

Eino Murtorinne

* 25.11.1930 † 15.7.2023



Professor Emeritus of Contemporary Church History Eino Murtorinne died on 15 July 2023 at the age of 92. He was born on 25 November 1930. He was invited to the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters in 1973.

Eino Murtorinne took his matriculation examination in 1950 and earned a Bachelor's (Master's) degree in Theology in 1956 at the University of Helsinki. He was ordained a pastor in Kuopio. Later, he had to make a choice between a scientific career and working as a pastor. Murtorinne chose the former.

Murtorinne set out to study the legal struggle during the Period of Oppression around the turn of the 20th century, or the so-called Russification period, from the perspective of the church and clergy. In 1964, he defended his doctoral thesis entitled *Papisto ja esivalta routavuosina 1899–1906* (“Clergy and the governing authorities during the Period of Oppression 1899–1906”), which was groundbreaking in that it brought the study of church history fairly close to the present day and also included a political aspect.

While working on his thesis, Murtorinne also worked with so-called profane historians. He was a member of the

legendary Tanner seminar, a source of peer support.

The fundamental questions of the Lutheran theology concerning the governing authorities soon pointed Murtorinne to a new path, to study the German church struggle. He was able to collect research material on the relationships between German and Nordic churches during the Third Reich.

The study of the German church struggle produced four notable monographs in total. In them, Murtorinne was able to remain scientifically objective and, despite the topic related to the influence of National Socialism, did not become known as a controversial researcher.

In 1975, Murtorinne was appointed to his dream post, Extraordinary Professor of Contemporary Church History. He began systematically turning his own and his students' attention to the position of the church and clergy in 20th century Finnish society. He coordinated the start of a research project entitled “Suomen kirkko uusimman ajan aatteellisissa, poliittisissa ja sosioekonomisissa muutoksissa” (“The church of Finland during contemporary ideological, political and socioeconomic changes”), funded by the Academy of Finland.

Murtorinne could always sense the spirit of the times, as shown in the mid-1980s by his interest in the position of churches in socialist Eastern European countries, which led him to organise research on this topic. The relevance of the research, focusing on the Soviet Union, Ingria, the Baltic countries, East Germany and the rest of Eastern and Central Europe, was ultimately demonstrated by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

Murtorinne held all key positions, including chairmanship, in the Finnish Society of Church History. A Festschrift, *Kirkko ja politiikka* (“The church and politics”), was dedicated to him in 1990. He was a key figure in organising the society’s 100th anniversary event in 1991. Murtorinne was invited to become an honorary member of the society in 2001.

Murtorinne was invited to become a researcher member of the Finnish Historical Society in 1969. He was a long-time member of the board of the society and its chair in 1984. The then-executive director of the society remembers Murtorinne as an exceptionally kind and considerate supervisor.

As Assistant of the Department of Finnish Church History, Murtorinne developed the general survey of Finnish ecclesiastical tradition. The purpose was, on the one hand, to examine how the old ecclesiastical customs were being lost across Finland while a new way of life was adopted, and, on the other, to examine the

impact of Finnish revivalist movements. The survey was translated into Swedish. It drew from the example provided by Hilding Pleijel who was a professor in Lund at the time.

Murtorinne was not only a researcher and a supervisor of research, but also a scientific politician who worked as a member and Vice-Chair of the Scientific Council for the Humanities of the Academy of Finland.

Murtorinne shouldered his share of the responsibility for the ecumenical and international relations of the Lutheran church from the mid-1970s to the early 1990s. He worked under three Archbishops of Finland – Martti Simojoki, Mikko Juva and John Vikström. He was a long-standing member and Chair of Theological Issues under the Department for International Relations of the church.

Based on his education and orientation, Murtorinne was a wide-ranging theologian. He took part in the doctrine discussions of the Lutheran Church of Finland with the Russian Orthodox Church. Murtorinne also made a substantial contribution to the study of the church-state issue and the relations between the church and culture.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland presented Murtorinne with the Saint Henry Cross in 2014. The highest honour of the Finnish church was awarded to him based on his academic and ecumenical merit.

Hannu Mustakallio

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The Finnish Society of Church History