” was accused of many serious things. However, anonymity is an efficient way of defense also in presenting false accusations. Let's mention that a Lutheran member of the movement *Community* acted as the interviewer of *Kotimaa* again.

In addition to the Järvenpää conference, it is likely that the *Orthodox Rainbow Society* also attended the Helsinki Pride event in June, because on its website it tells that it had attended the event already in 2007, a year after it was founded. The website of the movement *Community* advertised the event under the headline *Make a Journey to Gay Finland 22–26 June 2009*. During this event, the students moved around in vehicles in Helsinki, “bringing the colors of rainbow all over the city and presented the central gay regions of the capital city”. According to the program, Helsinki Pride 2009 culminated in the “hottest party of Gay Finland”.

Although the circles advocating the idea that homosexuality is a normal orientation are thus proceeding in a determined manner in our local Church, too, it is a fact that by the autumn of 2009 the Episcopal Synod hasn’t been able to present any statements on homosexuality as an ethical problem. The statement that same-sex partnerships cannot be identified with Christian marriage isn’t a response to the phenomenon as such, and it cannot remain the final statement of the Episcopal Synod in this matter.

3.12. “Open atmosphere for discussions”

Many of those who pursue the interests of the homosexuals in the Orthodox Church of Finland have repeatedly advocated for an open atmosphere for discussions, but it has repeatedly been proven out to be an empty phrase. Instead of discussion, they have so far just been labeling the representatives of the traditional approach as fundamentalists and presented arguments, which don’t emerge from a Christian world view and the Tradition of the Church, as the Rev. Timo Soisalo says in his Letter to the Editor comment in *Aamun Koitto*: “One mark of aggressive and determined fight is the act of dishonoring and swinging the axe of stigmatization. The mark of foolish fundamentalist is stamped in everyone, who dares to defend Christian basic truths. The subject is allegedly discussed. In fact, there is no discussion, but by the strenuous and public sticking to the subject they seek and demand approval for homosexuality in our Church.”

The seeming nature of the discussion was revealed, when the Orthodox priests, who are members in the movement *Community*, refused to meet the signatories of the letter delivered to the Archbishop in

a closed event at their own home area, to which Metropolitan Ambrosius invited the signatories, and to which the signatories were ready to travel from afar. At first, the date of the meeting was “sought” for half a year, and then Metropolitan Ambrosius declared that the priests of the movement *Community* finally don’t intend to participate in the meeting, because not all of them agree to attend it. This conveyed a picture that the priests of the movement *Community* don’t have serious grounds for their membership, even though, on the other hand, the cancellation of the meeting implies that perhaps there weren’t any serious plans to arrange it, because it would naturally have been easy for the Bishop of the Diocese to oblige his priests to participate in it.

The genuine desire of the Orthodox members of the movement *Community* about an open ecclesiastical discussion atmosphere is also questioned by the fact that in the beginning of February 2009, two Orthodox priests who belong to the movement raised in a police district near Helsinki a libel charge against a person, who had criticized their actions in the movement in sms messages he had sent to them. Let’s also mention that all the three people have known each other for fifteen years, and one of the priests has even taught religion to the person he was suing. When a policeman phoned the said person, he mentioned a few other names, too, but when he heard the background, he didn’t contact them. The matter was settled and the charge was dismissed. However, in about a month, the other of the two priests raised a new charge against the same person in the Helsinki police district, this time for libel and unlawful threat. The charge was based on the above-mentioned sms messages and one message on an Internet discussion forum, which the said priest had mistakenly assumed to be linked to the person he accused... In the middle of May, the Helsinki police announced that they will discontinue the case, due to its insignificance and costs.

The Orthodox of the movement *Community* acted in a similar manner in regard with Doctor of Theology Hannu Pöyhönen, because soon after his book was published, one of them contacted the principal of the educational institution in which he teaches, and accused him of matters that proved out to be groundless. It was alleged that he had in a three-day course of Orthodox ethics concentrated on homosexuality alone, even though this theme was touched for about 15–20 minutes in a 90-minute lecture on sexual ethics. Moreover, it was alleged that he had at that time been selling his book. Before the matter was dropped, it went as high as to the board of the educational institution, which is chaired

by an Orthodox priest who belongs to the movement *Community*. Undoubtedly, it was the goal even here to silence criticism against the Orthodox members of the movement *Community* through such a warning.

Unfortunately, cases of this kind seem to be on the increase.

3.13. Scope of influence of the Orthodox members of the movement *Community* in the Finnish Orthodox Church

As the facts presented above show, the Orthodox members of the movement *Community* make themselves heard in our local Church, because they have exceptionally important seats in it. This can be swiftly noted by everyone who casts a glimpse on the list of the Orthodox members of the Movement. They have for a long time been in control of the Orthodox mass media, for instance. Due to this and their often questionable methods and efficient networking, a Greek “Theoprovritos”, who is well aware of the Finnish matters, has on his website started talking about gay mafia in the Orthodox Church of Finland. Even though this allegation may sound fierce, a local Orthodox Bishop used exactly the same term in a discussion with a member of our Brotherhood, independent on the said person.

Parallel with the mass media, the ideology of the movement *Community* has gained visibility in the schoolbooks on Orthodox religion in the past few years. In the summer of 2007, Jyrki Härkönen compiled for senior high schools the book *Orthodox ethics and dogmatics – richness of ethical thinking and doctrinal heritage in the Orthodox Church*. In addition to numerous big dogmatic problems – the writer alleges, for instance, that natural disasters, just as all the evil causing destruction and sorrow, is irrational and also a mystery for God” (page 66); and that “the Church was created so that it could be split into pieces” (page 67) – the book also contains ethical views on corporality chiefly comparable with Gnosticism of the early Christian era. The problems occurring in the book are serious, above all, because the book was published by the Council for Publication of Orthodox Literature, i.e., the official publication department of our local Church.

Here are some examples of the problems of Jyrki Härkönen’s book in the field of ethics:

— On page 58, the writer states that “according to Gregory of Palamas, human body isn’t an enemy, but a friend on the road towards transfiguration”. However, in saying this, he detaches the philosophy of St. Gregory from its correct context (physical ascetism and participation of body in prayer). On the basis of his mistaken starting-point, the writer alleges that “Christianity, which emerged and had influence in the Mediterranean region considers that – – sensuality and passion are positive things” and that “divinity of corporality was the radical message of the Gospel”.

— On the same page (58), the writer appeals to Olivier Clément and states that the views of the Church Fathers on sexuality were bound to the social morality of their times, and after ithe doesn’t hesitate to draw his own conclusion: “The Fathers were able to create a new view on personal and freely operating God, but didn’t agree to extend this freedom to sexuality.”

— On page 57, the writer speaks about “sexual ethics of Paul”, which, from the point of view of Orthodox theology, is somewhat peculiar, as if Apostle Paul had in the field of sexual ethics represented a line of his own, something detached from Christ! The writer questions the authority of Apostle Paul in ethics, for instance, by alleging that “it was his goal to be loyal towards the Roman society in his views on morality” and stating that Paul “wasn’t such an unambiguous and undeniable authority for his contemporaries as he has been in the later centuries.” Therefore, in the end, the writer is able to state: “Orthodox view on love and sexuality contains many various ways.”

Jyrki Härkönen’s book has often been defended by stating that it doesn’t attempt to “review the concepts on right and wrong, but tries to provide fresh viewpoints into ethical questions through Orthodox anthropology”. However, we can with good grounds ask, whether senior high school pupils are able to adopt a critical view on the allegations of the book, which strongly reflect the personal views of its compiler? Isn’t it a task of the ever-declining religious teaching in schools – especially in regard with a religious minority – to offer the pupils expressly the world view and life of the Church, stretching out towards sanctity, because that’s something they cannot get anywhere else?

3.14. Ecclesiastical way of thinking is changing

Many may be amazed how some people can strenuously for years complain about the Orthodox members of the movement *Community* and about the view of our local Church on homosexuality in general. However, they aren't loose topics in our ecclesiastical reality, because they reveal that the way of thinking is changing here; let's hope that it hasn't been finalized yet. Our ecclesiastical situation is like a toboggan slide or skiing slope, along which we slide at an accelerating speed in an amiable atmosphere and with a smile. However, in this way, we slide farther and farther away from the top, from our starting-point – Orthodox Tradition. In the following we bring up some things that can serve as a gauge in evaluating the distance of our local Church from the Orthodox Tradition.

3.14.1. Ecumenism

As a small religious minority, the Orthodox of Finland simply must take the dominating Lutheran Church into consideration. However, “ecumenical politeness” has started watering down the liturgical life of our Church. In a Diocese, for instance, the Bishop has in some cases allowed commemorating not only him but also the local Lutheran Bishop so that the Lutherans present in the church would feel more comfortable. According to the announcement of the local Bishop, one Finnish Diocese arranges an ecumenical divine service together with the Lutherans every month, but it's true that it doesn't include Eucharist. Nevertheless, it is a known fact that in Finland, many priests and even Bishops silently distribute the gifts to the heterodox, too. Metropolitan of Helsinki Ambrosius has even suggested that “Communion hospitality” with the Lutheran church should be adopted as a goal so that it would at the first stage extend to the (Lutheran) family members of the Orthodox in mixed marriages (*Aamun Koitto* 17/2005). In the proskomide, the nature of Communion and Eucharist as a sacrament of the Church has been violated in Finland a long time ago, because by the blessing of the Bishops, the priests regularly commemorate all the living and dead.

Metropolitan of Helsinki Ambrosius in practice counts Mikael Agricola, who is known as the Lutheran reformer in Finland, into the saints, when he says in *Ortodoksiviesti* 4/2007, circulated to the Orthodox households of the Helsinki parish: “Nothing prevents us Finns from commemorating

Bishop Mikael in our private prayers, even though the calendar of Saints isn't used in the Lutheran Church.”

In the opinion of the Rev. Heikki Huttunen, General Secretary of the Finnish Ecumenical Council, faith in Holy Trinity and Christ as God-Man is a sufficient basis for unity of Christians, i.e., to unite them into one flock of Christ. In the journal of the organization *Näköala-Utsikt* 4/2006, he says: “In the rules of the Finnish Ecumenical Council, this basis is expressed in the following manner: *Churches and Christian communities, which, according to the Bible, confess the Lord Jesus Christ as the God and the Savior, are welcomed as members of the Council. Due to this common testimony, these Churches and Christian communities are striving together to fulfill their common calling for the glory of one God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.* The nucleus of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, shared tradition of the Christians of the east and west, has been summarized into this word formulation. It is a sufficient basis for spiritual unity of Christians, their common service, and confession in the world.” Soon he also specifies this thought, in which a “creed” developed outside the Church is raised to the position of its own Creed: “There are those, who would prefer to add something to the ecumenical basis. They may find it hard to trust that this nucleus of faith unites all those who commit themselves to it as disciples of Christ.”

Metropolitan Ambrosius goes even further. For him, those who belong to other religions are brothers in faith, and in praying with them, it is possible to experience something from the Miracle of Pentecost. The website of cultural journal *Kaltio* (<http://www.Kaltio.fi/index.php?164>) quotes one of his speeches, which he held, when serving as the Metropolitan of Oulu: “I had the opportunity to attend the joint peace prayer day in Assisi, Italy, in 1986, hosted by Pope John Paul II between various religions. In Assisi, representatives of Islam, Asian religions and religions of native peoples prayed together with representatives of various Churches for the peace of world. A few days later, this caused a great public commotion. Roman Catholics and we, the representatives of other Churches, were accused of syncretism (mixture of religions). The Holy See, which is better than the rest of us in the complicated figures of diplomacy, explained the event in the following manner: ‘We certainly didn't pray together, but in the presence of each other.’ At least some of the people present, including me, experienced the situation otherwise. In my heart, I joined the prayers and sighs read by Hindus,

Buddhists, Moslems, etc. The thought that the situation would be somehow unreal or absurd didn't even come to my mind. On the contrary, the atmosphere resembled the miracle of Pentecost; a glimpse of hope amidst the variety of confrontations and upheavals of our contemporary world. Even as Christians, we were able to pray together for peace, because we understood that God was somehow present in the search of truth by the others, too."

The newest "ecumenical" opening in our local Church seems to comprise yoga: famous Belgian yoga teacher Peter Marchand, one of the founders of the Sanatan Society, arrived to Helsinki on 3–4 October 2009 and taught yoga at the *Orthodox Culture Center Sofia*, which also serves as the diocesan center of Helsinki. The seminar went under the headline *Yoga of Truth*.

In the spring meeting of the Finnish Ecumenical Council, held on 27 March 2008 in Orthodox Cultural Center Sofia in Helsinki, Metropolitan Ambrosius in a way crystallizes the view of our local Church towards ecumenism in his speech *Divine Wisdom in Post-Modern Twilight*, saying boldly (http://www.ekumenia.fi/sen_esittaytyy) : "Finland is a model country in inter-church operation. If the Finnish Orthodox Church weren't so bound by international praxis, cooperation might be even closer in Finland. We are the receptive part in the process; we follow the discussion going on in the Lutheran Church. And it has had an effect on us, for instance, in regard with ordination of women; in this matter, we certainly are on a wave completely different from the rest of the Orthodox world."

3.14.2. Ordination of women

Metropolitan of Helsinki Ambrosius brought the question of female ordination to the spotlights in the Orthodox Church of Finland in the beginning of 2007 on the basis of an ecumenical document of the Anglican-Orthodox Commission about it. *Helsingin Sanomat*, the newspaper with the widest circulation in Finland, presented his views on 1 February 2007: "According to Metropolitan Ambrosius, ordination of women isn't a factor separating churches. The Orthodox have an open approach to the matter, but consecration of women bishops faces big problems in terms of the doctrine of the church." The same newspaper quoted him on 6 April 2007 and said: "According to Metropolitan of Helsinki Ambrosius, it isn't impossible to think that women could be ordained priests in the Orthodox Church, too." However, the question "isn't topical yet", and it hasn't "so far been examined

in any forums of the Orthodox Church.” Master of Theology Aino Nenola, Missionary Secretary of Orthodox Mission Association, interviewed Metropolitan Ambrosius about this topic in the radio during Holy Week 2007, and the timing attracted great disapproval among the believers.

Many female theologians and other female lay activists in the Orthodox Church of Finland commented the matter in the Letters to the Editor page of *Helsingin Sanomat*. Master of Theology Aino Nenola, Master of Theology Outi Vasko and Matushka (Presbytera) Leena Mikkilä-Huttunen wrote on 29 March 2007: “Many esteemed Orthodox theologians consider that ordination of women into priesthood is an open issue, for which they look for a solution through open discussion. Even though the initiative of the discussion arose outside the Orthodox Church – awakened by the ecumenical movement – it has matured into a debate of the Orthodox Church on gender and priesthood. – – The grounds for male priesthood lie in the tradition of the Church: women have never been ordained priests or bishops. This continuity is considered important, even if no-one is able to explain the theology behind it. Arguments on priesthood as an icon (priest as an icon of Christ) or different natures of man and woman are naturally very interesting in the theological sense, but they are least of all insufficient in explaining why priesthood as an office is restricted for men alone.” In the same newspaper on 4 April 2007, Student of Theology Riina Nguyen, Master of Theology Jooa Vuorinen and Student of Arts Elena Gorshkow-Salonen asked: “Can the church afford not to use the constantly growing group of women with theological education?” and added: “The arrogant attitude, according to which the Church doesn’t discuss some topics, ignores the constant and creative work of the Holy Spirit among us.”

Such a “theology”, in which Tradition is challenged to provide contemporary people with arguments acceptable for them and fit for their world view, is widely spreading in the Orthodox Church of Finland. Egotistical criticism admiring one’s own intellect has become a second nature, especially among the young.

3.14.3. Divorces of the clergy

Divorces of Orthodox priests have alarmingly increased in the past few years in Finland without any visible actions to restore the situation. It is likely that divorces are promoted by the fact that the

divorced can now almost without exception continue serving as priests. In his article *Against spiritual blindness*, published in *Analogi* 4/2007, Father Veikko Lisitsin states: “In the end of the 1980s, there were only a few divorced (priests) in our Church, but since the end of the 1990s and up to now, there are about 30 divorced or separated priests, i.e., about 20 % of the ordained priests. This fact should awaken the Bishops and the Church to adopt measures in order to prevent such a trend.”

3.14.4. Freemasonry

Upon retirement of Archbishop John, Metropolitan of Helsinki Ambrosius has several times tried to urge the Orthodox Church of Finland to revise its view towards Freemasons: first in 2002 (see *Logos* 3/2002) and later in 2007, when he spoke about this, for instance, in nationwide TV news. Freemasonry was strikingly brought up in the Orthodox Church in a new manner in the summer of 2009, when it was noted that Metropolitan Ambrosius had already twice in consecutive years himself actively invited the members of all the Freemason Lodges of Finland to his Diocesan Center Sofia (see official journal of the Finnish Freemasons *Koilliskulma* 2/2009). In connection with the EU election debate of the Rev. Mitro Repo, this matter was also discussed on a nationwide TV channel and in even greater detail on its website, where Tuomas Kerkkänen, news editor of the Finnish Broadcasting Company YLE, wrote on 3 June 2009: “Metropolitan Ambrosius is known of his relationships with the business circles, and he has cooperated, for instance, with the Freemasons. He left the organization in the beginning of the 1980s, but has visited its meetings as a speaker until the recent years. According to his opinion, Freemasonry is nothing more than membership in the Rotary Movement. Therefore the prohibition in the canons against the membership in secret societies cannot be extended to the activities of Freemasons of our times.”

In regard with the Rotary Movement and the Lions’ Club, almost all the Finnish Orthodox priests are members in them, although in the Orthodox world they are considered outer courts of Freemasonry, because the “most talented” of their members are often invited to join the Freemasons. In the Orthodox Church of Finland, these movements can sometimes be criticized, but chiefly of elitism alone (see *Logos* 3/2002).

3.14.5. Orthodox Pascha

As is known, the Orthodox Church of Finland is the one and only local Church that celebrates Pascha together with the western Christians, i.e., at a time differing from that of the Orthodox Pascha. True, the permission for this was granted by the Orthodox Patriarch Meletios (Metaxakis) of Constantinople in 1923, when the Orthodox of Finland had sought shelter in the Ecumenical Patriarchate. However, the permission was meant to be temporary, and it should have been applied every year again. Now this “temporary” practice has been conducted for almost a century. Attempts have at times been made to inspire a discussion on returning to the praxis of the family of the Orthodox Churches, both in Orthodox journals and in bilateral discussions with the Bishops, but all the circles are strongly against a change. The most peculiar thing is the defiance based on self-sufficiency, according to which the Orthodox Church of Finland is a forerunner and shower of the way to the whole Orthodox world in questions related to Pascha. In the editorial of *Aamun Koitto* 7/1997, the official organ of our local Church, Tapani Kärkkäinen expresses in words the thought that is far too often heard in Finland: “We, the Finnish Orthodox, must not feel inferior in relation with the other Orthodox, whose churches are constantly in pain and lose their energy in calendar disputes. Many Western Orthodox in particular comment us in the following way: That’s a church courageous enough to solve the calendar issue in the way all the Orthodox Churches should do.”

During the year of lively debates, 2007, Metropolitan of Helsinki Ambrosius says in *Aamun Koitto* on 13 July 2007: “Our Church lives in the modern ages and looks ahead. Neither do we sigh for the old calendar. In our mission and confession, we take advantage of the best achievements of the culture of our own times.” However, the claim of the Metropolitan was questioned in *Aamun Koitto* 16/2007 by Doctor of Medicine Ilkka Soini, who pointed out that the question on Orthodox Pascha is still topical in our local Church. He said: “What, don’t we miss the old calendar? I have had innumerable discussions about this matter – at the latest a couple of weeks ago – and I can assure that in our autonomous local Church there is a remarkable group of active believers, both laymen and members of the clergy, who are conscious of their tradition and who in my way feel that the current calendar issue is an extra wound on the Body of Christ. There are innumerable connections, in which Finnish

Orthodox have to try to provide explanations why we celebrate Pascha in accordance with the Western calendar – which was meant to be temporary and for which we should apply for a permission every year – and thus diverge from all the other Orthodox of the world.”

3.14.6. Orthodox Baptism

The Orthodox Church of Finland has cemented the practice based on the principle of economy about approval of heterodox baptism and receives all its new members, baptized elsewhere in the name of the Trinitarian God, through Chrismation – also in cases, when the individuals themselves would want to receive Orthodox Baptism. In these cases, Orthodox Baptism is even considered heretical, because Finnish Orthodox priests approach the idea of one Baptism only in numerical not in qualitative terms. This leads into an absurd situation, because in this way, any baptism performed anyhow by anyone, in which we can assume that water has been used and the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have been mentioned, is considered “one Baptism” meant by the Church, and on this basis, the Baptism according to the Tradition of the Church may in no case be performed! In the view of the Church, the sacraments are, however, always guaranteed by the Orthodox Church and its Tradition, and not some detached minimal criteria, because sacraments aren’t magic – they are the source of the life of the Church.

The single-tracked view prevailing in Finland has most clearly been presented by the Rev. Johannes Karhusaari in *Ortodoksiviesti* 10/2000, in which he criticizes the view presented by Nun Kristoduli: “Nun Kristoduli also brings up the heresy, against which we have to fight: ‘ – – those joining the Church request rebaptism by themselves’.” It is an illustrating fact that no comments were sent to this article!

3.15. Conclusion

As the above may show, a deep-going change of the way of thinking is going on in the Orthodox Church of Finland, in which catholic truth is being replaced by Protestant individualistic thinking anchored to the spirit of the world. Therefore, those who appreciate the Orthodox Tradition in our country consider that the on-going debate on sexual ethics is an extremely serious stage, at which the future of Finnish Orthodoxy as a whole is at stake. Therefore Doctor of Theology Hannu Pöyhönen

– writer of the book *Homosexuality in light of Orthodox Tradition* – replied in an interview by the Internet version of *Aamun Koitto* to the question “How important do you think that the topic (on homosexuality) should be examined in the Church?” in the following manner: “For our local Church, this topic is a question of life and death. If we now diverge from the universal Orthodox Tradition in this question, most probably already tomorrow we will diverge from it in some other crucial questions. Following this, soon the family of the local Orthodox Churches may not recognize us anymore as a representative of the Orthodox Tradition. Because the Church, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, has already settled this question, we should start to teach in line with the Tradition of the Church concerning this theme, instead of keeping up a discussion for the discussion’s sake. It’s also our duty to support all those who are struggling with this cross so that they would have strength to keep up the good fight of faith and take hold of the eternal life, to which they were called in holy Baptism.”

4. Appendices:

4.1. A letter to the Holy Episcopal Synod of the Finnish Orthodox Church in Joensuu, 29th of September, 2005. Mr Markus Paavola, Mr Hannu Pöyhönen, Mrs Anna Pöyhönen, Mr Jukka Mäntymäki

To the Holy Episcopal Synod of the Finnish Orthodox Church

We, the undersigned wish to present for the Holy Episcopal Synod our deep concern about the danger facing the Christian ethical education and sober minded pastoral work of the Finnish Orthodox Church.

A group of priests and lay theologians of our local Church have publicly given their support for movement *Community* – a movement that defies Christian sexual ethics – by signing under their Declaration (see http://www.yhteys.org/julistus_frame.html). The main principles of the movement *Community* are ecclesiastical blessing of homes for homosexual couples, ecclesiastical blessing of same-sex unions and access to priesthood for those living in same-sex unions. It is clear that our Catholic Church cannot undersign these principles in no circumstances, because according to Christian ethics we cannot approve in any case homosexual partnerships.

Also if it should be, that the question is merely about the private support given to these principles by members of clergy outside our own Church's witness, it contradicts seriously the ecumenical task of our Church, because Church's special ecumenical task is to bear orthodox witness to heterodox.

For these impending reasons we see that it is essential to the Holy Episcopal Synod to give a clear statement where those members of clergy, who have undersigned the Declaration, are obliged to denounce the movement mentioned and its principles, because "No man can serve two masters" (Matthew 6:24).

Furthermore it has become evident that in the midst of our local Church the ensued discussion about the homosexuality according to Orthodox Church is obscuring the views of many believers in this sensitive ethical issue. At the same time discussion is showing unpleasant sides when priests and laypeople, who are sincerely teaching according to the Church, have become targets for personal insults.

Therefore, we the undersigned, regard highly necessary that Holy Episcopal Synod takes whole and firm stand in question about homosexuality according to the Church. With this holistic approach the ground for deliberately aimed and distorted teaching and for general obscuring of sexual ethics is blown away. Clear confirmation of Christian ethical teaching also strengthens both the people's trust to own local Church and the credibility of our local Church in the family of Orthodox Churches.

We approach the Holy Episcopal Synod not in order to condemn those members of clergy and the homosexual members of our Church, who are involved in movement *Community*, but for the sake of their salvation. In the life and mission of Church, pray there is no such a matter ahead of man's salvation.

In Joensuu, 29th of September, 2005

With due reverence

Markus Paavola, Hannu Pöyhönen, Anna Pöyhönen, Jukka Mäntymäki

4.2. Collage of the website of yhteys.org

4.2.1. Front page

The movement *Community* is an ecumenical solidarity and support group, which

- Defends and promotes a decent and Christian way to relate to sexual and gender minorities;
- Opposes discrimination of sexual and gender minorities in society and in churches; and
- Promotes a neutral discussion and interaction respecting the various parties involved.

The movement *Community* has a background organization called Support for Ecumenical movement *Community* Association.

Goals of movement *Community*

- Homes of gay and lesbian couples will be blessed, when requested
- Gays and lesbians working in parishes can register their same-sex union without fear of consequences
- Churches will adopt measures to ensure that gay and lesbian couples may receive blessing to their registered same-sex unions, when requested
- [--]

4.2.2. Declaration

Community

COMMUNITY is an open forum for all the members of Christian churches and communities, who believe that the gospel of Jesus Christ also embraces sexual and gender minorities, such as gays, lesbians and bisexuals, as well as trans-gender individuals as full-standing people and Christians. They have the right to participate as themselves in the life and management of Christian parishes.

WE ARE a group of Christians, individuals with a variety of backgrounds, who work to materialize the above-mentioned right in practice. We invite new members to look for ever-deepening concept on community and courage to work for our goal.

AS PEOPLE committed to Community, we are active members of our Christian churches and communities, both office-holders and lay people. In our work related to pastoral care, education and administration, as well as in the everyday life of Christian parishes, we have faced the often painful reality of the lives of people who belong to sexual and gender minorities.

WE CALL TO Community people in Christian churches and communities ready to serve as friends, pastoral caregivers and supporters of those who belong to sexual and gender minorities in various parts of our country.

WE ALSO LOOK for people, who want to promote the debate on the rights of those in sexual and gender minorities both in Christian churches and communities and society on the whole. We try to make sure that no-one will be left alone in his/her internal struggle or under pressure of public attacks and prejudices. Silence and lies are a destructive burden for all those involved. We want to create in our Christian communities an atmosphere, in which it is possible to be honest and to live according to one's conscience, with no need to fear that one is rejected or insulted for it.

AS CHRISTIANS, WE are bound by responsibility, respect, confidence and reciprocal commitment in inter-personal relations, including sexuality. The Bible doesn't contain any part, which would condemn a faithful marital relationship based on respect and commitment between people of the same sex. The parts in the Bible interpreted in this way are chiefly related to rejection of sexual abuse and irresponsibility. We know that the Bible is interpreted in light of various traditions and with a variety of emphases. At the same time, we have confidence that open debate and new research can help us to get out of old and biased interpretations based on a fear of deviation. Many questions are difficult and answers are still open. However, we have confidence that, in accordance to the promise given by Jesus, the Holy Spirit will guide us towards the truth.

COMMUNITY REQUIRES that the principles and practices, which constantly cause anxiety among the people who belong to sexual and gender minorities and function in Christian churches and communities, should be re-evaluated. Those complicate the lives of these people as Christians and may also restrict their participation in the sacraments of the church. Moreover, valuable work of many employees is lost.

IN CHRISTIAN FAITH, the most crucial thing is God's mercy, granted in Jesus Christ. This gospel of forgiveness and conciliation calls from isolation into community and from alienation into mutual confidence between Christians with different sexual orientations. The gospel provides the back-

ground for reciprocal respect and cooperation both in office and the life of Christian communities in general.

At the moment, we are especially concerned about the fact that employees, elected officials and other people bearing a responsibility in the parishes, who belong to sexual and gender minorities often cannot but keep silent about their sexual orientation or resign from their work and even their entire Christian community.

Homosexual employees who live in stabilized and committed same-sex unions also give Christian churches and parishes an opportunity to provide positive examples for their members, who belong to sexual minorities. This would strengthen the right of everyone to have sacraments, pastoral care and Christian unity.

On behalf of the movement *Community*:

Mr. Raimo Harjula, Docent, Vantaa
 Mr. Hannu Honkkila, Dean, Helsinki
 Mr. Matti Hyrck, Doctor of Theology, Psychotherapist, Kirkkonummi
 Mr. Sakari Häkkinen, Doctor of Theology, Diocesan Secretary, Kuopio
 Mr. Mikko Juva, Doctor of Theology and Philosophy, Turku
 Ms. Katja Kaila, Master of Arts, Helsinki
 Ms. Maija Kalin, Docent, Jyväskylä
 Mr. Matti J. Kuronen, Dean, Lappeenranta
 Ms. Liisa Laamanen, Hospital Chaplain, Helsinki
 Ms. Pirkko Lahti, Psychologist, Helsinki
 Ms. Pirjo Latokangas, Family Adviser, Helsinki
 Mr. Kari Latvus, Doctor of Theology, Järvenpää
 Ms. Outi Lehtipuu, Licentiate of Theology, Vantaa
 Mr. Martti Lindqvist, Docent, Mäntyharju
 Mr. Lauri Maarala, Adult Education Chaplain, Vantaa
 Ms. Talvikki Mattila, Licentiate of Theology, Helsinki
 Ms. Aino-Kaarina Mäkisalo, Lecturer, Helsinki
 Ms. Leena Nissinen, Psychotherapist, Helsinki
 Mr. Martti Nissinen, Docent, Helsinki
 Mr. Lassi Nummi, Writer, Helsinki
 Ms. Anni Pesonen, Master of Theology, Helsinki
 Ms. Raija Sollamo, Vice Rector, Vantaa
 Mr. Ulf Särs, Educational Secretary, Helsinki
 Ms. Liisa Tuovinen, Dean, Järvenpää

4.2.3. Activities

NEIGHBOURLY NETWORK

The neighbourly network of the movement *Community* provides discussion and support services to those who belong to sexual and gender minorities. They include, for instance, shared everyday routines, pastoral care and spiritual guidance, individual and family therapy, work guidance, judicial advices, and peer activities.

[– –]

The work of the neighbourly network is based on the principles of Christian love, recorded in the declaration of the movement *Community*. More detailed information about the work of the Neighbourly Network is available from the contact persons of this network. With them, you can also discuss the course to be taken, if no suitable discussion or support service is available in the network at the moment. The contact persons are Deaconess Arja Tuunela (Lutheran), tel. 040-822 0767, arja.tuunela@elisanel.fi, and Reverend Markku Salminen (Orthodox), tel. 040-501 6190, markku.salminen@hki.ort.fi.

(Unofficial translation from Finnish)

4.3. “Welcome to the Website of Orthodox Rainbow Society”

<http://sateenkaariseura.wordpress.com/>



Ortodoksinen Sateenkaariseura

Vertaisryhmä ortodoksisille seksuaalivähemmistöihin kaaduville ihmisille: tukea, tietoa, toimintaa

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LATEST NEWS

05.11.2008:
 Sateenkaariseuran näkökulma kirjaan "Homoseksuaalisuus ortodoksisen perinteen valossa". Lue lisää klikkaamalla [Articles](#).

Home

Tervetuloa Ortodoksinen Sateenkaariseuran sivuille!

Ortodoksinen Sateenkaariseura on ryhmä ortodoksisen kirkkoon kuuluvia homoseksuaaleja. Vuonna 2006 päätimme perustaa oman vertaisyhteisön, joka tähän asti on toiminut ja tavannut hyvin matalalla profiililla. Viimeaikainen

4.4. Statement 10.4.2007 by *Orthodox Rainbow Society* on the discussion on homosexuality

<http://sateenkaariseura.wordpress.com/articles-from-other-sites/the-question-about-homosexuals-2032007/>



The screenshot shows the website for 'Ortodoksinen Sateenkaariseura'. The header includes the title 'Ortodoksinen Sateenkaariseura' and a tagline: 'Vertaisryhmä ortodoksisille seksuaalivähemmistöihin kaaduville ihmisille: tukea, tietoa, toimintaa'. Below the header is a navigation menu with links for 'Home', 'Contacts', 'Home', 'Articles from other sites', 'Columns', and 'Links'. A 'Subscribe to feed' button is also visible. The main content area features a section titled 'LATEST NEWS' with a date '05.11.2008:' and a brief article snippet. To the right, there is a section titled 'Statement 10.4.2007' with the subtitle 'Statement on the discussion on homosexuality'. The text of the statement begins with 'After following up intensively the discussion on homosexuality in our Church, we also want to bring our own opinion to it.' and continues with 'It has come to our attention that a small group of people belonging to the conservative group known as the Brotherhood of St Kosmas Aitolian have'.

After following up intensively discussion on homosexuality in our Church, we also want to bring our own opinion to it.

It has come to our attention that a small group of people belonging to the conservative group known as the Brotherhood of saint Kosmas of Aitolia have sent a letter to Archbishop Leo of Carelia and all Finland, demanding removal of names of employees and members of the Orthodox church of Finland from the declaration of a Christian movement called Yhteys-liike (*Community*). This declaration promotes tolerance and equality towards homosexuals in the Church. In their letter to Archbishop, the Aitolians threaten the Orthodox church of Finland with an international scandal unless their demands are agreed to. These include the church holding on to certain teaching on sexual ethics which Hannu Pöyhönen emphasizes in his statement published in *Aamun Koitto* magazine, issue 3/2007.

The Orthodox teaching on sexual ethics is not unambiguous, and in our opinion it is not up to date. Members of our Church live in common-law marriages and mixed marriages; divorcing and getting remarried happen among laity and even clergy. When all this occurs it is justified to ask, how many of the members of our Church really are living canonically a completely orthodox life. Why have homosexuality and same-sex partnership, based on respectful mutual love, become a bigger problem than all these other phenomena? As Orthodox homosexuals we are, according to our best efforts, ready to follow the teaching of our Church on love, loyalty and care between spouses. However, in our lives perfection of that love can happen only in a same-sex partnership. Being homosexual is not a choice of our own. We were born as we are, and we only hope that we would be allowed to express and experience love in our own way even in the Church.

Homosexuality seems to have become the last question of orthodoxy, in which uncorrupted realisation of canonical teaching is required. But has this orthodoxy ever been realised? Isn't the only difference between history and our present time the fact that society is openly accepting homosexuality and this has brought the issue up for the Church? Throughout the history of the Church, homosexuals have been there. Earlier this fact was silenced, and now as the discussion has finally started the real core of the problem seems to be the discussion, not the phenomenon itself. We hope that the discussion will continue despite of the opposition, for silence will not exterminate homosexuality.

As active members, theologians and employees of the Orthodox Church we understand that it can be very difficult from the political point of view for our Church to take a stand on homosexuality. Still we wish that our bishops would give instructions on this challenging pastoral issue. As the Church has no uniform stand on homosexuality, homosexual people are exposed completely to the variegated attitude of the clergy in pastoral care.

It feels unfair and unjust that the conservatives are allowed to say anything they wish about us, homosexuals, in public but the freedom of speech of our advocates would be restricted, as the statement to Archbishop indicates. The aim of Yhteys-liike are in correspondence with international

declarations and legislations on Human Rights, as they strive for non-discrimination of employees of the Church on basis of sexual orientation. If the demands of the Aitolians are agreed to Human Rights are violated, namely the freedom of speech and peaceful association and the freedom of non-discrimination. It is also a right of a human being to live without being subjected to physical or psychological violence. We do feel ourselves subjected to violence, when anything can be said about us in public, ranging from tasteless jokes to condemnation to Hell.

According to the Bible, Jesus never said a word on homosexuality. But He did have mercy on the woman who had sinned, He took the Samaritan as a good example and He visited the house of Zacchaeus. He acted in a very unconventional way: inviting to Himself those who at that time were despised. At various times He also proved empty the legitimate faith of the Pharisees, requesting people to study their own deeds instead of judging others.

Throwing stones and public condemnation is easy if the target is a nameless, unknown phenomenon somewhere far off from us. By this statement we wish to bring out the fact that we homosexuals are acting in the Church as every-day members and even employees. Every stone that is thrown strikes and hurts us, who for the love towards our Church have wanted and still want to work in the Church for Her common well-being.

Ortodoksinen sateenkaariseura

(Official translation made by the *Orthodox Rainbow Society*)

4.5. Interviews of Fr. Heikki Huttunen and Fr. Timo Lehmuskoski in *Aamun Koitto* (1/2007) on homosexuality

The interviews were published in *Aamun Koitto* 1/2007. They were interviewed by Editor-in-Chief Hellevi Matihalti.

Fr. Heikki Huttunen: “I wish we could have a realistic discussion that wouldn’t discriminate against anyone”

Having in the beginning of the interview stated that “Fr. Heikki has also studied the topic of homosexuality and is one of the first signatories of the declaration of the movement *Community*”, Matihalti continues:

The movement Community and the Orthodox signatory members

The fact that several Orthodox priests have signed the declaration of the *Community* has at times aroused a lively debate on some websites. Many discussants have greatly disapproved the matter. Fr. Heikki explains:

”The movement *Community* was launched, when a search of a kind of spiritual advisors was going on in the Lutheran and Orthodox Churches of Finland in the hope that they would be ready for an open and calm discussion about questions on homosexuality and ready to present their names in that connection. The need is still there, because many people are easy targets for spiritual violence.”

The movement’s Orthodox side has attached to the declaration a clear account of the ways, in which the signatories support the goals of the Movement.

“In our Church, we have always felt that we have our own approach to this question and also our own subjects for discussion, which we wish to promote. We want to be open and participate in this kind of discussion, too. But it is still right and fair that there are Orthodox people who don’t want to take on this discussion.”

Fr. Heikki notes that he has no need to be right in relation to the movement *Community*: “Still, I don’t believe that the other signatories would have that kind of need, too. It is namely a question of openness.”

Conduct and predisposition

According to Fr. Heikki Huttunen, the Bible and the canonical tradition of the Church take a stand in regard to homosexual conduct. For the matter, in his understanding, homosexual predisposition isn't known in the Bible. And the two-thousand-year-old Tradition of the Church can be interpreted in the way that heterosexuality of all is the basic idea.

“Perhaps it would be better to pose the question: ‘Do the teachers of the Church suppose that all people are heterosexual by nature, and homosexual conduct is a deviation from the normal; a fall and debauchery that people can repent and be cured from,’” he says.

“This kind of homosexuality is condemned, but there isn't a discussion on homosexual conduct”, he sums up and continues:

“Still, extensive psychological and neurophysiologic research in the 20th century has shown that homosexual predisposition exists and it is not an effect of human choice. This gives us a view on the matter, which is in line with Orthodox anthropology and theology: what man has not chosen is not sin.”

Fr. Heikki guesses that Orthodox ethical thinkers do not consider a predisposition to be a sin. There is disagreement about the question, how serious a matter it is to act in accordance with the predisposition.

“There are different opinions – whether one is allowed to fulfil this predisposition and, if allowed, what are the limits for that conduct. In the Church there is a vast and colourful spectrum of opinions, but the extreme views are missing. So, predisposition isn't seen a matter influencing salvation – but there are neither any Orthodox theologian who would demand that homosexual partnership should be equal with marriage.”

Partnership – a sin?

Fr. Heikki ponders quite a long time about the question, whether homosexual partnership could be considered a sin. He says: “We have to hit the brake pedal, if we draw such a conclusion.” “We have to consider seriously the teaching of the Bible and the Canons – what they are speaking about, what they depict, and what kind of a phenomenon they deal with. On the other hand, we have to take into account the phenomenon we are talking about, when we are dealing with homosexual orientation and partnership. Moreover, the question of what we mean with erotic matters is a completely different question – and we also have to keep in mind that nowadays we live in a quite over-eroticized era.”

Fr. Heikki says that the Church Fathers speak minimally about homosexuality and that there are two different views. One of the views presents sexuality as an effect of the Fall. This view is emphasized especially in Augustine teaching in the Western Church. Fr. Heikki sees that western teaching has unfortunately influenced the Orthodox Church, too.

“Otherwise, the majority of the Church Fathers are of the opinion that sexuality, manhood and womanhood, and sexual love are God’s gift to man. But as every gift can be misused, so can sexuality, too.” He returns to the question about the sinfulness of same-sex partnership:

“This question could also be posed in the following manner: are there no reflections in homosexual love of the divine life-force and good sexuality, which God has originally given to man? One Orthodox father-confessor has said: ‘Wouldn’t it be so!’ I must also think so: Wouldn’t it be so!”

Synodal statement?

According to Fr. Heikki, it is God’s blessing that the Orthodox Church isn’t so strong and well-organized that it could have the strength to dictate final truths about everything:

“In this way, we avoid many haste solutions and do not issue statements on a subject that surpasses our capacity. It is rather a blessing that we don’t present the final truth in every matter. To my mind,

the synodal statement on the Act on Registered Partnerships, to which Metropolitan John refers in his article, is a good tool. It is a statement made in style: it presents the specialty of family and wishes that this could be supported in society. The statement says that no partnership can be related to marriage, but it also mentions a third important matter – that men should be equal to law, regardless of their partnership.”

Fr. Heikki explains that the attitude of the Orthodox Church to homosexuality is more pastoral than dogmatic, compared with the Western Church. He says: “In the Church of the East, we have always been realists about this phenomenon”, and holds this to be good. “Homosexuality hasn’t been seen as abomination risking the salvation of soul.” “I wish we could have a realistic discussion that wouldn’t discriminate against anyone”, he says. “Therefore, the problem in this discussion is that we talk about something outside us. One Orthodox, a homosexual, whom I know, said that he feels the situation rather peculiar, when he is the object of the matter – without a chance to say anything...”

He also refers to the deplorable truth that the writings on homosexuality are too often bypassed by just throwing a glance to the headline and the writer. “It is so that in a way, people are stigmatized, and there is no willingness to become familiarized with matters, seeing the writer’s name and considering that he/she presents something contrary to one’s own opinions.”

What does the Bible say?

“In the Bible, there are about ten passages, which talk about homosexuality”, Fr. Heikki says. “There are maybe four in the Old Testament and a couple in the New Testament. In Gospels, it is never mentioned – Christ doesn’t speak about homosexuality. Neither the Old nor the New Testament speak of homosexual predisposition. The Old Testament uses a Hebrew verb, which means ‘to lie with a man as with a woman’, so that is contrary to natural order. It is a maximal form of submission of another man. Moreover, it is terrible, because it refers to actions in pagan temples. Thus, if you search for an answer for faithful homosexual partnership, you can’t find it in the OT. As a fact, the OT speaks only about raping men. But in the Book of Isaiah, it is mentioned that the sexually deviant are also accepted in the Kingdom of Heaven.”

Apostle Paul writes about homosexuality in the New Testament. “Paul thinks basically of the Greek concept of pederastia”, Fr. Heikki explains. “In its beautiful form, it has been a relationship between master and apprentice, but Paul thinks about the Roman practice of his own time, which is much uglier. It is the right of a slave master to abuse slave boys sexually. If we use ugly expressions, there is also the question of rape. And thus, Paul has a very negative attitude towards it – to submission and exploitation of another man.”

According to Fr. Heikki, it is difficult to take a stand on homosexual partnership in the Biblical light. We cannot find a clear answer even from the Church Fathers. Fr. Heikki quotes another article written by Metropolitan of Nicaea (i.e., Metropolitan John), which he wrote, when he still served as the Archbishop of Finland:

“These questions are in practice difficult in many ways, even though the ideal set by the Church is as clear as possible. Many people need support and encouragement to their ascetical efforts. Above all, we should remember the words of Christ: *Judge not, that ye be not judged.*”

Father-Confessor’s views on homosexuality: Fr. Timo Lehmuskoski

Fr. Timo Lehmuskoski retired to early disability pension from his post about ten years ago, due to his ill health. Afterwards, he has served the parishioners in many ways, not least as one of the loved father-confessors. Therefore, it is quite natural to talk with him about the problems related to homosexuality in the light of the relationship between a father-confessor and confessant.

Fr. Timo ponders about the Church’s stand in homosexuality and in sexual ethics in general. He concludes that it isn’t thought through yet. He thinks that in some questions he himself may be more liberal, but in others his views are stricter. He brings up adultery as an example:

“Not so that it would be an unforgivable sin”, he states. “The repentant is pardoned in the sacrament of repentance. But really I cannot adopt an easy approach to it.”

The narrowing of human beings

According to Fr. Timo, the basic important thing in dealing with homosexuality is whether it is a question of true love or not. “Somebody might say that there is no such thing between homosexuals. But, yes, there is. If somebody imagines that homosexual love is sexual only, he dangerously narrows them as human beings.”

Fr. Timo doesn't deny that there wouldn't be “jumpers from bud to bud” among the homosexuals, just as there are among the heterosexuals. He says that it is difficult for him to understand – simply to understand – continuous partner swapping, no matter whether it is done among the gays or the heterosexuals. “In the sacrament of repentance, when I encounter such, I fear I may be too strict.”

“But when we talk about true love, we talk about something completely different than mere eros. We talk about agape, self-giving, effort for one and another, and care”, he remarks. He also tells having closely witnessed how a young man awakened to find his sexuality – and noticed to be different.

Love and suffering

“Even though we are nowadays more tolerant and live in a more accepting age, suffering is connected to this difference.” Fr. Timo has the impression that suffering is also in some curious way always connected to love, but in homosexual love, there is an extra-large portion of suffering. He knows the anxiety many homosexuals have experienced and the discrimination many of those with this orientation have faced – he says that there is still the witch hunt mentality in the air.

A place of spiritual asceticism?

Fr. Timo also knows that some people think that homosexuals should carry their load – to feel that it is their place of spiritual asceticism. “I must admit that in general this kind of thinking is even logical. On the other hand, sexuality is such an essential part of man that it cannot be separated from him – we cannot, i.e., say that I don't condemn one, but one's quality, his/her possible deed. Another

important thing is – and this is also related to the sexual slips of the heterosexuals – that as a father-confessor I look at the Book of Gospels in front of us on the analogue. How much does Christ say about sexuality? – Almost nil. He says a lot about other matters, where everyone of us should live ascetically. And we do as He says – we strain the mosquito but eat the camel. We don't care for, we swallow hard-heartedness, hypocrisy, greed, of which He talked much more harshly than of sex.”

He says that all this is a clear example of two-faced conduct, double standards, which he clearly loathes, especially when it is shown in the Church. And he says, it shows behind all the evil tongues, before bright flattering.

What about homophobia?

“But I also encounter homophobia,” he remarks, “and I have found two reasons for it. The general reason is that a person either has conscious or subconscious homosexual traits in him/herself. Another reason is that homosexuality is such a strange phenomenon for a heterosexual that he/she is afraid of it. Because we fear everything strange.”

He says that we should be calm about this kind of fear, because it is a part of their distress. Yet, he reminds, “in love there is no fear.” If we could see ourselves and our motives clearly, we could perhaps be more merciful towards each other.”

4.6. Some corrections to the dialogue on homosexuality by Mr. Hannu Pöyhönen, Doctor of Theology (*Aamun Koitto* 3/2007)

In issue 1/2007 of *Aamun Koitto* Orthodox journal, there was plenty of talk about homosexuality. Many interviews presented in the journal included theological problems that could be extensively commented. However, most of the sometimes teeming problems were found chiefly in the interview of Fr. Heikki Huttunen. As the majority of the mistakes are related to the interpretation of the Holy Bible, as an exegete I cannot circumvent them and maintain my self-respect and a clear conscience. In the following, I concentrate only on the views presented in the interview, but I'd once again wish to

remind the reader that I do not criticize Fr. Heikki Huttunen as a person, but his outlook provided in the interview.

Fr. Heikki searches for a solution for the Old Testament's negativity about homosexuality in a Hebrew verb. He says: "The Old Testament uses a Hebrew verb, which means 'to lie with a man as with a woman', so that is contrary to natural order. It is a maximal form of submission of another man." We could also draw a completely different, and to my mind, more natural conclusion from this Hebrew verb. We could think that lying with a woman was for the Jewish men such a self-evident form of sexual conduct that they didn't even have to think to come up with a separate verb for another kind of sexual conduct!

A little bit later Fr. Heikki continues: "Thus, if you search for an answer for faithful homosexual partnership, you can't find it in the OT. As a fact, the OT speaks only about raping men. But in the Book of Isaiah, it is mentioned that the sexually deviant are also accepted in the Kingdom of Heaven." In the light of what is considered, this one-sided conclusion is quite questionable. Moreover, according to the clear exegetical mainline interpretations, the negativity of the Old Testament towards homosexuality doesn't depend on the thought of raping equal men, but as a fact of going against God's natural order of Creation.

Approaching the New Testament, Fr. Heikki overthrows the critical views of Apostle Paul with the same arguments: the question is not about a sexual relationship of same-sex partners, but the submission of another, and thus the rape, of another man. The Greek concept of *pederastia* or, in reality, the conduct based on this concept, which, in its Roman form, Fr. Heikki sees as an "ugly" and misshapen master-slave relationship, where the former abuses the latter sexually, compared with the original "beautiful" form of mutual love between a master and an apprentice. According to Fr. Heikki, this misshapen version of the original form is the actual reason why Apostle Paul criticized homosexuality in his epistles.

In the light of the New Testament, the solution is in no way so easy. This can be proved through only one quotation from the Epistle to the Romans (1:26–27): "For this cause God gave them up unto vile

affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.” On the basis of this quotation, we cannot speak of submission or rape, because it draws a quite clear picture of mutually chosen homosexual love, as especially the Apostle’s words “the men – – burned in their lust one toward another” clearly point out.

Fr. Heikki also says, “In Gospels, it is never mentioned – Christ doesn’t speak about homosexuality”. This fact as such doesn’t support the idea of Christ’s sympathy or indifference toward homosexuality, but it can be interpreted as a diametrically opposite way: the phenomenon was so marginal and instructively well-understood in the midst of His listeners that there was no need of giving separate teaching in the matter. Christ didn’t speak in an empty void about eternal truths for all the ages, but chose the matter in accordance with the listeners’ phase of life and their circumstances. Even in the framework of Orthodox theology, it is wrong to separate Christ from the Biblical writers of the New and Old Testaments. He doesn’t draw His own separate line deviating from the others in the Bible, but continues in the apostolic proclamation the same teaching He gave on Earth. Before His Incarnation, the prophets were His voice in the Old Testament. For this reason, I would kindly wish Fr. Heikki to clarify what he means by saying: “But in the Book of Isaiah, it is mentioned that the sexually deviant are also accepted in the Kingdom of Heaven”. To which passage of the Book of Isaiah does he refer in his interpretation?

The interviewer, Ms. Hellevi Matihalti, sums up her interviewee’s views: “According to Fr. Heikki, it is difficult to take a stand on homosexual partnership in the Biblical light. We cannot find a clear answer even from the Church Fathers.” Right after Fr. Heikki quotes Metropolitan John (*of Nicaea, the Exarch of Bithynia, former Archbishop of the Orthodox Church of Finland*) who says: “These questions are in practice difficult in many ways, even though the ideal set by the Church is as clear as possible. Many people need support and encouragement to their ascetical efforts.” Here we can see that Metropolitan John is quoted completely against his intentions! Namely, he underlines the totally non-contradictory view of the Church in this matter, saying: “even though the ideal set by the Church

is as clear as possible”. The Metropolitan also presupposes that homosexuals need encouragement and support not *in sexual deviation, but against it*.

Fr. Heikki’s view on sin is also very problematic and contradictory to that of the Church. He defines that the statement “what man has not chosen is not sin” to be in line with Orthodox anthropological and theological teaching. According to the inseparable Biblical and patristic view, we live in the postlapsarian world and the reality of sin lives strongly within each of us. On the ground of Adam’s fall, we are called to fight against sin and not specifically – and with uncertain, subjective solutions – to find out when and in what measure all the predispositions and leanings against God’s will are self-obtained or genetically inherited. In my opinion, it is generally misleading to refer to contemporary scientific research and state that homosexuality is proven to be inherent. That may be true in some cases, but not in all of them. With this kind of generalization, we easily tend to strengthen homosexual orientation among the youth, for instance, whose sexual identity is still unclear. In this way, we have led them to choices that are against Ecclesiastical Tradition and even against their own deepest identity. In His Gospel according to Matthew (18:6), Christ seriously warns us of this kind of action, which threatens one’s Christian ascetic striving.

In the interview, Fr. Heikki also characterizes the Church Fathers as realists in matters related to homosexuality and concludes: “Homosexuality hasn’t been seen as abomination risking the salvation of soul.” Without doubt, this is true – presupposing that the homosexually oriented fight against the lusts like all the Christians do. Salvation isn’t endangered by the falls, but by man’s continuous stay in fallen state, without any intention to rise. With these intentional premises, none of the Christians should be too optimistic about his/her salvation, no matter what his/her weaknesses are.

Aamun Koitto journal may have wished to launch a dialogue on homosexuality here on Orthodox forum, too, obviously inspired by the Lutheran Church of Finland. Of course, we can discuss the matter, but the discussion should be honest and the sources should be honoured. Neither the Biblical writings nor the authorities of our local Orthodox Church should be used in a misleading manner, against their own intentions. That kind of behaviour is saddening and makes the dialogue less credible.

At worst, it makes the dialogue seem a monologue, where the speaker enforces his biased views on the others.

Mr. Hannu Pöyhönen, Doctor of Theology (Aamun Koitto 3/2007)

4.7. “A Letter To His Eminence Archbishop Leo of Finland and All Karelia” 14.03.2007 by Mr. Hannu Pöyhönen, Mr. Markus Paavola, and Mr. Heikki Alex Saulamo

We wish to inform Your Eminence of our worry about the false teachings spread in our local Church. According to these false teachings, homosexuality is an approvable form of sexuality as one Christian way of life. In the ecclesiastical journal *Aamun Koitto* (issue 1/2007) Ms. Hellevi Matihalti, who belongs to Yhteys-liike (*Community*), interviewed two orthodox priests, who are locally known by name and who also belong to same movement. Opinions presented in interviews are according to us such a serious derailment from Our Church’s theology and spirituality. Accordingly this matter is pastorally important and requires quick operational actions.

Mentioned issue of journal *Aamun Koitto* has aroused also discontent in many members of our local Church and mixed feelings abroad. Some members of our local Church even ponder over to move under the other existing ecclesiastical jurisdictions in Finland. This and the coming presence of other jurisdictions to Finland are more and more argued, if our local Church does not hold and maintain the orthodox teachings in this matter.

In addition the “rumors”, also known by us all, of orthodox priests visiting unsuitable places of entertainment, also referred to in *Aamun Koitto* issue, can lead to same kind of scandal as in Greece a couple of years ago, during when HE archbishop Christodoulos kept His throne only by an effort, one bishop was dethroned, and in the media the separation of Church and State was demanded. In the eyes of the people Church lost Her credibility.

To movement *Community* belong members of orthodox clergy and laypeople. Their names can be found from the movement’s Internet-site (www.yhteys.org). Most of those clerical members have also

signed the movement's declaration. Their goals are: the blessing of homo- and lesbian homes is officiated when asked, the homosexuals and lesbians working in the church can register their partnerships when wanted, and finally local churches take actions to allow the ecclesiastical blessing of the registered partnerships when wanted.

At the same time, we have confidence that open debate and new research can help us to get out of old and biased interpretations based on a fear of deviation. Many questions are difficult and answers are still open. However, we have confidence that, in accordance to the promise given by Jesus, the Holy Spirit will guide us towards the truth.

In the movement's declaration it is written: "The Bible doesn't contain any part, which would condemn a faithful marital relationship based on respect and commitment between people of the same sex. -- At the same time, we have confidence that open debate and new research can help us to get out of old and biased interpretations based on a fear of deviation. -- However, we have confidence that, in accordance to the promise given by Jesus, the Holy Spirit will guide us towards the truth." In our view this part of declaration blasphemes the Ecclesiastical Tradition and is even close to being concerned as blasphemy of Holy Spirit. From the view-point of our Ecclesiastical Tradition theologically and pastorally highly problematic is also the following part of declaration: "Homosexual employees who live in stabilized and committed same-sex unions also give Christian churches and parishes an opportunity to provide positive examples for their members, who belong to sexual minorities. This would strengthen the right of everyone to have sacraments, pastoral care and Christian unity."

Those orthodox signed members of this movement have also asked for an addition to be attached here, that they will promote the goals of movement *Community* "in the frame of Our Church's Holy Tradition and canonical tradition". This superficial and cosmetic addition is left totally meaningless, because it does not define, how the Ecclesiastical Tradition and canonical tradition are understood. Orthodox members of this movement also seem to approve the declaration mostly only with the slight deviations. This could be seen at least from the declaration by each reader.

According to us the workers and clergy of Orthodox Church cannot support the goals of movement *Community* least in public forum. We seriously claim that the leaders of our Church demand them to remove immediately their names from the site mentioned. Unless this happens, our consciousness demands us to act differently. The teaching of Church about homosexuality is quite clear. On the other hand, as it has in public dialogue shown to be, this clear teaching is not clear even to all clergy members of our local Church. Synodical statement to this matter can even be expected in near future. We think that the synodical statement from the year 1999 republished in journal *Aamun Koitto* (no 4/2007) is not sufficient as an answer to this dialogue, because it does not specifically deal with Christian sexual ethics but the approval of the registration of the homosexual partnerships in our national civil law.

Finally we wish to emphasize that the homosexuality is a pastoral challenge to Church. Many people are in demand of support in their Christian ascetical life. Therefore a sincere and in the humble spirit given dialogue and teaching is needed, not the irresponsible proclamation of one's own ideology.

In Kuopio, the 14th of March, 2007

With respect

Mr. Hannu Pöyhönen, Mr. Markus Paavola, Mr. Heikki Alex Saulamo

Enclosed: the goals and declaration of movement *Community*

(This letter was given by the signed on their visit to HE Archbishop as a memo of discussion.)

4.8. The article “Double Life” by Jyrki Härkönen

<http://sateenkaariseura.wordpress.com/articles/statement-1042007/>



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Double Life

I know dozens of gay bishops and priests from Greece, Russia, Serbia and France. All of them are leading a double life: in public they condemn homosexuality as a sin but still live quite peacefully with it in private.

Homosexuality is not an obstacle for ecclesial career for the Orthodox, but it

4.9. “The Question About Homosexuals is Complicating Relationships Between the Orthodox in Russia and Finland” by *Orthodox Rainbow Society*

<http://sateenkaariseura.wordpress.com/articles-from-other-sites/the-question-about-homosexuals-2032007/>



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The Question About Homosexuals 20.3.2007

The Question About Homosexuals is Complicating Relationships Between the Orthodox in Russia and Finland

Attitudes towards homosexuals is becoming the key issue of Orthodox church politics. The Russian media has presented the gay-liberal outlining of Finnish

4.10. “An Expression of Concern and Call for Finnish Orthodox Church to Hold to Orthodox Doctrine and Sacred Tradition” by Russian-speaking members of the Finnish Orthodox Church

With this appeal, we, the undersigned Russian-speaking members of the Finnish Orthodox Church, wish to attract attention to certain phenomena in our Church; phenomena, which, in our opinion, are incompatible with the Orthodox Christian world view.

When we arrived in Finland and joined the Finnish Orthodox Church, we hoped and still hope that in dogmatic and fundamentally important moral and ethical questions our Church would be one with the rest of the Orthodox world and, which isn't insignificant for us, with the Russian Orthodox Church, under whose Omophor many of us were before our arrival in Finland.

Nevertheless, we have unfortunately noticed that un-Orthodox and even un-Christian influences have appeared in the study of certain dogmatic, moral and ethical questions.

Firstly, the question of female priesthood; an unparalleled issue in the Orthodox Church. However, its eventual introduction has sometimes been pointed out in the Orthodox press in Finland.

Secondly, the question of the sin of Sodom* – homosexuality. The spirit, in which this sin is discussed, is gradually losing its Christian character. The press published in the name of the Orthodox Church has for a few years already been “studying this problem”, but in reality their “study” is a way of working on public opinion in order to gain acceptance for this phenomenon, which is categorically impossible in Orthodox, Christian and Biblical tradition (*Genesis 19:4–5; Leviticus 18:22, 20:13; Romans 1:27; 1 Corinthians 6:9–10; 1 Timothy 1:10).

Unfortunately some clergymen of the Finnish Orthodox Church are active participants in this movement. Moreover, those who express their concern about this in accordance with general Biblical and Christian traditions are constantly called “fundamentalists”, “extremists” and “fanatics”.

Recent developments remind us the bitter words of Father Alexander Schmemmann, written a month before he passed away, in the foreword for the Russian edition of his book *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom*:

This is without exaggeration a horrendous and spiritually dangerous era we live in. It is not horrendous merely because it is shattered, bloody and full of hate. It is horrendous, above all, because it is increasingly rising against God and His Kingdom. Instead of God, human beings have once again become the measure of all things; instead of faith, ideology and utopia once again determine the spiritual state of the world...

Western Christianity has as if adopted this perspective at some stage:... financial, political and psychological issues have replaced Christian world view and service of God. In various parts of the world, nuns, theologians, and hierarchs rush around defending – against God? – various rights, abortions and depravities. All this happens in the name of peace, consensus and unity of all. But, alas, the thing is that our Lord Jesus Christ didn't preach or bring this kind of peace to us.

We wonder why the hierarchs of our Church remain silent, but we keep hoping and praying that their response would be direct, comprehensive and deep-going. We urge all the Russian-speaking members of our Church to note these problems. The era of silence has to come to an end. For the sake of our children, many of whom were baptized in this Church; for the sake of the future of the Church, which faces the danger of spiritual and moral isolation in the Orthodox world, we will use all the possible chances to express our view in order to bring this madness to an end.

Finally, to our great regret, we have to state that if these kinds of developments keep going on in the future, we will find it problematic to remain under the Omophor of the Orthodox Church of Finland.

German Vakkari, Natalja Peräsaari, Liliya Euro, Zhanna Rogashko, Yulia Tuovinen

(undersigned Russian-speaking members of the Finnish Orthodox Church)

This expression of concern was published in issue 5/2007 of Ortodoksiviesti journal (1 June 2007).

4.11. The movement *Community* and the Orthodox

We, the undersigned members of the Orthodox Church are involved in the movement *Community*, because we believe that it promotes the ethical teaching of gospel. Christ accepted all kinds of people in his company. He set as examples people, who were despised, rejected and held in contempt. The Kingdom of God calls for integrity and penance. Integrity is a fruit of love, which teaches us to respect all people. Christ forbids us to condemn each other.

Sexuality doesn't determine the whole of a person. Homosexuality is an innate tendency, not a choice. We hope that the Orthodox who belong to sexual minorities will find their spiritual home in their own parish and that they will be able to participate in the divine services, prayers and sacraments of the church in full.

The teaching of the church about sexuality, family and the equality of man and woman meets various challenges, in which homosexuality is only one. In our opinion, homosexuality is, above all, a pastoral question, not a dogmatic one. We work for the values of the movement *Community* within the framework of the sacred tradition and canonical tradition of our church. We are not bringing new practices into the life of the church, nor are we draw parallels between matrimony and same-sex unions.

On the basis of the Orthodox view on people, we consider that all kinds of discrimination are a sin. We hope that an open and objective discussion on issues related to sexuality will promote tolerance and love for one's neighbour in our church.

(Unofficial translation from Finnish)

At the release date of the report the text above was signed by 55 orthodox, including four priests, two deacons, and nine theologians or laymen of some important post in local Finnish Orthodox Church. Because the situation has been slightly changed after the release, we have seen it fit to remove the names from the report.

4.12. “An orthodox layman is allowed to registerate his relationship with a person of the same sex”; Interview of archbishop Leo in the newspaper *Kotimaa* 13.11.2008

Archbishop Leo gave the following interview in the organ of Finnish lutheran church *Kotimaa* 13.11.2008 with the title: “*An orthodox layman is allowed to registerate his relationship with a person of the same sex*”

A discussion about homosexuality and registered relationships between people of the same sex churns up in the Finnish Lutheran church, but the view of the Orthodox Church to this kind of relationship has not been brought before the public eye. The law which demands equality and prohibits discrimination binds in the same way also the smaller national Church.

According to Leo the Orthodox Church avoids consciously to take in the discussion things connected with the homosexuality.

– As we know, they provoke powerful feelings both for and against.

According to archbishop Leo the attitude towards social ethic questions is quite much connected with the culture. In the liberal West it is possible to speak about things which are passed by in silence in the South and Eastern Europe.

– Especially in the Eastern Europe the leaders of the Orthodox Churches are forced to balance in the cross-fire of demands of different loud groups expressing quite fundamentalistic viewpoints. In those groups the tolerance is not in fashion.

According to archbishop Leo the registered relationship between two person of the same sex is not any problem.

– No believer is asked about his family backgrounds as a condition to participate in the life or services of the Church.

The clergy and laymen working in the Church are anticipated in a different way.

– A person who lives in a registered relationship with somebody who shares the same sex can not be a member of the clergy. We don't expect the same preconditions in the case of lay workers of the Church, Leo says.”

The interview of *Kotimaa* was published in a shorter form also in the periodical of seven orthodox parishes of South Finland *Analogi* 6/2008 with the title “*Archbishop allows the registered relationships between two people of the same sex*” as well as in the biggest Finnish newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* 14.11.2008.

In the end of Spring and the beginning of Summer 2009, however, archbishop Leo has given interviews and published articles with much more moderate and traditional views concerning the theme of homosexuality.

4.13. Interviews about the book “Homosexuality in the light of Orthodox Tradition” in *Aamun Koitto* 5.12.2008

The book “Homosexuality in the light of Orthodox Tradition” written by Doctor in Theology Hannu Pöyhönen was discussed extensively in the issue 5.12.2008 of magazine Aamun Koitto. There was intention to have also his interview in the issue and he was asked to reply to two questions made by editors. However, this interview was not in time or the issue was out of space and the editorial didn't see it appropriate to publish it in the next issue, but they agreed to put it into the web version of the magazine. Here it is presented in the end of the document.

4.13.1. Tapani Kärkkäinen: The question of homosexuality divides opinions

The question of homosexuality is difficult topic for the churches all over the world. There is a discussion going on also among the orthodox people in Finland.

The discussion of orthodox people in Finland concerning the question of homosexuality reached a new stage this autumn when there was published a book called “Homosexuality in the light of Orthodox Tradition” by D.Th. Hannu Pöyhönen.

In his book Mr Pöyhönen quotes Bible, holy canons and Fathers of the Church and also gives his own interpretation of the quotations. According to Mr Pöyhönen, the teaching of the Orthodox Church considers homosexuality a sin – and a grave one.

Homosexuality is a new topic of discussion in the orthodox countries of Eastern Europe. Many times theological arguments are based on prejudices and misunderstandings. Probably only the future will show, which is the most steady theological foundation of the Orthodox sexual ethics.

It's also easier to condemn homosexuality in Eastern Europe than in Finland, where legislation, general attitude and scientific research are in irreconcilable conflict for example with the message of the book of Mr Pöyhönen.

There are strong winds of fundamentalism blowing in the Orthodox world nowadays. Tradition is interpreted from the most conservative point of view, and those who wish for more nuances are labeled as unorthodox. Future discussion will show if it's even possible to set forth other than simply condemning points of view on homosexuality in the discussion among the orthodox.

4.13.2. Archbishop Leo: Church is cautious

What is your opinion of the fact that Mr Hannu Pöyhönen has delivered his book concerning homosexuality to the whole clergy of the Finnish Orthodox Church?

— Mr Hannu Pöyhönen is free to deliver his book whomever he wants. The members of our clergy are well educated and they can think by themselves and they are men of some life experience. I am convinced that they are able to examine the book of Pöyhönen with open eyes.

In the Orthodox world the discussion concerning homosexuality is labeled by a black-and-white formulation of the question. Why is that?

— Orthodox Church is cautious and do not take up a strong position in the question of sexual ethics. This is caused by the fact, that the unity of the Church can easily be in danger at the situation we are living now. The fall of communism happened less than 20 years ago, and especially the Churches of Eastern Europe still need more time to adopt the open culture of discussion.

— Another important point of view is the one, that in those countries where the Church is traditionally strong, sexuality is not a topic of public discussion. Many times we don't understand this in Finland.

— When we put in these frames the fundamentalists who have always caused problems in the Church and who have now activated in Finland and who are searching for potential heretics out of our own people, it's wise caution from the part of our Church not to start to churn out theses. The foundation of the sexual ethics of the Church is anyway always the family.

What kind of position does the Orthodox Church of Finland take in the case that some orthodox makes his homosexual relationship officially registered?

— A Church acting in a democratic country respects the rules of democracy. The juridical registration of relationship and the ecclesiastical blessing of it are totally different proceedings. The relationship blessed by the Church is the marriage between a man and a woman.

— In practice no member of the Church is asked about his or her family background as a condition for attending the activities and church services of a local parish.

What about the persons working in the Church?

— A member of the clergy must be a married man or a monk. In special cases also a person who has made a promise of celibacy can be accepted into the clergy. A person living in a registered homosexual relationship can not be a member of the clergy.

— What comes to the lay workers of the Church we do not presume same criteria. We accept also those who are not orthodox to work in the Church – so in this question we have a different stand in comparison to the Lutheran Church.

4.13.3. An anonymous orthodox priest: “An embarrassing book”

How does it feel to a priest to read a book in which homosexuality is said to be in irreconcilable conflict with the teaching of the Church?

— Reading the book was an embarrassing experience, mostly because the author has taken such a freedom in his interpretation. Especially surprising was to notice, that the theological interpretation was almost completely the same like the one of protestants of certain line. In reality Orthodox Church does not have a “teaching” on the subject; there is just different kinds of opinions.

— The most problematic thing, though, is the lack of pastoral aspect. When we are dealing with such a sensitive questions, there should be shown a careful consideration. What has Mr Pöyhönen to offer for a reader who becomes anguished after reading the book? It would have been wise to tell the reader to turn to a priest.

In what way do you think the sexual diversity should be treated in pastoral work?

— Every human person is unique. A person coming to confession should be seen as a one who in spite of his or her imperfections is seeking for God.

— Maybe the most horrible way to confront a person coming to confession is to give him a lecture from a book. It means that the person is not seen but only the law and the punishment, which is seen to fall on him in a legalistic way because of certain offenses. There are this kind of “Codes of Law” also known in the Orthodox Church.

— The duty of a confessing priest is not to bring things to a heed, but to tend the brokenness of a person with love. There isn't just one model of confronting the sexual diversity. From this point of view the book of Mr Pöyhönen has almost nothing to offer, because it only strengthens the view of those who have already a negative opinion about homosexuality, and those with more liberal attitude it just makes to resist.

4.13.4. Simo Haavisto: “Sexuality is not a topic of dogmas”

Mr Simo Haavisto, you are an active member of the Orthodox Church. What do you think, when your sexual orientation is stated to be a sin?

— It hasn't broken my personal relationship with God, but sometimes my trust in Church has been put to a test. Fortunately I have not been prevented from receiving Holy Communion as one of my friends has, and I have not been humiliated because of this matter in ecclesiastical connections.

What are your expectations for the discussion concerning this theme in our Church?

— Sexuality shouldn't be made such a big question. The things done in bedroom can not have this big a meaning for the salvation. Sexuality is more a question of pastoral care and ethics and not of dogmas and of holy canons. In the light of these latter our present-day life is going “wrong” in many other aspects also. And what did Christ say concerning homosexuals? Not a thing!

4.13.5. Hannu Pöyhönen: “A Question of Life and Death”

Why did you want to publish this book?

— I wanted to publish the book for two reasons. First, to show untenable the unexpected and emphatic claim that the Orthodox Church has never had a clear standpoint in the question of homosexual partnership (“According to Fr. Heikki, it is difficult to take a stand on homosexual partnership in the Biblical light. We cannot find a clear answer even from the Church Fathers.”), because everything in the Tradition of the Church which is said about homosexuality in general (an old human phenomenon) holds true for homosexual union (a new phenomenon in society). Second, for my part to support in our local Church the silent and confused majority which was (intentionally?) given the misleading picture that the Orthodox Church would be changing its teaching on this subject on the grounds of new information got by medical research. I believe that the book I compiled out of quotations shows indisputably that in this question the Orthodox Tradition has always had a clear

substance and chronological continuity. Because this topic is current, I hope that as many people as possible will read this book to be able to create their own opinion.

How essential do you see the discussion on this topic in the Church?

— For our local Church this topic is a question of life and death. If we now diverge from the universal Orthodox Tradition in this question, most probably already tomorrow we will diverge from it concerning some other crucial question. Following this, soon the family of the local Orthodox Churches may not recognize us anymore as a representative of the Orthodox Tradition. Because the Church illuminated by the Holy Spirit has already settled this question, we should start to teach in line with the Tradition of the Church concerning this theme, instead of keeping up a discussion for the discussion's sake. It's also our duty to support all those who are struggling with this cross, so that they would have strength to keep up the good fight of faith and take hold of the eternal life to which they were called in the holy baptism.

4.14. “Truth is not to be denied”; comment by Fr. Timo Soisalo in Journal *Aamun Koitto*

The book “Homosexuality in the Light of Orthodox Tradition” written by Mr. Hannu Pöyhönen (D.Th.) has awoken delight and enragement. Delight, because it clearly promoted the negative stand of Christianity towards homosexuality. It enraged those for whom teaching based on the Bible and Holy Tradition of the Church is not acceptable.

Sexual minorities have brought their social fight into Church. Their goal is not to search for truth, but to get acceptance for their cause. Bible and Church’s teaching do not bind them, but their allegations and demands rise from personal views and fancies.

One mark of aggressive and determined fight is the act of dishonouring and swinging the axe of stigmatization. The mark of foolish fundamentalist is stamped in everyone, who dares to defend Christian basic truths.

The subject is allegedly discussed. In fact there is no discussion, but by the strenuous and public sticking to the subject they seek and demand approval for homosexuality in our Church. By ramming and plowing the public opinion we cannot make allowable what God has Himself said to be a sin. If we acknowledge the authority of the Bible, it is pointless to ask like serpent in Paradise: “Did God truly say...?”

Fr. Timo Soisalo, Journal Aamun Koitto, issue 1/2009 (editor page)

4.15. “Courage to Follow the Law of Love”; European forum of lesbian and gay christian groups in Finland 2009

<http://www.yhteys.org/ef2009b.html>

EUROPEAN FORUM OF LESBIAN & GAY CHRISTIAN GROUPS 2009



”Courage to follow the Law of Love”

MAY 20-24, 2009 IN FINLAND

PROGRAMME

EUROPEAN FORUM OF LESBIAN & GAY CHRISTIAN GROUPS 2009

”Courage to follow the Law of Love”

MAY 20-24, 2009 IN FINLAND

PROGRAMME

Wednesday May 20

- 14.00- Registration and information
- 16.00-17.00 Dinner (included in participation fee)
- 17.00-21.00 Pre-Conference for Women, Pre-Conference for Men

A REPORT ON THE HOMOSEXUALITY DEBATE IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH OF FINLAND

Compiled and published in PDF format on 08.12.2009 by *Pyhän Kosmas Aitolialaisen Veljestö ry* — THE BROTHERHOOD OF SAINT KOSMAS OF AITOLIA, Joensuu Finland;
2nd revised edition 8.5.2010

- 21.00- Orthodox vesper, supper, saunas

Thursday May 21

- 08.00-08.30 Morning meditation
- 08.30-09.30 Breakfast
- 09.30-13.00 Pre-Conferences continue (Coffee break 11.00)
- 13.00-14.00 Lunch
- 14.00- Opening Ceremony
- Song of the Forum: Petri Laaksonen
- Director of the Education Center of the Church: Hannu Harri
- Welcoming words of Finnish organizers: Liisa Tuovinen
- Representative of the Lutheran Church: Bishop Mikko Heikka
- Organizers of the European Forum 2009: Enric Vilà
- Orthodox bishop Ambrosius
- Shaking hands with each other, Map of Europe
- 15.00-15.45 Coffee and Meeting with the church representatives and European Forum: Liisa Tuovinen.
- 15.45-16.30 “Courage to follow the law of love”: Lecture/ Speak.
- 17.00-18.30 Workshops (Further information of all workshops)
- 1) Future strategy for European Forum: European Forum board.
- 2) LGBT situation in the first Christian country in the world: Karen Badalyn.
- 3) “Transition in a church context: theology, community and roles of sex and gender in Christian life”: Eeva Järvinen.
- 4) Sexual orientation, identification and means of power use and violence in church communities: Liisa Tuovinen.
- 5) “My story” - Story of my life: Inari Hytönen, MD (Max 10 participants and same persons present in every workshop meeting).
- 6) Together we give a voice to our praise of Creation. Practicing the akatist to the Praise to God for all creation, a service which is easy to learn. All who want to sing welcome. Orthodox cantor and music teacher Tuomas Sidoroff.
- 7) Lutheran Concerned / North America (LC/NA) programs and resources: Matrin Scheel & Philip Moeller.
- 18.30-19.30 Dinner
- 20.00–21.00 Evening programme “Dancing Conference” in the Hall
- 21.00- Orthodox vesper, supper, saunas

Friday May 22

- 07.30-08.00 Morning meditation
- 08.00-09.00 Breakfast
- 09.00- to Helsinki
- 10.00-13.00 Open seminar in the University of Helsinki
- PhD, Kerstin Söderblom, Goethe University Frankfurt: The European Churches and their sexual minority
- ThD, Bishop Wille Riekkinen: How to define theological stand on homosexuality
- General secretary, Father Heikki Huttunen, Ecumenical Counsel of Finland, Orthodox church of Finland: Human sexuality in the Orthodox theology
- ThD, Assistant professor Vesa Hirvonen: Does homosexuality challenge the doctrine of the church?

- 13.00 Travel back to Järvenpää
 - 14.00-15.00 Lunch
 - 15.30-17.00 Workshops
 - 1) Catholic church book project: Andrea E. Kruger.
 - 2) HIV and sexually transmitted infections - safer sex and HIV-prevention: Lennie Lindberg.
 - 3) LGBT situation in the first Christian country in the world: Karen Badalyn.
 - 4) “Transition in a church context: theology, community and roles of sex and gender in Christian life”: Eeva Järvinen.
 - 5) Sexual orientation, identification and means of power use and violence in church communities: Liisa Tuovinen.
 - 6) “My story” - Story of my life: Inari Hytönen, MD (Max 10 participants and same persons present in every workshop meeting)
 - 7) Our response to persecution - growing towards spiritual strength. Johan Slätis.
 - 8) “Rowing spirit”. A journey to Lake Tuusula with texts from the Bible: Jaakko Hyttinen & Tuula Putkonen.
 - 9) Visit to Ainola – home of composer Jean Sibelius: volunteers.
 - 10) Planning group for the Closing service: Monika Pensar-Granroth.
 - 11) Lutheran Concerned / North America (LC/NA) programs and resources: Matrin Scheel & Philip Moeller.
 - 17.00-18.30 Floor ball in the Sports hall
 - 18.30-19.30 Dinner
 - 20.00–22.00 Evening programme
 - 22.00-23.00 Orthodox vesper, supper, saunas
- Saturday May 23
- 08.00-08.30 Morning meditation
 - 08.30-09.00 Breakfast
 - 09.00-13.00 Annual meeting of European Forum
 - 09.00-13.00 Workshops
 - 1) “Transition in a church context: theology, community and roles of sex and gender in Christian life”: Eeva Järvinen.
 - 2) Sexual orientation, identification and means of power use and violence in church communities: Liisa Tuovinen.
 - 3) Can male priest love and live with a man? Discussion with an introduction by an orthodox priest working in southern Finland. (09.00-10.45).
 - 4) From invisibility to visibility. Spiritual and communal ways to establish a rainbow identity in an orthodox context. Introduction to the theme by orthodox rainbow fellowship members. (11.30-12.45).
 - 5) “Rowing spirit”. A journey to Lake Tuusula with texts from the Bible: Jaakko Hyttinen & Tuula Putkonen.
 - 6) Visit to Ainola – home of composer Jean Sibelius: volunteers.
 - 7) Planning for Sunday service: Monika Pensar-Granroth.
 - 13.00–14.00 Lunch
 - 14.00- Travel to Helsinki
 - Guided tours
 - Free time in Helsinki

- 17.30 Travel by bus to the Church of Kallio
- 18.00 Rainbow Mass in the Church of Kallio
- 20.00 Dinner & Party
- 23.00 Travel by bus back to Järvenpää
- 01.00 Travel by bus back to Järvenpää

Sunday May 24

- 09.00-10.00 Breakfast
 - 10.00-11.00 Closing service
 - 11.00- Info for the Future - Barcelona 2010
 - 13.00-14.00 Lunch
- ...Good Bye...

4.16. “Yoga of Truth”; seminar in the *Orthodox Culture Center Sofia* in Helsinki

<http://www.kulttuurikeskussofia.fi/fi/kulttuuri/seminaarit>

The screenshot shows the website's navigation bar with options like 'etusivulle', 'sivukartta', 'tekstikoko', 'etsi', and language options 'In English', 'På Svenska', and 'По Русски'. The main content area is titled 'Seminaareja, kursseja, tapahtumia - Kulttuurikeskus Sofian syksyn ohjelma 2009'. It lists several events, including a seminar on 'Venäläiset Helsinkiä rakentamassa ja kulttuurielämää rikastuttamassa' held from 6-8.11.2009, and another on 'Totuuden Jooga' held from 3.-4.10.2009.

See, for example:

http://www.yogaoftruth.info/images/iym_p2.jpg

“An interview with Peter Marchand on jnana yoga was published in the *Integral Yoga Magazine - issue Autumn 2007*
click on the pics below to read it:”

IYM: What is the distinction between meditation, *samadhi* and enlightenment?

PM: Meditation occurs when you can stop thinking and no longer even require an object on which to concentrate. *Samadhi* occurs when there is no longer any distinction between the one witnessing and the witnessing itself. In *samadhi* however, there is still willpower involved. Enlightenment is total, effortless, permanent silence. There is no more identity at all and it happens without any willpower. You can't *do* enlightenment—it just happens. The sages say that, for it to happen, you have to be in *samadhi* for a very long time. Of course, if a person is enlightened, who is left to say, “I am enlightened?” So, enlightenment is a tough concept. The only thing that makes us a little unenlightened is the ego, which is the main concept that must be deleted.

IYM: Do you feel that preparatory practices are needed



Peter Marchand

See, for example, also:

<http://www.rasas.info/>

<http://books.google.com/books?id=s2IXep-ejckC&lpg=PP1&dq=%22yoga%20of%20truth%22&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

[http://store.innertraditions.com/Contributor.jmdx?action=displayDetail&id=15\)](http://store.innertraditions.com/Contributor.jmdx?action=displayDetail&id=15)

4.17. “Come to Culture Centre Sofia: The Wall of Masons confronts the evil”

According to a scientific research a part of our brotherhood are experiencing within Freemasonry a nostalgia towards the Divine. A year ago in the Orthodox Cultural Centre an inter-Masonic symposium took place with the aim to study the common elements between Freemasonry and religion. The title was “Encounter with the Divine”. Brothers from all Masonic Organizations of Finland were present.

Introduction was made by the *Orthodox Metropolitan of Helsinki Ambrosius* while other participants were

Heikki Kukkonen:

Every symbol of ours includes a needed and positive message. The world of Masonic symbols is a tool of educative methods access to which is secret for those outside, as a sort of intranet tool.

Göran Andersson, Civil Engineer:

A good and impressive conference presupposes that its workers do not only skillfully perform their duties but they also understand the symbolic importance of their roles. Those who go deeper into this can also experience in a new way encounter with the divine.

Sakari Lehmuskallio, Lutheran pastor:

Ancient Church Fathers said that “the closer to God the darker it is and the darker it is the closer to God”. In my opinion this alone is enough to explain the fact why to the person who has the urge to go to deeper into things, Freemasonry feels good and positive.

The general discussion and group forums gave such good impressions that participants expressed their wish for future conferences. For this reason Metropolitan Ambrosius invited the participants in a similar Symposium that will be held on May 8th, 2009 at the Orthodox Cultural Centre “Sofia” with the title “Confronting evil. Connections of Freemasonry and of the shady side of Life”.

The Service of the Hours will take place in the chapel of “Sofia Centre” at 15:00. Participation applications can be found at the web page <http://www.suurloosi.info/>

Sakari Lehmuskallio

(Unofficial translation from the Finnish Freemason magazine “Koilliskulma” 09/2009)

**4.18. “Do not be conformed to this world” Ilkka Soini, specialist physician Vantaa;
Published in the issue 16/2007 of journal *Aamun Koitto***

In the issue 13.7.2007 of journal *Aamun Koitto* metropolitan of Helsinki Ambrosius states: “Our Church lives in modern age and looks ahead. Neither we do sigh for the old calendar. Our mission and witness makes good use of the greatest modern cultural achievements.”

Are we not really yearning for the old calendar? I have had countless conversations in this subject – last time a couple of weeks ago – and I can assure that in our local autonomous Church is a considerable number of active parishioners (members of both laity and clergy), who are traditionally conscious and who feel like me the present calendar as an additional sore wound in the Body of Christ.

Countless are the situations where a Finnish orthodox has to give explanations for our way, in which we differ from all the other Orthodox of the world, of celebrating Easter according to the Western calendar, which was meant to be temporary and requiring annual permission petitioned from the Patriarchate.

The problem will be especially big next year 2008, when we will celebrate Easter already 23.3., but everywhere in the Orthodox world not until 27.4. It also sticks out that next year the Jewish Easter starts 20.4., which is the simple explanation for the late date of the Orthodox Easter.

The Church has traditionally celebrated Easter following the Jewish Easter just like it is told already by the Gospels. The Resurrection of Christ and the redemption from the death are beautifully related to remembrance of the liberation from Egypt. For us this doesn't seem to have any significance – and reasons we can only guess. Silliest explanation I have heard is that paying attention to the Jewish Easter is a sign of “antisemitism”.

I don't understand our real itch creating connections to those outside the Church instead of other local Orthodox Churches. This is shown factually when so called “ecumenistic” view-points are always presented under discussion about our practice of Easter. This was reflected also when the Finnish translation of the psalms according to the Septuagint was not implemented in use due to the “ecumenical worth” of 1992-translation of Bible (made by Lutherans).

What might be the “ecumenical worth” of 92-translation of Bible from the point of view of Orthodox Church which is the continuation of Early Church? This hasn't become clear to me – especially not when I am reading the great Teachers of Church, and I see few biblical verses with LXX-marking added and with a translator's own translation, so that even some sense might be put into the text! I guess, this problem is not solved even if we had the most “original” psalms in Hebrew as possible, because the Fathers have used Septuagint anyway...

The mission of Church in the world is to bear witness to resurrected Christ! This is the only driving force and for that there is no need for “the greatest modern cultural achievements”, neither for

anything else new. The holy Fathers have built their teaching on the foundation of the Resurrection of Christ and the sermon of the Apostles, and it's our duty to keep their teaching alive for the coming generations. This should be so self-evident that there wouldn't be need to say it aloud.

According to my experience the continuation and living connection to Early Church is what many are seeking from the Church and in the Church. If this is not clear and common mission to us all, seekers will be disappointed and will fall into the corrupting maelstrom of sundry sects and heresies.

We Orthodox Christians have founded right to expect of our bishops the shepherd's voice and not even personal public squabble in local Church's main media. I sincerely feel that something precious has now badly been broken. For God's sakes, keep your personal conflicts out of public, settle your differences, and give us a clear and common witness! A flock which is not allowed to hear the shepherd's voice, will soon be lost.

Ilkka Soini, specialist physician, Vantaa

(Published in the issue 16/2007 of journal *Aamun Koitto*)

4.19. Joining the Church – is Rebaptism Needed? Father Johannes Karhusaari

On page 24 in *Ortodoksiviesti* 9/2000, nun Kristoduli brings up a serious theological and pastoral problem, which is connected to the question of members of other Christian communities joining the Orthodox Church. The clergy should examine this question both in Finland and in our parish, too, and decide about a clear and integrated practice. Unfortunately this hasn't happened.

Reception of other Christians into the Church is a problem in the Greek Orthodox Church, although Archbishop Christodulos denies it. All those joining the Greek Orthodox Church are baptised before their chrismation. I have faced this matter many times, when Finnish spouses, often Lutheran, who live in Greece and have joined their spouses there in Christian (Orthodox) matrimony, wish to join the Orthodox Church as a consequence of his/her family, local culture and religious search. We have

found a solution, according to which they have arranged this matter in accordance with the Finnish practice, when they have been visiting Finland, and taken with them a certificate of belonging to the Orthodox Church.

Nun Kristoduli also brings up the heresy, against which we have to fight: “ – – those joining the Church request rebaptism by themselves”. Baptism is always an act of God, in which He in his love of mankind adopts us as His children without merit; it isn't a question of our bringing our own excellence and faith to Him. Rebaptism is a denial of salvation by God. In every baptismal service and liturgy we confess: *I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins*. If we don't believe in this, we are heretics.

Father Johannes Karhusaari

(in *Ortodoksiviesti* journal, which is sent to each Orthodox household in the Orthodox Parish of Helsinki, issue 10/2000) (Unofficial translation)

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6. Briefly on *The Brotherhood of Saint Kosmas of Aitolia*

The Brotherhood of Saint Kosmas of Aitolia is a registered non-profit organization in Joensuu, Finland. It is founded by students and scholars of Orthodox Christian Theology, and other members of Finnish Orthodox Church with the blessing of the Holy Episcopal Synod of the Finnish Orthodox Church, Patriarchate of Constantinople in 2001. The Brotherhood has so far published approximately ten orthodox spiritual books. Most of the published books are translations from other languages into Finnish.

7. Contacts of *The Brotherhood of Saint Kosmas of Aitolia*

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and

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For further information (mainly in Finnish), please see at internet www.kosmas.fi