

The Nationalization of Liturgy in the Orthodox Church of Finland in the 1920s-30s

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The article explores the nationalization of the Orthodox liturgical tradition in Finland in the 1920s-30s. It was a process through which the Finnish Orthodox tried to remove signs of Russian heritage from their church culture in order to prove their loyalty to the newly independent Republic of Finland. The analysis of the national discourse reveals how the contemporary writers justified the nationalizing reforms.

Keywords: *nationalization, Finnicization, Orthodox Church of Finland, liturgical reform, liturgical adaptation*

Introduction

On 26 November 1918, the Orthodox (contemporarily called Greek Catholic) Church was declared a state Church in the newly established independent Republic of Finland, next to the Evangelical Lutheran Church, which constituted the majority denomination.¹ Through this, the Orthodox Church of Finland was severed from the Russian Orthodox Church and, in 1923, its canonical allegiance was officially transferred from the Moscow Patriarchate to the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. These events were a response to the aspirations towards a national Orthodox Church that a group of Orthodox “nationalizers” had cultivated already at the turn of the 20th century. Moreover, and even more significantly, these changes were planned and brought into action in cooperation with the representatives of the Finnish government. The aim was to create a national Finnish Orthodox Church and thus prevent any conflicts of interest with Church authorities beyond the eastern border, in other words, to uproot Finland’s Orthodox minority from its Russian background.

In popular Finnish historiography, the process of nationalization has generally been considered a story of success. From this perspective, the Orthodox minority emerged from the tumultuous years of early in-

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¹ Mika Nokelainen, *Vähemmistövaltiokirkon synty. Ortodoksisen kirkkokunnan ja valtion suhteiden muotoutuminen Suomessa 1917-1922*, Helsinki, Suomen kirkkohistoriallinen seura 2010, p. 130-158.