# Four Immigrant Churches and a Mosque: An Overview of Immigrant Religious Institutions in Oulu

Edward Dutton

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Eerikinkatu 34
20100 Turku
Finland

Internet:
www.migrationinstitute.fi

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# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

The northern Finnish city of Oulu has a relatively small immigrant population; only two thousand out of around 130,000 inhabitants, not including those who are naturalised (City of Oulu 2009). There are immigrants from various developed countries, usually having reached the city because of work with the telecommunications company Nokia or other international companies, research or study at Oulu University (or sometimes at the University of Applied Sciences)[1] or because they are in a relationship with a Finn.[2] In addition, there are refugees from various developing countries and in particular Sudan, Somalia and Iraq. Though the foreign population in Oulu is modest compared to that in Finland's capital Helsinki, there are five immigrant-led religious organisations operating in the city. There is an official 'English Language Church' run by the Oulu Finnish Lutheran Church which maintains connections with the Anglican Chaplaincy in Helsinki. There is a more conservative evangelical[3] English-language church which split from the Lutheran-run church and was originally established by a South African Finnish-Lutheran priest called the Rev'd Patrick Dickson. Currently, there are two separate Arabic-language Sudanese churches (one Anglican and the other of mixed denomination) and a Mosque. In addition, Oulu's Orthodox Cathedral has so many foreign worshippers at its Easter service that the head priest *('Kirkkoherra')* declares 'Jesus is Risen!' in not only Finnish but also Russian and Greek.[4]

I provide this summary of foreign religious activity in Oulu because it is perhaps symbolic of the importance to some immigrants of religious practice in negotiating and preserving identity and in seeking social status when, as immigrants, their identity may be exposed to question and their status within society limited, a point

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[1] This is the international rebranding of Oulu Polytechnic (Oulun Ammattikorkeakoulu – lit- Oulu's Vocational High School).

[2] Research reported in Finland's leading newspaper, *Helsingin Sanomat,* by Elli Heikkilä and Tarja Niemi indicates that 14.4 percent of marriages in Helsinki in 2007 were between a Finn and foreigner. These marriages are more likely to end in divorce especially if the two cultures are markedly different and the husband is the one who is not a Finn (Huhtanen 4th August 2009). See also Heikkilä (2005b).

[3] This term is employed in Protestant discourse to refer to a church which is, in very brief summary, religiously and socially conservative but which engages in proselytising activity. It is sometimes used as a synonym for 'fundamentalist Christian' though this might not be entirely accurate. See Barr (1977) and below.

[4] I interviewed the Kirkkoherra Father Raimo Kiiskinen in February 2007 and have attended many services.

that has been made by Bruce (2002, Ch. 1). There has been considerable research into the dynamics of religion amongst immigrant communities (see Bruce 2002, Kurien 2004) and into various aspects of immigration to Finland (e.g. Heikkilä 2005a, Pitkänen and Kouki, 2002). However, there exists very little detailed research into the relationship between immigrant status and the development of religious organisations in a specifically Finnish context not least because immigration to Finland is a relatively recent phenomenon, occurring only in any substantial numbers since the 1980s.[5] This report will aim to make a contribution to the field of religious, Finnish and migration studies by examining this specific issue of immigrant religious development in Finland, focussing on the city of Oulu. In this discussion, I will aim to understand the dynamics of the development of religious organisations amongst immigrants in a specifically Oulu context. This case-study will allow the research to be tightly focussed and, as I will discuss in Chapter Two, has allowed me to conduct albeit brief participant observation fieldwork in every pertinent religious organisation in the city. Specifically I will attempt to understand why the two largest immigrant-led religious organisations in Oulu have become highly religiously conservative or 'fundamentalist' to put it in more colloquial parlance.[6] In doing so, I will aim to provide further insight into the Finnish immigrant-religious situation more broadly.[7] I will argue, as I will outline below, that the reasons for the development of tight religious groups with conservative ideologies in a Finnish context are broadly the same as in other European countries where this process has occurred amongst immigrants. For example, many British cities – for comparable reasons that we will discuss – have seen the rise of what are commonly called 'fundamentalist' mosques (see e.g. Philips 2006, Ranstorp 2005). However, I will argue that there are a number of specific dimensions to the interface between Finns – especially in northern Finland though to a lesser extent in the whole country – and immigrants which may augment this rise in conservative and separate immigrant religiosity.

[5] Various researchers have, however, conducted research into the development of urban Islam in Turku and other cities such as Martikainen (2007).

[6] I am using the word 'fundamentalist' in the accepted sense that I will define below. I appreciate that it has become something of an epithet to be thrown by liberals at religious conservatives. This renders it inherently judgemental and brings its usefulness into question. For the most part I will therefore use the term 'radical conservative.'

[7] As we will see below, a more complex situation can be noted in Helsinki.

## Outline

It is, perhaps, fairly trite to state that, in general, immigrants to Oulu – whether from developed or developing countries – lack social status within Finnish society at least to a certain extent. As has been noted in many other countries, immigrants will tend to gain social status by creating their own religious organisations which provide them with social status amongst themselves and within the broader society as 'community leaders' (e.g. Bruce 2002). These churches also provide them with a strong sense of social identity and, if they are ethnic-specific in some sense, help them to preserve their original sense of national identity in a context in which it is dislodged from the nation from which it derives and rendered more pertinent due to the 'outsider status' of the group.[8] At the same time, immigrants will often feel excluded from the broader society with their identity and sense of self under a kind of assault and this may be especially so if they are unemployed or feel marginalised in some other respect (see for example Wroth 1941). This will tend, I will argue, to render radical conservative religious groups particularly attractive in this time of identity and status-crisis because such groups provide a strong sense of identity (due to renewed membership of a tight group) and, indeed, a kind of moral superiority over the host community.[9] This point has been made by numerous scholars of religion in relation to times of crisis and the attractiveness of conservative religious organisations (see Dutton 2008, Rambo 1993) and their ability to offer a strong identity has been widely observed as has the importance of them offering a sense of social status (see, for example, Reiss 2000 or Stark 1996). However, I will also submit that there are a number of specific factors in a Finnish context which may make the formation of these immigrant and radical conservative religious organisations somewhat more likely than they might be in some countries or cities. I will argue, following Anttonen (2005), that Finland is a particularly nationalistic and tribal society meaning that immigrants are less likely to be accepted into the community than in some societies. I will submit that Finland – and even the Lutheran church in Finland – lacks the voluntary culture observed in churches such as the Church of England (see Yeung 2004) meaning that it is very difficult for immigrants to gain status within the Finnish church even if they learn Finnish. This kind of voluntary culture is observed, it will be noted, in Finland's

[8] See Eriksen (2002).

[9] Bruce (2002) also observes the way in which moral superiority is gained by the disempowered through religion as does McEnery (2006).

'Awakening Movements' but not more broadly. Indeed, it will be argued that the 'pietist' nature of almost all of these movements – and especially the one dominant in Oulu – makes them 'introversionist' following Wilson's (1970) 'Sect Typology' which will be outlined below. This means that they do not actively proselytise as 'conversionist' groups do. As I will note, this possibility for community status-seeking and group-religious-identity is thus not really present for immigrants in Oulu because the groups are not outsider-oriented – though this would only really affect a small minority who had been in Oulu for a long time. Moreover, the majority of these 'Awakening Movements' could legitimately be classed as 'fundamentalist' as we will see in another chapter. Thirdly, I will argue that the issue of language – and the fact that many foreigners in Oulu do not learn Finnish or are relatively slow in learning it – renders the development of separate churches – and feelings of social exclusion – more likely. And fourthly, I will argue that the kind of immigrants that have come to Oulu are, naturally, a significant factor in the development of religiously conservative institutions.[10]

But before moving on to the analysis, I will examine in more detail the nature of immigrant religion and 'fundamentalism' as it is commonly called. In Chapter Two, I will look at the religious dynamics of the city of Oulu and the fieldwork conducted for this study which will draw mainly upon the participant observation method and the interview method using a primarily social anthropological methodology. In Chapter Three, I will examine Christianity amongst immigrants in Oulu looking at all of the Christian churches operating in the city at the time of writing which are immigrant-run or primarily aimed at immigrants. In Chapter Four, I will look at Islam in Oulu and in Chapter Five I will summarise the findings of this discussion and look at its implications for immigration to Finland and Oulu specifically.

## Religion and Immigration

I appreciate, firstly, in discussing 'religion' that various different definitions have been offered. Geertz (1966, 4) provides a broad functionalist definition of 'religion' which might be understood to encompass some forms of nationalism and various other political ideologies. Religion, for Geertz, is any system of symbols which provides 'a general account of existence' and clothing it in 'such an aura of factuality' that it

[10] See House (2003) for further discussion of English as a *lingua franca.*

seems 'uniquely realistic' for believers. Geertz's definition can be applied across all cultures and eras and is, therefore, of great use. 'Religion' refers to the aspects of culture[11] which are, at a given point, regarded by a group as essential and beyond question – those to which they cannot have a critical attitude. Wilson (1975, 560) notes that belief in gods and abhorrence of incest tend to be the firmest aspects followed by 'ideology.' We would expect aspects of this primal 'religion' to be partially preserved in any 'secular' replacement ideology. But to a avoid turning 'incest' into 'religion' our distinction needs to be slightly more specific. Boyer (2001) makes the point that religion refers to a series of phenomena in human-thought made possible by evolutionary hard-wiring towards group membership with Mithen observing that the human mind is distinguished by an ability to apply one 'cognitive domain' (of which man has three: technical, environmental knowledge and pack) over to another – noted in the tendency to anthropomorphise nature and thus apply social knowledge to the environment (see Mithen 1996, 173). One of the consequences of this hard-wiring is perceiving agency in the world. This perception of the 'hidden hand' unites everything from ancestor cults to a historicist perspective such as Marxism or Herderian nationalism.[12] This, combined with a firm belief that the perception of agency is accurate, is how we might distinguish 'religion,' while always being aware that religion is a by-product of a series of adaptations rather than something easy to grasp. However, in discussing religion in this context, I will draw upon what Bruce (2002, 232) terms the 'widely accepted' definition of the term as found in the Oxford English Dictionary. This is not only because it is widely accepted within the community of researchers and speakers of English at which this discussion is aimed but also because I am specifically interested in 'world religions' in this context; namely Christianity and Islam. To a certain extent, however, I think that the definition of scholars such as Boyer is congruous with Bruce's definition which assumes that religions must include gods and spirits or similar entities. The main problem with Bruce's definition is that it is difficult to apply it across all cultures because it assumes a distinction between the 'religious' and the 'secular' which, in light of human agency dimension to historicism, is difficult to justify. Nevertheless, I

[11] I use 'culture' here in the anthropological sense to mean 'the entire way of life of a people.' See Jenks (1993) for a detailed discussion of the word.

[12] 'Historicist' ideologies tend to believe that history moves a long an inevitable path to a set point. For an examination see Popper (1957).

do not think that this essentalist[13] discussion needs to detain us here for this overview. Indeed, I would suggest that Fitzgerald (2000) is needlessly essentialist in demanding a perfect definition of 'religion' before the word can be employed. If we follow Boyer's mild essentialism, then characters such as Father Christmas do not get drawn into our definition of religion. It remains distinctive from culture. I would submit that there is a strong case for seeing 'historicist' ideologies as 'religious' following Boyer's definition and thus a case for nuancing Bruce's definition. But for the purposes of this article, I am only interested in organisations that believe in God in contrast to those that do not. So Bruce's definition is the pragmatic one.

The relationship between immigrant communities and religion has been widely noted. Bruce (2002, 34) observes, for example, that when Irish Catholics migrated to London in the nineteenth century they were an excluded and socially marginalised community. They responded to this low status by establishing their own Irish Catholic churches. Consequently, they were able to compete for – and gain – social status within their own church community and the fact of having status within a 'religious' community provided them with status within the broader community because of the respect accorded to religiosity and because of their ability – as an organised community – to campaign for their own empowerment. Moreover, the development of such a community, Bruce points out, allowed members to negotiate their new situation as immigrants and to preserve their own culture while concomitantly integrating, to some extent, as more empowered members of the broader community. Similar processes, Bruce notes, can be observed amongst many immigrant communities in numerous countries. What he calls the 'cultural transition' reaction to change provides a means to negotiate a new identity and develop a new sense of social worth and various scholars

[13] As I write in Dutton (2009, Ch. 2): 'On the one hand, *essentialists* – following the Platonic view – insist that every concept is an imperfect reflection of the ideal of that concept (which, according to Plato, can be found in the world of forms accessible through the intellect). These forms are unchanging and it is the task of science to describe the true nature of things and thus focus on the definitions of terms. Dennett (1995, 95) observes that scientists should 'of course' define their terms but 'only up to a point.' He provides a modern version of the so called *nominalist* critique. *Nominalists* are more interested in understanding how something behaves in different circumstances and they make use of a concept if it is helpful. There will always be different ways of defining a set term and different definitions will be useful in different circumstances. But to insist, in an essentialist fashion, that terms must always be perfectly defined before being employed leads us to a situation where we can do very little. As Dennett (39) observes, there are manifold problems defining a word such as 'island' but, aware of the intellectual difficulties, we can still use the concept as a tool to further our understanding. Some form of essentialism is necessary in order to taxonomise the world and further understand it but focussing so intensely on the precise meaning of words leads us to a situation where we cannot really go any further. It is the fallacy of 'Loki's Wager.' The Norse god, who lost his wager, was happy for the dwarves to cut off his head but insisted they not touch his neck. They discussed where his neck ended for eternity.'

(e.g. Geertz 1966, Hebdige 1979, Morris 1969) have noted the centrality of group membership to any structured form of individual identity. Group membership would therefore become especially significant to an immigrant detached from the symbolic dimensions of place, language and cultural activity and so forth through which his national identity is constructed.[14] Moreover, 'religion' is a highly significant dimension to some forms of nationalism or discourses within particular nationalisms, a point which Bruce (1998) emphasises in relation to Polish national identity for example and which Wilson (1976) discusses with regard to the Lutheran church and Finnishness. Thus, 'religion' might become attractive to an immigrant as a means of expressing and preserving their sense of national identity in a foreign environment.

Perhaps, Oberg's (1960) notion of 'Culture Shock' might also assist in explaining this process. Oberg argues that – at some stage in their adjustment – immigrants will react negatively to the host culture and represent their own culture in an unrealistically positive light.[15] Indeed, they will tend to gravitate towards other immigrants and immigrants from their own ethnic backgrounds in particular. This heightened attachment to ones own foreign identity during a period of social transition may be another reason for the seemingly universal phenomenon of immigrants establishing their own immigrant groups when abroad and religious organisations in particular. And, of course, the fact of these being religious organisations – rather than other forms – is also significant in terms of understanding identity development. Various scholars such as Galanter (1999) and Lewis (1993) have observed the tendency for people who are otherwise not particularly 'religious' to become involved with religion at times of social change. Indeed, Bruce (2002) observes a direct connection between rapid social change and religious revivals in the history of Wales to give a specific example. Religion provides certainty in a time of uncertainty and a strong identity at a time when immigrant identity is exposed to question. Wilson (1975) observes that 'religion' tends to be one of the most central dimensions to 'culture,' the components which a person is most emotionally attached to and, accordingly, most likely to reach for in times of crisis. Boyer (2001) and Dawkins (2006) both observe that it is in the stresses of a time

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[14] I appreciate that the literature on national identity is voluminous and it is beyond the scope of this discussion to go into it in depth. See, however, Reicher and Hopkins (2001) for a useful summary. The issue will also be returned to in greater depth in the next chapter but obviously any nationalism contains competing interpretations and emphases according to time-period, social status and so on as Kidd (1998) observes. See also Smith (1999), Anderson (1983) and Gellner (1983).

[15] Interestingly, Wagner (2002) finds that nostalgia is one reaction to rapid and significant social change. As we will see below, there may be something highly 'nostalgic' about conservative religiosity.

of crisis that one is more likely to feel a sense of agency in the world – something explained by the evolutionary advantage to always perceiving a living thing, just in case there is (to fail to perceive one when there was one would result in death). Morris (1992) suggests that 'religion' is lodged deeply within contemporary constructions of identity and is, for this reason, only turned to at the most profound times in life – in a sense 'times of crisis' - when a person is compelled to think about such questions as who they are and even what the point of life is.[16] It might be suggested that moving to foreign country might evoke such a 'religious reaction' in some immigrants. As such, I think there is a reasonable case – beyond our specific case-study of Finland – for expecting immigrant communities to create their own religious organisations (or to become more involved in religious organisations) to a greater extent than they otherwise might.

## Immigration and Fundamentalism

Bruce (2002, 34) also notes what he calls 'Cultural Defence' in response to rapid change. In these circumstances, a group that feels in some way 'under threat' will retreat in on itself and create an organisation with strong boundaries in an attempt to preserve the perceived purity of their ideology and way of life and protect themselves from outsiders. Sandall (2001) looks at the way in which certain forms of nationalism and religion engage in this process and he terms them 'Neo-Tribes' because, like tribal organisations and in contrast to 'civilisations,' they tend to prize group solidarity and cohesiveness over a pursuit of 'truth', promote a world-view that appears less than entirely logical to outsiders and look to the past for ideas on how to live and think thus idealising the past. This phenomenon might be summarised as 'fundamentalism' or, as I have suggested, 'religious radical conservatism' due to the connotations of the word 'fundamentalism.'

Nevertheless, Armstrong (2001) and many others such as Bruce (2002) and Barr (1977) employ the term 'fundamentalism' no matter what the sensitivity of 'conservative' religious practitioners may be. Armstrong (2001, xi) defines 'fundamentalist' groups in line with Bruce's 'Cultural Defence' category and in such a way that the term – though originally relating to early twentieth century American

[16] Conn (1986) finds that conversion experiences tend to occur at precisely these times.

Protestantism – can also be applied to other World Religions. Armstrong summarises that fundamentalist groups are:

> ' . . . embattled forms of spirituality, which have emerged as a response to a perceived crisis . . . They fear annihilation and try to fortify their beleaguered identity by means of selective retrieval of certain doctrines and practices from the past.'

This is a broad summary but is nevertheless useful in trenchantly describing the dynamics of fundamentalist religiosity. Of course, there are different kinds of group that might be termed 'fundamentalist' and Wilson's (1970) 'Sect Typology' distinguishes between groups which are 'conversionist' and attempt to persuade others to join and those which are 'introversionist' and, having little interest in converting others, attempt to preserve their own purity and ideas. Wilson (1970) points out that some groups might begin as 'conversionist' and thereafter become 'introversionist.' We should also be aware – in discussing 'fundamentalism' – that it is a broad description which encompasses considerable differences in, for example, Protestant belief and practice. Thus, a distinction is often drawn between 'Charismatic' and 'conservative evangelical' Protestants.[17] Barr (1977) notes that both will tend to believe – to varying degrees – in 'Biblical inerrancy', socially conservative behavioural ethics and the importance of conversion experience and evangelism. However, the former will engage in 'Charismatic', lively worship which may include 'spiritual gifts' such as 'prophecy', 'speaking in tongues' and the gift of 'healing'. Moreover, as Wilson (1970) notes, some religiously conservative groups do not engage in active evangelism at all – such as the Amish - and, as we will see below, various Finnish pietist groups exemplify this.

Returning to our discussion of immigration, we can perhaps begin to see why – though we will look at this in more depth below – 'fundamentalism' might be likely to develop and be attractive amongst certain immigrant communities. Asked to integrate or finding themselves in a more liberal religious culture, immigrants may feel that their religion and culture are under threat meaning that a fundamentalist form of religiosity begins to develop. They may feel a sense of crisis, assisting the development of such religiosity and rendering it attractive to immigrants because of the certainties it offers in time of change, the religion and culture that it preserves and, even we might suggest, the sense of superiority and status that it allows the immigrant to experience in relation to

[17] Indeed, as Labanow (2009) points out, there is a growing 'liberal evangelical' movement known as the 'Emerging Church.' Influenced by Post-Modern ideas it is difficult to term its members 'fundamentalist' though they are 'evangelical.'

the dominant or host community in which the immigrants' status may be relatively low on certain levels.

Having then examined the key terms in this discussion, in the next chapter I will look at the fieldwork conducted for this study and provide a general outline of Oulu (and its native religious dynamics within a Finnish religious context) which will act as our case-study in attempting to understand immigrant religious dynamics in Finland.

# CHAPTER TWO

## Oulu as a Field

Oulu is the largest city in northern Finland and the fifth largest city in the country with a population of around 130,000. The city's main employers are currently Nokia, Oulu University and the city's paper mill. The city was established in 1605 by King Karl IX of Sweden (Finland was a province of Sweden until 1809 when it became a Grand Duchy of Russia before gaining independence in 1917). The city originally had a substantial Swedish-speaking population but it is now overwhelmingly Finnish-speaking (there are only 400 registered Swedish-speakers) and Swedish-language school is therefore private rather than purely government funded.[18] However, before examining Oulu – or its religiosity – any further, it would useful to examine the nature of the fieldwork conducted for this study.

Information for the current study involved using the participant observation method drawing upon a social anthropological discourse. This method was employed in order to understand more about immigrant religion in Oulu and Finnish religious practice. As stated, this report is only meant to offer the reader an overview of the situation. In order, within various practical limitations, to provide an overview of all of the relevant religious organisations this report can, therefore, only aim to provide a relatively brief examination of each group based on relatively brief observation. It might be countered that this is impressionistic. But any overview is such. It does not mean that it is not a contribution to knowledge upon which future and more in-depth research can be constructed. I attended services and interviewed worshippers about their religious and ethical views. In addition, I was able to interview, as will be discussed below, the priests and lay leaders in charge of these groups as well as the Anglican Chaplain in Helsinki who had had considerable contact with the various Lutheran-church-related religious organisations operating in Oulu.[19] For comparative purposes, I also attended the Anglican church in Helsinki on a number of occasions as well as other immigrant churches in the city.

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[18] According to staff whom I interviewed, most of the students are actually bilingual and some native speakers of Finnish

[19] For more detail on fieldwork method see Hammersley and Atkinson (1995).

In addition, and as part of a broader project on Finnish culture and religiosity,[20] I interviewed a sample of Finns from the Oulu region – and broader Oulu Diocese – selected according to such as issues as age, gender, social background and extent of church attachment. This was very useful with regard to the current project as it allowed me to gain further insight into the religious dynamics of the Oulu region and thus any relationship that this may potentially have with immigrant religiosity. Oulu is generally accepted in Finland to be a relatively religiously conservative city. The Finnish Lutheran Church operates a system of church membership whereby those who have been baptised can pay a special 'church tax' in order to be members of the church. Assuming they have been confirmed – which around ninety percent of Finns are – this means that they can get married in the Lutheran church and have their own children baptised into it. 81.7 percent of Finns are paid-up members of the Lutheran church (*Monikasvoinen kirkko* 2008, 53) but this slowly declining figure disguises wide regional differences. In Oulu itself, church membership is somewhat higher; close to ninety percent. Oulu is also heavily influenced by what are known in Finland as 'awakening movements' to a greater extent than in Helsinki, for example, and these tend to be theologically and socially conservative.

## Religious Dynamics in Oulu

As already stated, Oulu is a relatively conservative city in terms of its religiosity. Finnish regular church attendance (as with the Nordic countries) is very low if we compare it even to a country such as England and certainly to southern Europe – only around two percent attend church once a week (Davie 2000, 14). However, if we attempt to measure religiosity in terms of church membership then Finland – and especially Oulu – would appear to be far more religious, though it is generally accepted that for most Finns the Lutheran Church is regarded as a significant part of Finnish identity and this explains the high level of involvement (see Anttonen 2005).

However, Oulu itself – even putting these issues aside – is relatively religiously conservative and, in particular, is under influence from a particular 'awakening group.' Before looking at this in more detail, I would be useful to have an overview of Finland's 'awakening movements'. There are four main revival movements in Finland, some with various sub-groups or schisms but all are within the Lutheran Church. Each movement

[20] See Dutton (2009).

has its own central organisation, a newspaper or magazine and even a summer convention which can attract thousands of attendees. The original ‘Pietist Movement’ (‘*herännäisyys’)* was founded by a ‘peasant’ called Paavo Ruotsalainen (1777 – 1852). The core emphasis of this group was on humanity’s insignificance compared to God and the group also emphasises human sinfulness. The Evangelical Movement (‘*Suomen evankelis-luterilainen evankeliumiyhdisys’)* was founded by Frederik Gabriel Hedberg (1811 – 1893). It split from the Pietists and tends to stress the importance of gaining salvation, most crucially through baptism. It is also evangelical in the sense of engaging in outreach activities to persuade others to become Evangelical Christians, though it is generally conservative in style. Henrik Renqvist (1789 – 1866) was a leading figure in the ‘Praying Movement’ (‘*rukoilevaisuus’).* Members of this small group, mainly found in the south west, may pray up to twenty times a day and some prayers may last for hours. They also emphasise private confession (Stoddard 1974, 77-78). Various revivals occurred in the twentieth century but the main one that has survived as an independent movement within the Lutheran Church is ‘National Mission’ (‘*kansanlähetys’).*

However, the largest revival movement in Finland is Laestadianism (‘*lestadiolaisuus’)* which was founded in Lapland by (partly-Sámi) Swedish priest Lars Laestadius (1800 – 1861). While he was inspecting congregations in Lapland in 1844, he met a Sámi woman called Milla Clementsdottir and through his relationship with her he experienced a kind of religious awakening. He began to preach and his views influenced first the Sámis in Sweden and then spread to Finland and Norway. His was a highly conservative interpretation of Lutheranism, returning to traditional belief and rejecting liberal strains of thought. The group draws a strong distinction between themselves and others whom they mostly expect to go to Hell. Laestadius also encouraged people to stop drinking in order to commit themselves to Christ and Laestadians argue that, ‘In many localities, the revival movement caused complete changes in ways of life, drunks repented, the tavern keepers closed their bars . . .’ (*Suomen Rauhanyhdistysten Keskusyhdistys* 2007). The movement also spread due to the popularity of Temperance Movements and by the end of Laestadius’ life it was as far south as Oulu. It is particularly popular in this area.

This group has split into three main movements – Conservative Laestadians (‘*vanhoillis-lestadiolaisuus’* commonly termed as ‘the Laestadians’) and by far the largest group; the First Born Laestadians *(‘esikois-lestadiolaisuus’)* and *Rauhan Sana* (‘Word of Peace’). There are a number of other small subgroups. The Laestadians have

about 110,000 members worldwide of which about 100,000 are in Finland. Of these, seventy-five percent are Conservative Laestadians (see Kouva 2005 or Korpela 2005) who refer to themselves as 'Laestadians' or 'Believers.' The remainder are in Sweden, Norway and the USA and there also are very small groupings in various other countries. The Conservative Laestadians are highly conservative in theological terms believing in Biblical inerrancy and that the Bible can only be revealed through a learned mediator. One becomes a member by confessing ones sins to another Laestadian. Most members reject television, alcohol, make-up and ear-rings and hair-dying for women and, most notably, contraception; leading to large families of, on average, ten children. The largest Conservative Laestadian family in Pesälä's (2004) study had twenty-one children. Women are generally expected to be house-wives once they have children and many marry as young as eighteen. From my own observation, many members tended to smoke, even outside the meeting hall before entering, and also dress noticeably fashionably or stylishly. Most Conservative Laestadians that attended the mid-week meeting also tended to be under thirty. Johanna (a Laestadian) remarked about Conservative Laestadian traditions:

> We would like to put emphasis on much more than clothes . . . but I guess you understand that we have our own culture. I don't see make-up as a problem but I want to be like other believers. Maybe we put effort into how we look. We want to shine, we want to be different, we want to be separate somehow . . . but also not that separate. But this life is more important and it is important to do what is right.

A twenty-nine year-old male Conservative Laestadian remarked with regard to smoking that, 'I guess you know that we don't drink alcohol so that's why I think people smoke.' Also, members admitted that their English does not tend to be especially good which most blamed on the fact that they 'don't watch television.' Timo remarked, light-heartedly, that it was because, 'We are too lazy to study at school!' Members also conduct their own separate 'confirmation camps' for teenagers.

Though there are Laestadians in Scandinavian countries, they are not as significant as in Finland. The Bishop of Oulu since 2000, the Rt Rev'd Samuel Salmi, is from a small Laestadian group as was his more conservative predecessor. However, as will be noted below, I did speak to some people from Laestadian families who were in effect Laestadians for social reasons – attending the meetings but not necessarily rigidly following the practices in private. Evidence of the influence of conservative awakening groups in Finland can be seen in the acute controversy over female clergy. Finland

ordained female clergy over twenty years later than the Nordic countries, in 1988. Interview-based research on female priests in the conservative, northern diocese of Oulu up until 2000, argued that female clergy were routinely discriminated against and demeaned by conservative colleagues who refused to work with them. (Finnish ‘congregations’ have multiple priests headed by a *Kirkkoherra* – ‘Church Lord’.) The Bishop of Oulu until 2000, the Rt Rev’d Olavi Rimpiläinen, refused to ordain female priests and was singled-out for criticism in this research (Saarinen 2005). It should be pointed-out that this research was accused of bias because it was conducted by a Lutheran priestess who was herself working in the Oulu Diocese: the Rev’d Satu Saarinen. Also, it is constructed in a biased manner, each chapter beginning with a prominent pro-female Biblical quotation when the Biblical understanding of the female position is at least contentious. For example, the entire book is preceded by the quote ‘As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him’ (Luke 10:38). But, that said, the work demonstrates a religious conservatism in an area of Finland where the Laestadians are a large minority of the population. Thus, it provides evidence for the view that aspects of Finnish culture – notably the Lutheran church - reflect the influence of sustained pietist movements

## The Laestadians, Church Organisation and Immigrants

So, clearly the Conservative Laestadian movement is relatively influential in Oulu. I have already mooted the possibility that this may have some limited influence of the development of immigrant religious – or at least Christian – communities and I would like to look at this in slightly more depth both in relation to the Laestadians and other awakening groups.

Finnish churches differ from those in England for example in the sense that they do not construct a community to the same extent. An English parish will tend to have one priest and usually only that priest, though sometimes also a trainee priest known as a ‘curate.’ It will have one congregation whereby there will in general be the same people every week. They will meet afterwards for coffee and the church will organise social which these people will attend. The Finnish Lutheran Church does not operate in this way. Within Oulu, there are four large ‘congregations’ each with a head priest *(Kirkkoherra).* For example, there are eleven priests working in the congregation of

Karjasilta. Two priests are, in general, in charge of an area called *Kaakuri,* though they have responsibilities beyond this as well. Different priests preach there on different Sundays rather than just the same priest. Different people attend for different priests – for example Laestadians might attend specifically when there is a Laestadian in charge. Others might refuse to come if the officiating priest is female – this information being advertised in the local newspaper. So, in general, there is less of a sense of community – and coffee after the service is very rare indeed. The system of organisation means that a community – beyond the community of Oulu Lutherans – is not fostered so there is less community within which disempowered outsiders can compete for social status.

This lack of status-seeking opportunity is augmented by the lack of voluntary culture within the church. In addition to the relatively unstructured church-community, almost everybody with any position of power within a congregation is a salaried professional. To provide just a few examples, when there is a 'coffee morning' it will either be organised by external caterers or the Church Warden. The latter are salaried professionals as are the congregation's various secretaries, youth-workers and cleaners. Even those who help run the church's popular summer 'Confirmation Camps' are paid. This includes a paid 'Summer Theologian' (a theology undergraduate training to be a priest). By contrast, in the Church of England these positions tend to be – though are not always – voluntary and are therefore a means through which status-seekers can compete for status within the community. In my experience, the sermon is always preached by a priest. In the Church of England, it is sometimes preached by a 'lay-reader.' This concept does not appear to exist with regard to Lutheran Church services. However, it does with regard to the awakening groups.

And this is where the awakening groups become important. These groups – and in particular the Laestadians – appear to operate far more like Anglican parishes. During my broader fieldwork in Finland, I attended meetings of the Pietists, the Evangelicals, the National Mission and the Conservative Laestadians. In both cases, there is an evident voluntary culture with people contributing to making and serving the coffee, helping to run the meeting or even preaching for on a voluntary basis. It follows that if a foreign Christian could speak Finnish then he could – if he so wished – compete for social status within such a community. However, this appears rather unlikely to occur. As already briefly looked at, many of these groups are – especially with regard to the Laestadians – introversionist. According to members and relatives of members to whom I spoke, though it is possible to become a member as an outsider, in general this is rare

and membership tends to be hereditary. Conservative Laestadians, the largest group, make no significant effort to engage with outsiders – though there is a weekly Laestadian sermon in English in Oulu – and so are unlikely to attract status-seeking foreigners, who would then be more inclined towards establishing their own group even if they spoke Finnish. But as in any country, notwithstanding the structure of the Finnish Lutheran Church, immigrants are likely to be pulled towards other immigrants like them whereby a religious community in their shared *lingua franca* can be developed.

Moreover, I think we can argue that the structures of Oulu have the potential to assist in fostering a sense of English-language solidarity – at least amongst certain kinds of foreigner – which make the establishment of separate churches more likely.[21] Many foreigners who come to Oulu – especially if they work for the university, Nokia or some other international company – have little need to learn Finnish. Most to whom I have spoken argue that it is possible to simply speak English most of the time, especially when socialising with Finns under the age of around forty. Consequently, there are English-speaking, informal social groups in Oulu which include people working in these institutions (who may be British or American but may also be using English as a lingua franca) as well as usually educated Finns who enjoy speaking in English. There are also formal associations such as Irish Music Society, Oulu Expat Family Adjustment and an English-language, online newspaper called 65 Degrees North.[22] Though some people in these groups may learn Finnish, many do not meaning that if they wish to take part in a religious community it needs to be in English. Moreover, even if they learn Finnish they are likely to spend many years prior to perfecting it socialising through English with other 'international people' as they are sometimes termed. This is likely to create a sense of *lingua franca* solidarity, again making an English-language church an attractive option for those who are so inclined.

## Language and Culture

As this report merely aims to give an overview, there is insufficient space to examine the many controversies surround the 'culture concept' let alone those regarding language. I suspect that most scholars of religion would accept Benoist's (2004)

[21] It has also led to the establishment of immigrant run, Anglophone media. For discussion see Dutton (2006).

[22] www.65degreesnorth.com

argument that European Christianity has subsumed within it many Pagan dimensions and thus, to a certain extent, the Finnish Lutheran Church might be regarded as the kind of national cult. Indeed, Anttonen (2005) observes that Finland is relatively nationalistic and this cult is of particular centrality to Finnish nationalism or at least certain interpretations of it.[23] This salience is most significant in the importance of Lutheran ritual in negotiating such 'Pagan' (or family-centred) Rites of Passage as initiation into adulthood, marriage and so on and there is a good case for arguing that baptism has very clearly replaced a pre-Christian 'naming-ceremony' and dimensions of this ceremony are still preserved – such as the baby's name being kept secret prior to baptism (see Dutton 2009, Ch. 8). It follows that, as in any Nordic country, the state Lutheran Church is more than simply the Lutheran Church in a certain language. It is the national cult and as a foreigner it is something which is substantially alien to you. Thus, as in any country we might expect religiously-inclined foreigners – even those who are Lutheran themselves – to develop some of other form of religious community. I will look at specific cultural issues within these communities in the following chapters. Accordingly, I would like to begin with the English-language church in Oulu.

[23] This point has been made in many other studies of Finland such as Dutton (2009) and Armstrong (2004).

# CHAPTER THREE

## Immigrant churches in Oulu

The recent history of English-language worship in Oulu is complex and schismatic. A schism occurred in May 2007 between the overwhelming majority of the Oulu International Church – who favoured an evangelical organisation – and the priest, who was more high church-oriented.[24] This makes much more sense if an overview of the history is provided first.

### Brief of History of the Oulu International Church

The beginnings of the Oulu International Church (known as Oulu International Christian Fellowship) were in 1976 when the Rev'd Patrick Dickson, a South African, set-up an English-language Bible study. During my research, I have interviewed Mr Dickson and heard him preach. Now retired, he is overtly evangelical, advocating a highly conservative reading of the Bible, in-line with what might commonly be called the 'fundamentalist' perspective. The pastor was educated at a leading conservative evangelical Bible College in Wales before coming to Finland, learning Finnish and eventually being ordained. In basic summary, the ministry appeared to be bordering on charismatic. Until 2009, Dickson was a councillor in Oulu for the Christian Democrats, a religiously conservative political party. Thus, there was a conservative influence over the church from its very inception.

As ICFO grew, they began to meet in a Lutheran Church and effectively became a kind of project of the Lutheran Church in 2002 when the Rev'd Arpad Kovacs (originally a refugee from the Hungarian-speaking part of what is now Serbia but what was, in 1992 when he fled, Yugoslavia) was appointed the priest in charge of International Work in Oulu and accordingly the group's priest. To a great extent, ICFO – even by this stage – was effectively a structured, lay-led organisation, rather like a church council. It had, for example, its own constitution. Nevertheless, the organisation included – and continues to include - members from backgrounds that believed in

Apostolic succession, communion and thus the need for an ordained priest. Kovacs informed me that he took a sabbatical in 2005, returning to his post in late 2006. During this period, the church's main priest was once again the Rev'd Patrick Dickson, though it would sometimes be other priests who would cover for him if he were busy or took a Sunday off. By this time, the organisation had its own website which appears to propound an implicitly conservative understanding of Christianity:

> **"Final Authority - God's Word**
>
> God has revealed himself in the Bible, which consists of the Old and New Testaments alone. Every word was inspired by God through human authors, so that the Bible as originally given is in its entirety the Word of God, without error (inerrant and infallible) and fully reliable in fact and doctrine. The Bible alone speaks with final and supreme authority and is always sufficient for all matters of belief and behaviour, doctrine and practice. In its interpretation we submit ourselves to the indwelling Holy Spirit who gives a true understanding of the Scriptures.
>
> **Communion**
>
> The Lord's Supper is a commemoration of Christ's sacrifice offered once for all. It is reserved for God's sons and daughters who have accepted Jesus as Saviour . . .
>
> **Mission**
>
> The chief end of man is to glorify, worship, and enjoy God forever. In this light our mission is to share the good news of Christ's saving sacrifice, going to all nations, tribes and people, starting here in Oulu . . .
>
> **Salvation**
>
> We believe salvation is by faith alone, through grace alone, in Christ alone. God, in His great love for mankind, sent His Son Jesus Christ that whoever believes in Him will be saved . . . (ICFO 2009).

In particular, with reference to the understanding of the Bible as 'inerrant,' these quotes strongly imply that the dominant discourse within ICFO would be 'fundamentalist' and this would obviously be likely to be self-perpetuating. My own interviews with senior members of ICFO provided further evidence for this conclusion. Christianity was understood to involve certain 'fundamentals' of belief and lifestyle which were non-negotiable. ICFO would have coffee after their Lutheran-run service prior to which a senior member would lead a rather convuluted religious song (seemingly a children's song) which culminated in everyone saying 'Amen' numerous times. This is not something that would generally be witnessed at a liberal church in these circumstances.

[24] This is an Anglican division. 'High Church' refers to those more influenced by Catholic practice and ideas. 'Low Church' refers to evangelicals – more influenced by Reformation, Puritan ideas. They tend to

Under Dickson's temporary stewardship the church service reflected the style of an evangelical – even, to some extent, charismatic – church. Services would culminate – for example – in spontneous prayer and even prophecy.

According to Mr Kovacs, by 2007, when he returned to his post, the church was increasingly dominated by 'fundamentalists' – by those with a strongly evangelical perspective. I attended the church on many occasions but the fact that the service was presided-over by a rather traditionalist priest meant that it was difficult for the service itself to reflect this. Members of ICFO would obviate this problem in two ways. Firstly, on two occasions I observed that members would wait until the Sunday service was over and the priest had left the room. Then somebody would stand-up and share some kind of 'prophecy' which they had experienced. Secondly, I noticed that in the months prior to the split the 'coffee' itself would, in a sense, become ICFO's service. Many members, including members of the committee of ICFO, would not attend Kovacs' mass but they would turn-up afterwards for the coffee. During this period, I also spoke to assorted worshippers from America, Sweden, the UK, Ghana, Sudan and Kenya who attended the International Service but insisted that they were not part of ICFO. However, it appeared that – since Kovacs returned – fewer and fewer people were attending and by early 2007 the numbers of worshippers had dropped to about fourteen from a high point of close to forty.

This was at least partly revitalised by moving the service – in Spring 2007 – to Oulu Cathedral. In addition, it was mixed with the Arabic-language Sudanese service which catered for the primarily Anglican Sudanese refugees in Oulu. This was led by the Rev'd Amos Manga who was, at that time, a deacon in the Anglican church very soon to be ordained as a priest. The Sudanese worshippers engaged in traditional African worship which made for a relatively lively service, though there were some technical difficulties because many of the Sudanese could not speak the language through which the services were conducted. This continued for a few weeks though it subsequently transpired that this was a period of escalating tention between ICFO, who made-up the overwhelming majority of non-Sudnese congregants, and Mr Kovacs. The precise details of the turning-point – which took place in May 2007 – are disputed by both parties but what is not disputed is that Kovacs did not turn-up to a particular

focus on the Bible and evangelism. See Shepherd (1987).

Sunday service at Oulu Cathedral. He had a note pinned to the door explaining to any worshippers that might arrive that the service was cancelled.

It was this single act that led to ICFO formally severing its involvement with Kovacs and the Lutheran Church. According to an Ethiopian man from ICFO who I later interviewed, 'There was no discussion. Nobody was asked. We turned up. There was no service. Just a note. Why was there nobody to tell us? We just felt disappointed.' Kovacs claimed that he did everything that he could but he could not conduct the service or even get the Cathedral to tell people that. 'I was ill. I had no energy. I was puking. And anyway it is not my responsibility to organise a service for ICFO. I am not the pastor of ICFO!' Subsequent to the split, ICFO began to meet in the flat of the Rev'd Patrick Dickson and were led either by him or a lay-leader from Indiana, a teacher in Oulu University's 'Language Centre' by the name of Patrick Nesbitt. He claimed that Kovacs was 'not Biblical' and was 'not a Bible believer' and that he, therefore, could not 'shepherd' their church. Kovacs continued to conduct an approximately weekly service either in the cathedral or in the crypt beneath the cathedral. In my experience, average attendance was around fourteen or so. It was composed of a few of the Sudanese, relative regulars who regarded ICFO as 'too fundamentalist' and weekly newcomers. Attendance at these services – which started to become unpredictable and irregular in terms of place and time – dwindled over the following months. In February 2008, Kovacs' Sunday evening service – at which Finland's Anglican Chaplain preached – was attended by four people, in addition to Kovacs and the chaplain. Two of these were priests and then there was myself and a particular female, Finnish member of ICFO with 'international' connections (she had lived in Australia). The Sudanese congregation had returned to meeting quite separately and had itself split in two. By October 2008, attendance at Kovacs' service – which by now had moved back to St Luke's Chapel by Oulu University where it had originally been – was again two (including myself) in addition to priests and the church warden. The other attendee was a Finnish, female church youth worker. By this time, ICFO were once again meeting at St Luke's having refused – earlier in the year – overtures on the part of Kovacs to mend the split. Indeed, their service was directly before Kovacs' English-language service and those worshippers still hanging around in the lobby when the other service started pointedly refused to attend. This, then, is a brief summary of the recent history of ICFO and the intertwining English-language church. The former, at least when it split in May 2007, had just under twenty people attending while I have

been to services of the latter in which there are perhaps, two, one or – where the attendees are all Lutheran church workers obliged to be there – effectively no attendees at all.

So, overall worshippers with ICFO have dropped considerably in recent years taking into account these splits and various other developments. The Rev'd Rupert Moreton (the Anglican Chaplain), for example, recalled that in 2004 there were about 50 worshippers at ICFO's service. By May 2007, it had dropped down to about seventeen and, according to my unstructured interviewees, these were strongly committed evangelicals and they were preached a strongly evangelical sermon – which assumed Biblical inerrancy – by their lay-leader Patrick Nesbitt. By 2008, numbers appeared to be down to around twelve or so.

Sociologically, it also important to understand the kind of people that compose the core of the congregation. There are many models of class. I think Argyle's (1994, 16) model is useful for trans-national analysis. He distinguishes between an upper-class or the old aristocracy and new rich, a middle class of 'higher professionals' such as doctors and academics and 'lower professionals' such as nurses and teachers, the lower middle class of white collar workers, the working class of manual labourers and a criminal underclass. There are, however, problems with this model. It raises questions such as, 'If a car mechanic has a father who is a Duke, is he really working class?' It assumes, I think, that ones background is generally the same as the profession that one pursues. Fox (2004, 75) points out the strong hereditary dimension to class. The model also fails to take into account the way that the status of certain professions can change. For example, leading British physician Dame Carol Black (Heath 21st August 2004) argues that as a profession such as medicine becomes more female-dominated the status of the profession decreases. She observes that this has occurred in Russia where most doctors are female. This could also be true of teaching and it might be suggested – though I am unaware of research into this – that as a profession becomes dominated by social climbers who have moved up into that profession, its status is eventually lowered and this might also be relevant to the status of doctors. So in using Argyle's model, we must be aware of the way in which professions rise and fall in social status over time. In ICFO, these are not Oulu immigrants in any apparent position of authority, financial or cultural success even amongst immigrants. They tended to be lower professionals such as school teachers, language teachers, office workers of various kinds or just the

unemployed. These are the very people who are likely to find social status in an organisation such as a church as Bruce (2002) has noted.

## The Sudanese Anglican Church in Oulu

Again, in the context of a brief report, a history of the Sudanese church in Oulu may be the most useful for gaining an overall understnding of it. According to the Anglican Chaplain in Helsinki, the Rev'd Rupert Moreton, the arrival of (often though not always Anglican) Sudanese refugees in Oulu from about 2003 onwards led to discussions in the Lutheran Church over helping to establish some of kind of 'Sudanese Church' based around the fact that most of the Sudanese were Protestant and spoke Arabic. When a particular Sudanese refugee, Amos Manga, arrived it appeared that he had already been accepted as a priest with the Anglican Church in Sudan, though he had not yet been ordained. He got in touch with the Anglican Chaplaincy in Helsinki (which we will discuss below) and continued regular contact with their chaplain, the Rev'd Rupert Moreton. In 2006, he was sent to England to have training in an Anglican parish and to improve his English. In November that year he was ordained a 'deacon' in the Church of England. In saying this, it should be stressed that a deacon in the Church of England is effectively a very junior priest. It is not an entirely distinct role – and assuredly not a priest – as is the case in the Lutheran Church in Finland. However, according to Moreton the fact that Manga was receiving so much attention and focus stirred various tribal and other jealousies amongst the Sudanese refugees across Finland – there are also Sudanese groupings in Kokkola and Kajaani for example. In particular, claimed Moreton, a Sudanese refugee from Kajaani who claimed to be a Methodist minister began to become 'active' in Oulu with a view to 'undermining' Manga's authority amongst the Sudanese.

Manga was ordained a priest in a colourful ceremony in Oulu Cathedral in June 2007 which garnered in good deal of media attention in the city.[25] Moreton suspects that it is here that the Methodist minister in question did all that he could to 'engineer a split' amongst the Sudanese, who had travelled from various parts of Finland to be present at the ordination. Manga's work – split between the Anglican Chaplaincy and the Finnish Lutheran Church – took him to various parts of Finland, ministering to the Sudanese in these places. However, not long after his ordination there was a split in the Sudanese

congregation. Moreton estimates that about 25 people remained loyal to Manga while around 35 established their own lay-run church under the ultimate supervision of Kovacs. Many of the members of the lay congregation subsequently converted to Lutheranism. Regular attendees are around four or so. On the occasions I have attended Manga's Sudanese Church the congregation has been composed of members of his immediate family and a few other Sudanese. There is no indication that either of these congregations could be classed as 'fundamentalist.' They simply reflect the mainstream views – relatively conservative by Western standards – of Sudanese Anglicanism. To be fundamentalist they would need to be evidence that their religiosity had hardened in a context in which it was open to question.

Other immigrant involvement in Christinity in Oulu appears to be relatively unstructured and it may be that the more pluralistic nature of the churches in question make it unlikely that fundamentalism would develop. Unlike in many Protestant countries such as England where church attendance was rapidly declined in the last one hundred years, this is not so in many Catholic or Orthodox countries where such attendance is regarded as more of a national ritual and in which the services are ritual – rather than 'word' – focussed. Thus, the Orthodox Cathedral in Oulu very occasionally has foreign worshippers. This is especially visible at Easter when there are a few Russians, Greeks and Ethiopians. But according to the chief priest, there is little further involvement than this.

In reference to our discussion of fundamentalism and migration, how can we make sense of this pattern amongst immigrant active Christians in Oulu? Why is the main immigrant church become, in effect, fundamentalist? We look examine this issue in our discussion chapter but understanding it might be assisted by briefly looking at contrasting immigrant church and then, of course, at Oulu's mosque.

## The Anglican Church in Finland

The Anglican chaplaincy in Helsinki was formally established just before World War II to cater to the small number of Anglicans living in the city. Its first chaplain, the Rev'd Sydney Linton, was appointed in 1948. The church meets on Sunday mornings in Mikael Agricola Church and the congregation is known as St Nicholas'. It has grown as the numbers of English and American Episcopalean people living in Helsinki was

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[25] For example, it was reported in detail in the regional daily *Kaleva* which has a readership of around

grown and, in addition, the congregation includes English-speakers from various denominations, such as the Methodist church, as well as a few Finns – often as the spouses of Anglophone worshippers. In my experience, the largest minority amongst this relatively diverse congregation are English expatriates, many of them married to Finns. For example, a leading figure in the church until his death in 2007 was the Hon. Charles Vane-Tempest, an English aristocrat who had married a Finn. He was an official lay-reader within the church. Rupert Moreton was appointed chaplain in 1998, to a chaplaincy which also covers Estonia.

From unstructured interviews with many members, it is clear that the church is theologically and socially relatively liberal and, indeed, it strongly Anglo-Catholic or 'High Church' in character, something which tends – though not always – to be paralleled with an emphasis on the social gospel rather than more evangelical preoccupations and tendencies. Thus, the overall style of the service is very similar to that of a Roman Catholic mass and, as in Catholic masses, the sermon is merely a short exposition of that Sunday's text. Unlike the ICFO, the Anglican church in Helsinki has a somewhat liberal – though Anglo-Catholic, High Church - character. Why, then, has this different trajectory been followed in the case of ICFO, which could conceivably have developed into a liberal Christian church? Before attempting to answer this question, let us examine Oulu's mosque which is, in certain broad respects, comparable to ICFO.

80,000. http://www.kaleva.fi/plus/galleria_popup/index.cfm?g=1174

# CHAPTER FOUR

## Oulu's Mosque

As has been the case with ICFO at various points in its history, there has been a kind of 'house church' dimension to Oulu's mosque. During my research, there was no distinctive building let alone a minaret. The mosque was a converted flat sitting on top of a row of shops close to the city's railway station. In 2009, it moved to a slightly larger premises. Attendance at prayers and interviews with members appear to provide a sound case for arguing that the mosque is 'radical conservative' in character.

### History and Connections

According to Dr Abdul Mannan (whom I interviewed in 2008), the unpaid imam of Oulu mosque, the religious centre was established in 1992 when he and his family came to Oulu from Bangladesh. Mannan arrived in the city to study for a doctorate in Chemistry and, having completed it, has chosen to remain. He speaks Finnish and claims that he chose to stay 'for family reasons and in order to serve the Muslim community in Oulu.' In 2001, the mosque moved to its former premises near the railway station. Since my attendancem the mosque has become formally known as the Yusuf Al-Naghi mosque and has moved again, not far from the original location. Mannan also established an Islamic graveyard in Oulu in 1992. The mosque is part of the 'Islamic Society of Northern Finland' which had 272 members in 2008 and of which Mannan is the chairman. This society is itself affiliated to the 'Federation of Islamic Organisations in Finland' (in which Mannan is a leading figure).

Though the mosque is not affiliated to it in any way, Mannan was previously involved in 'Islamic Forum of Europe,' which is particularly active in London amongst Bangladeshis. According to Hussein (2007) the organisation is heavily influenced by the teachings of the Egyptian theologian Syed Qutb (1906 – 1966) and of Pakistani theologian Abu Ala Mawdudi (1903 – 1979). Both theologians would generally be characterised as radical Muslims. Mawdudi's theology very much followed the radical reactionary model which defines the 'fundamentalist' mindset. Armstrong (2001, 236-238) summarises that Mawdudi 'saw the power of the West gathering its forces together

to crush Islam and grind it into oblivion.' For him, this was a moment of crisis and devout Muslims had no choice but to become politically engaged. Mawdudi stressed, in contrast to 'secularism,' that all authority was from God, Muslims could only be called upon to obey God and they could only do that by instituting God's law – Shariah law. As part of this, he demanded that there be a universal 'jihad' to reassert 'true Islam.' This he defined as a revolutionary struggle to seize power for God. Thus, there was a strongly militant dimension to Mawdudi's theology. One of his most significant followers was Syed Qutb. Armstrong (239) summarises that 'Qutb can be called the founder of Sunni fundamentalism.' For Qutb, not just the non-Muslim world but the Muslim-world (which he regarded as often not truly Islamic) required Jihad. He reacted with horror to the modern world and was determined that it be fundamentally changed inline with his interpretation of Islam. 'Humaninity today is living in a large brothel!' he once declared.[26]

## Brief Descriptive Analysis

During my visits, as already indicated, the mosque met in a converted flat. Upon entering, one had to remove ones shoes as a matter of course. In general, I found the people there – almost all male – to be welcoming. In my experience, around 40 people (including about five young boys) would attend Friday prayers. This would mean that the room – especially when prayer was actually taking place – was about as full as it could be. Almost all of the worshippers were foreign: from countries such as Somalia, Turkey, Morocco, Pakistan and Bangladesh. It was, it should be said, a Sunni mosque.[27] In my experience, the worshippers included three Finns. One was middle-aged and two were in their early twenties and all were converts to Islam. One of them worked for the mosque as a kind of secretary and though I found all of the worshippers and the imam to be extremely friendly the Finnish secretary, who was 22 and spoke only Finnish, once informed me that the mosque was for 'Muslims only' and that as I was a 'non-Muslim' I should not come to prayers. This was certainly not the view of the imam who was always extremely welcoming.

As indicated, the mosque was divided into two rooms. A large, plain, undecorated room for the men and a much smaller curtained-off room for female worshippers, of which I counted two on the occasions I was there. The meeting began with prayers – led by a Somali member – before there was the sermon and then the traditional Islamic

[26] The literature on radical Islam and in particular on these highly significant theologians is voluminous. Sivan (1990), Tibi (2002) and Ayoob (2007).

form of prayer involving the Persian beg prostration. During this, the imam led prayers in Arabic and became rather animated as he did so. Afterwards, there were short announcements and tea.

## Theological Perspectives

Interviewing Dr Mannan and listening to his sermons provides a strong case for arguing that the mosque is of the radical Islamic kind. For example, in his sermons Mannan tends to understand the Koran as being inerrant and being the ultimate source of truth. He asserted that the Koran was 'science' and doesn't need to be updated for the modern world 'because it's already been updated.' The Koran was unquestionably true and Mannan preached that if you follow the Allah, through 'his Prophet Mohammed' as set out in the Koran and the 'Sunnah' then you are a 'true Muslim' and you will go to Paradise on 'Judgement Day.' If you do not, then you will go to Hell though this is all ultimately up to 'Allah' because only he can know who is a 'true Muslim' and who is not. This was the essence of one of his public sermons. He then summarised the sermon in what seemed like good Finnish and then, very briefly, in Arabic.

He emphasised that the Koran 'is from God' and therefore the only acceptable way (from God's viewpoint) to run a country is in accordance with the laws of the Koran. 'True Islam is the only way,' he said. His wishes included propagating 'True Islam' and instituting 'Sharia Law' in 'Muslim states', something which Mannan defended. 'The cutting off of hands for the thieves is in Sharia Law . . . Sharia is from God and I think God knows which is the right law for humans.' He also informed me that Saudi Arabia – where strict Wahabist Islam[28] including Sharia is practiced – has 'a very low crime rate. This is because people are afraid of God and they are afraid of the law.' He assured me that whether people went to Hell was 'up to Allah' not him and, like many of the worshippers, distinguished 'True Islam' from supposedly 'westernised' Islam of the kind found in countries such as Turkey. Indeed, Turkey was not considered to be truly Islamic. He also insisted that 'women are not discriminated against in Islam'

[27] 'Sunni' is dominant denomination within Islam. 'Shia' is the other one of any significant size. Their main different is over which prophets they accept as the successors to Mohammed.

[28] Wahabism is a reformist movement in Sunni Islam established by eighteenth century scholar Muhammed ibn Abd al Wahab. He wanted to purify Islam of perceived Infidel influence and end what he saw as moral decline. It was a radical conservative movement in the Arabian peninsula. Some radical conservative Muslims regard being termed 'Wahabist' as a kind of epithet because the term was originally used as such by Wahabism's opponents.

because they have ‘honour and prestige.’ Thus, the theological and social viewpoints of the imam himself tended to be in line with contemporary radical Islam.

Worshippers at the mosque, all male, whom I interviewed tended to take a similar view. A thirty-year old student from Somalia, who had been in Finland since 1992, was studying biomedical sciences. He claimed that, ‘the West have brought a war against Islam. There is propaganda about Islam in the media and they say that there are ‘moderate’ and ‘extreme’ Muslims.’ He emphasised that it was they who were ‘moderate.’ Those that the west sees as ‘moderate’ are simply westernised and are ‘not real Muslims.’ ‘The West tries to say that all evil is in Islam,’ he continued. The Islamic Society of Northern Finland also clearly espouses what might be seen as a kind of radical agenda. For example, the inerrancy of the Koran and other Islamic texts is fairly clearly implied on their website.

> Our activities was a real response to Allah´s SWT call: **“Let there arise out of you a band of people, inviting to what is good and forbidding what is wrong” (Sura Al-Imran:104)**. Our utmost vision to please Allah SWT (Subhanahu wata`ala).
>
> The aim of this organisation is to seek the pleasure of Allah (SWT) by striving for the advancement of Islam, the development of the Muslim community and the benefit of the society. This organisation shall always follow the Quran and Sunnah as well as Islamic Shariyah while taking decisions and formulating policies and procedures.

It should be stressed, however, that Mannan denies that his mosque is anything ‘radical.’ From his perspective, it is ‘moderate Islam’ because it follows the Koran and Sunna. Various Muslims in Oulu whom I have interviewed from countries such as Tajikistan assert that the mosque is Wahabist – something which Mannan also denies.

Sociologically, there was a relatively similar pattern to ICFO but it was more pronounced. Many of the worshippers were unemployed or on job-training schemes, which is essentially still being unemployed. Others were university and polytechnic students (which is not in itself high social status) or they worked in restaurants for example. Thus, sociologically, these are the kind of people – in line with Bruce’s (2002) analysis – who would benefit in terms of social status by involving themselves in a religious institution at some kind of voluntary, organisational level. They would gain a crucial sense of social status and identity reassurance from such an institution. Equally, the mosque might be regarded as a way of helping to preserve an ethnic identity but this, I think, is less likely because it is ethnically mixed and the chief language is English.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## Why the move to Radical Conservatism?

In this overview, we are attempting not only to gain a descriptive understanding of immigrant-led religiosity in Oulu but also to understand why it has taken on the form which it has. Why is that both the Mosque and ICFO – which are immigrant-founded, immigrant-run and immigrant-dominated – have both become, or indeed have always been, 'fundamentalist' in character?

This is not a simple question to answer and I think that a number of competing explanations converge in assisting us in making sense of the situation. Most notably, both ICFO and the Oulu Mosque were founded by individuals who were might term 'radical conservative' in their theological orientation – the Rev'd Patrick Dickson and Dr Abdul Mannan. Accordingly, they brought with them to Oulu 'fundamentalist' perspectives and this may have provided both with a strong incentive to establish a religious organisation which would then be likely to take on these characteristics. This may have been to provide themselves with a sense of social status as we have already discussed. But this explanation is question-begging because it fails to tell us why their organisations should be attractive to a reasonable number of immigrants in the city. It might be suggested in recent years there has been spike in immigrants coming to Oulu both from Islamic and Protestant countries, some of these are likely to be radical conservatives and, accordingly, they have become involved in these respective organisations. The Muslims and Protestants that have not are simply not in that 'fundamentalist' tradition. This is a very important point. If we take England as an example, only seven percent of the population regularly attend church. Bruce (2002) observes that the conventional dimension to regular Anglican involvement has collapsed over the last hundred years and in particular since the 1960s. Though there remain active, theologically liberal congregations, for the most part the most active churches – those which are growing rather than declining – are 'evangelical' and, to a certain extent, English evangelicalism crosses over with what we might call 'radical conservatism' or 'fundamentalism.' So, the kind of Protestant, European immigrant who would want to attend church regularly would be more likely to be a fundamentalist and, therefore, to be interested in a church such as ICFO as it stresses regular worship. The

kind of attendee at the Anglican church in Helsinki would be likely to have a liberal Christian – but, importantly, from an Anglican church-going background and these inclinations would continue when living in Helsinki. It may be that there was the potential for a comparable immigrant church to develop in Oulu in 2007 when there was the split but that this fizzled out due to lack of organisation.

But this explanation as an overall answer is called into question by people I spoke to in both institutions who discussed changes in their religiosity after coming to the city. That is say, they arrived as relatively liberal Christians and began to develop a more conservative Christian perspective while in Finland. It equally does not explain the observations of people such as Rupert Moreton that ICFO has become more 'radical' over the last decade or so. This leads us to ask whether what we are seeing – in addition to the desire for social status implicit in involving oneself in any organisaion – is a hardening of attitudes in line with the commonly accepted model of fundamentalism. It implies – and there is much other research to imply this – that people may be more inclined to become religiously involved as immigrants. As discussed, it provides them with a sense of social status in a society in which they may be likely to lack of social status and deals with threats they might feel to their sense of group membership by providing a tightly structured group. If this is so, then this allows us to understand further the movement towards fundamentalism in these two religious organisations. Being an immigrant – at least with some immigrants – hardens previous attitudes and makes one search for a strong sense of identity in line with these attitudes. Both ICFO and Oulu Mosque would appear to provide this. Moreover, they can provide this in a way that Finnish Lutheran Awakening Groups – who may have a relatively similar theological orientation – cannot. This is for the key reasons that the Finnish-language skills of such immigrants may not be sufficient, many of these groups are relatively introversionist, being a member of such a group would not provide social status to the same extent and, anyway, would not allow for the 'foreigner solidarity' social dimension to such immigrant-run organisations. And we might argue that being a 'foreigner' is somewhat more difficult in Oulu than in Helsinki, for example, and this may also help us to understand the development and attrctiveness of these groups. Obviously, Oulu is considerably less cosmopolitan than Helsinki and has considerably fewer immigrants and, in particular, considerably fewer Muslims. There are fewer 'foreign' organisations in which foreigners can become involved, there are fewer people with whom they can communicate in English. These factors make something like ICFO

or the Oulu Mosque more attractive and make members more likely to develop the 'fundamentalist' model of religiosity. The pressures of this sort are lower in cities such as Helsinki or Tampere or Turku and this may be one factor behind behind why relatively liberal international congregations have managed to develop in these places.

In this regard, it also becomes fascinating that there is no 'fundamentalist' Catholic or 'fundamentalist' Orthodox church in Oulu and this may be understandable in terms of a different relationship with the church. As Benoist (2004) observes, the Catholic church has tended to decline as European countries have secularised – or at least not decline as rapidly – whereas the established Protestant churches often have tended to decline. He explains this in terms of the place of the church with regard to the issue of 'truth.' Protestant churches, he suggests, tend – even in their lay form – to be more strictly in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. They emphasise that there is one God, that there is one truth, that the Bible is the sole authority of such truth and so forth. By contrast, Roman Catholicism in countries such as Italy tends to be more Pagan. There are, in the form of saints, a plurality of objects of worship and various sources of authority. Catholicism has syncretised with certain folk, Pagan ideas whereas Protestantism was at least partly an attempt to expunge these influences. The same is true in relation to the Islsam of Mawdudi when compared to folk Islamic practices. This, then, would be why 'fundamentalism' would be likely to develop in Protestantism and in certain strains of Islam but not, to the same extent, amongst members of the Catholic or Orthodox churches finding themselves in Oulu. The Protestant tradition is of one truth – as expressed in worship objects in particular – in a way that is less clear-cut in Catholicism. It should be noted that there is no Hindu temple in Oulu and this may partly explain why. Moreover, there are very few Indians anyway and those that are in the city tend to be on temporary contracts working for organisations such as Nokia.

This also raises crucial questions about the distinction between 'religion' and 'culture' and the very usefulness of the word 'religion.' To a certain extent, organisations such as the Anglican church in Helsinki are really preserving a vague kind of 'culture'. They are promoting a particular 'way of life' and, to a certain degree, this is Englishness (or a certain model of Englishness). In that sense, they can be understood to be a kind of Pagan organisation in line with Benoist's model. What they are doing – when we consider the theological liberalness, the lack of emphasis on belief and dualistic truth – is a kind of cultural ritual comparable to the rituals of Hinduism or Shinto where, likewise, a plurality of truths and interpretations are tolerated. Benoist

notes that this open way of thinking usually reflects an unconcerned community. By contrast, he finds that the stress on unique truth and on clear group boundaries – tribalism – tends to be a sign of a people under stress. Precisely because they feel threatened, they turn inwards and create a strong sense of tribal identity. And this, of course, is what we see in groups such as ICFO. With regard to how we define religion, St Nicholas' is 'religious' in the sense of implicitly believing in some kind of agency in the world. But the firmness of this belief, and other related beliefs, is not as strong as in groups such as ICFO. This renders the latter more clearly 'religious' than the former, according to how we have defined the term.

So, sociologically we can perhaps begin to understand why these religious developments amongst immigrants have occurred in Oulu but not, or at least not exclusively, in Helsinki. If we push this further – and attempt to understand it in light of sociobiology – then we might argue that being separated from your tribe and sense of place causes some people to experience a high level of stress. And it is under a high level stress that their natural hard-wiring to be in a tight, tribal organisation and to experience a sense of agency in the world are likely to be activated as we have seen. The assorted specific circumstances of Oulu as a field would then be likely to exacerbate this situation. However, to avoid thre accusation of reductionism we might suggest a further dimension to the explanation. We have observed that most of the worshippers at ICFO were 'lower professionals' and, to a lesser extent, this professional dimension could also be observed in the Oulu Mosque where the imam had a doctorate and various members were post-graduate students. There has been research indicating a relationship between intelligence, creativity and religiosity. Michael Persinger's research is especially significant in this field. He observes that religious experiences occur due to the stimulation of the temporal lobe area of the brain. Specifically, they are caused by 'electrical microseizures within deep structures of the temporal lobe.' These microseizures are precipitated by stimulation of the 'amygdala' area of the temporal lobe, which relates to strong emotions.[29] Persinger (1983) found that life crises were 'optimal' at stimulating the amygdala and in turn producing these microseizures. Persinger (1984) produced a detailed statistical analysis of these results: 'People who

[29] The human brain is divided into four areas or lobes, symmetrical on each side: frontal, parietal, occipital and temporal. The temporal lobe is involved in auditory processing and the processing of speech and vision. It is also where the hippocampus is located. This plays a vital part in long term memory and spatial navigation. The amygdala is found deep within the temporal lobes. It plays a key part in processing memory and emotional reactions (see Turkington 1996 for more detail).

reported greater numbers of different types of paranormal experiences also reported greater numbers of temporal lobe signs.' A group of 108 university students (male and female) provided a correlation of 0.6. However, for the control group (of 41) there was a correlation of 0.72. This is used to demonstrate that religious experience is part of a continuum which includes temporal lobe conditions such as epilepsy which result in high levels of religious experience. However, Persinger also points out another consequence of this research. 'We have found a moderate strength (about 0.6) positive correlation over about thirty years of data collection between experiences consistent with elevated electrical sensitivity in the temporal lobes (particularly in the right hemisphere) and the propensity for mystical and conversion experiences. The temporal lobe scales are also correlated moderately with indicators of creativity, imagination, memory capacity and suggestibility' (Personal Correspondence, July 2009).[30] In summary, creative, reasonably intelligent people (who would be expect to be professionals whether higher or lower) may be more suggestible and more prone to religious experiences. It is purely speculative, but this factor may be relevant here and may take us beyond the 'reductionism' accusation.

Oulu's religious situation is comparable to what we would expect to happen in any town of such a size in which there was an increasing immigrant population which did not speak the local language. I do not think there is anything to Oulu that makes such a situation more likely to occur, apart from possibly the lower standard of English amongst natives when compared, for example, to Sweden or Norway. The influence of church structure on a need to create separate immigrant churches in order to gain social status would also be factors in other Lutheran cultures so there is nothing specific to Oulu in that regard. The introversionist nature of many awakening groups could only play a very small part because of immigrant inability to speak Finnish.

Oulu's immigrant religious fundamentalism appears to reflect the social pressures which the immigrants are under and the not especially high – and thus status-seeking – background of the immigrants themselves. When compared to Helsinki, these pressures are lower making it more likely that liberal religious organisations would be attractive where they may be less so to immigrants in Oulu. I have aimed here to provide an overview of these organisations and the factors that moved them in the direction they

[30] Persinger's research is often emotively branded 'controversial' in the media. While it has been criticised, other scholars in this area such V. S. Ramachandran have conducted similar experiments and found similar results. For a useful summary see the final chapter of Andresen (2001).

have taken. Obviously, in-depth fieldwork lasting for years would be necessary to really understand their nuances and this would be difficult in terms of preserving correspondent anonymity because the group's are so small. But an overview of Oulu confirms what we would expect which is that immigrants of relatively low social status – in a time of personal change – would be attracted to radical conservative organisations. This is a contribution to knowledge of the field which can be developed and built upon.

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