

**Thomas-Andreas Pöder**, *'From Conflict to Communion' and the Ecumenical Movement from the Lutheran Perspective*

In 2017 the conference “From Conflict to Communion” was jointly organised by the Roman Catholic Church in Estonia and the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church. The conference was inspired by a study report of the international Lutheran and Catholic joint commission. The document “From Conflict to Communion” (= CC; 2013), today available in 15 languages, contributed significantly to the celebration of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Reformation in ecumenical spirit.

The article is divided into three parts. It starts with a descriptive part, providing a brief overview of the document. The second part is analytical, offering a critical reflection on the assumptions, method and purpose of CC and commenting on some of the emphases of the document. The third part includes a constructive reflection on the significance of CC for the Catholic-Lutheran relations in particular, as well as on its significance in a wider ecumenical context.

CC proposes for study and critical discussion a jointly told story about the events of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation, a joint view on the theology of Martin Luther, a jointly given summary and evaluation of the dialogue between Lutherans and Catholics, of its results, current state and perspectives. The article claims that it is also important to read the document as a response to the questions such as how to understand an ecumenical dialogue and the ecumenical movement and why and how to take part of it. CC contains disenchanting and inspiring ideas for the communication between all churches and Christians. CC is thought-provoking *vis-a-vis* partners who have not explicitly condemned each other on doctrinal grounds but whose conflict and mutual non-recognition have been or are manifest in more or less concealed ignoring of each other. CC contributes to understanding the crucial importance of ecumenical conversations and theological research.

**Ingmar Kurg**, *Communion Ecclesiology*

Communion ecclesiology, being prepared by the Catholic theologians during the years 1930–1940, had been the central idea of the Second Vatican Council and was approved as such by the Second Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in 1985. If Church is to be characterized

as a communion, it means communion with God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit; on this basis is also built the communion between all Christians and the organization of the ecclesial life. This idea of communion instigated both changes inside the church buildings (*Inter Oecumenici Instruction*, 1964) as well as the new liturgy (*Missale Romanum*, 1970) that was supposed to realize the principle of the so-called *participatio actuosa* – “full, conscious and active” participation of the people of God (Constitution *Sacrosanctum concilium*, 1963) in the liturgy. In the Roman Curia the main leader of the idea of communion ecclesiology was Cardinal Walter Kasper. He explained and defended the unity of Christians in “reconciled diversity”, both in the Roman Catholic Church, *ad intra*, as well as in inter-confessional communion of churches, *ad extra*. For Roman Catholics the ecumenical intention of communion ecclesiology lies in the question of how the churches, nations and world will be united to Jesus Christ.

**Kaido Soom**, *A Comparison of the Religiousness of Estonian and Russian-Speaking People Living in Estonia*

The Estonian society is bicultural, and two of the largest ethnicities in the society are Estonians and Russians. The article seeks to answer the question of the religiousness of Estonian-speaking people living in Estonia in comparison to the Russian-speaking people. The population census of 2011 showed that only 19% of Estonians embrace some kind of faith, but for the ethnic Russians that percentage was 51%. From the Estonians who embraced some kind of faith 72% were Lutherans and 94% of ethnic Russians were Orthodox Christians. Thus, we can see that the Russian-speaking respondents are clearly more strongly associated with institutional Christianity than the Estonian-speaking respondents. Lutheranism is the faith of the Estonians, Orthodoxy the faith of the Russians. Orthodoxy is a bearer of minority culture and a binder of a minority ethnicity.

Comparing the Estonian-speaking and Russian-speaking population's attitude towards the teaching of the classical Church, the analysis of the study “Life, faith and religious life” highlights that for both language groups, only a small part (about 10%) agrees completely with the most important teachings of the church. The number of believers is broadly the same among the speakers of both Estonian and Russian, but the Russian speakers have

a more positive attitude towards Christian religious statements than the Estonian speakers.

The New Age spirituality is widespread among both Estonian and Russian speakers, while there are more active supporters of the New Age spirituality among Estonian respondents than among Russian respondents. Meanwhile, there are significantly more Estonian-speaking respondents than Russian-speaking respondents, who completely disagree with the claims of the New Age spirituality. There are not very many strong supporters of New Age spirituality, only about 10%.

Also, by comparing the practice of religion in the church by Estonian-speaking and Russian-speaking people, it can be concluded that there are no particularly large differences. The speakers of both languages are equally passive practitioners of the Christian faith. The Estonian-speaking people go to the chapel a bit more often than the Russian-speaking people, and the Russian-speaking people pray much more than the Estonian-speaking people, but there are no major differences on other issues.

**Triin Käpp**, *The Role of Christian Schools in a Liberal Society, Estonian example*

Most of the schools in Estonia are municipal schools and education is compulsory and free of charge until age 18. In recent years there has been a sudden rise in the number of Christian private schools.

This article questions the role of Christian schools in Estonia as a secular society. The answer to that question emanates mainly from the interviews I have conducted with the boards of the schools. For the background I looked into the Gallup “Life, Religion and Religious Life” that was held in the year 2015 by the Estonian Council of Churches. In order to get a broader look, I describe similar discussions in Great Britain and Belgium.

To summarise the outcomes from the interviews there were 4 themes that were emphasized a number of times:

- Unity in values both at home and in school
- Traditionalism that is known and secure
- The freedom and security to talk about faith and religion
- Christian perspective on human being

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In addition, we have to cope with the dead hand of the Soviet times, and as there is a lack of knowledge about how to pass on information concerning faith and religion or how to practise religious education at home, so the Christian schools have to fill the gap and also help the families.

From the Gallup we can see that people still have a rather vague understanding of what is religious education or what is the concept of Christian schools. On the positive side we can see that people do think these schools need to exist as they enrich variety in our education. Most probably all the prejudices come from unawareness.

In comparison with Great Britain and Belgium we face rather similar questions even if they sometimes come from opposite directions. The main issues are how liberal and Christian values meet, what is the role of the parents/society, who should finance Christian schools, etc.

### **Silja Härm, *Teacher Opinions of the Objectives of Religious Education at a Gymnasium Level in Estonia***

The article describes discourses of teaching objectives in religious education (RE) based on interviews with upper secondary school teachers in Estonia. In analysing the interviews content analysis and discourse analysis are used. Three main discourses are discernible: nurturing citizens of the world, nurturing European identity and self-reflective discourse. The same discourses are represented also in the state RE syllabus.

In case of nurturing citizens of the world, knowledge about basic beliefs and practices of world religions is provided. The main rationale behind teaching religion is helping the students to cope with everyday situations in the globalizing world.

In case of nurturing European identity interconnections between religion, culture and tradition are highlighted. Identity questions are emphasized and Christianity is seen as having played an important role in the formation of cultural space of Europe and Estonia.

In case of self-reflective discourse attention is mainly paid to the capability of pupils to form and express substantiated personal opinions on religious matters. Main focus is on the existential issues that are relevant in the lives of the pupils. Unlike other discourses, supporting religious development of adolescents is considered to be important.

There is no clear-cut links between biographical background of the teachers and discourses they use. The educational background of the teachers, however, seems to influence the choice of primary discourse. Especially noteworthy is the fact that all the teachers who prioritize the self-reflective discourse have either passed teacher training in RE or studied theology. Possibly such an educational background may give a teacher more self-confidence in dealing with religion and creating links between the theoretical knowledge and life experiences of the pupils. Nonetheless, not all the teachers who have passed training in RE teaching or theology put emphasis on self-reflective discourse.