

Supporters and opponents of a special blessing for homosexuals share many values

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In the autumn of 2005 the Church of Sweden decided to introduce a special blessing for same-sex unions. The decision was conditional on the Church making a distinction between genuine homosexuality and promiscuous homosexuality, associated with sin and profanity. This is shown by a new thesis in religious studies at the University of Gothenburg, which also identifies many similarities in values between opponents and supporters of the decision.

"It was genuine homosexuality that was made legitimate in the [Church](#) of Sweden by the decision on a special blessing for same-sex unions," says the author of the thesis, Daniel Enstedt.

He has examined documents from the Church of Sweden and interviewed both opponents and supporters of the decision – priests who signed the "Priests' Declaration" in protest at the decision, and members of the National Association of Ecumenical Christian Groups for LGBT People (EKHO).

Enstedt's analysis of the Church of Sweden's documents highlights firstly a distinction between genuine homosexuality and promiscuous [homosexuality](#) and secondly two positions with differing conceptions of how sexuality and same-sex relationships should be understood and defined. But these conceptions are based on a fundamentally common view of faithfulness, togetherness between two people and monogamy, a similarity that is found among the two interviewed groups.

"Although there are evident differences between EKHO and supporters of the Priests' Declaration, the groups share many common principles, such as the almost unanimous rejection of promiscuity.

The differences between the groups' understanding of themselves and how they are described by the other group are striking. Both groups position themselves as passive, while action is shifted to an imagined or actual counterpart.

Enstedt's conclusion is that the main resistance to change in the prevailing situation is not between the groups but is localised within the groups themselves, in their narratives and understanding of themselves.

"Resistance, both actual and experienced, is important to the constitution and maintenance of the groups," he says.

The opponents' arguments against a special blessing and later church marriage for same-sex unions which was introduced in 2009 include a view that such a decision would open the way to polyamorous relationships, that is to say several simultaneous amorous relationships.

"Several of the arguments put toward in connection with a special church blessing and marriage for homosexuals may also apply to polyamorous relationships, such as mutuality and respect," says Enstedt. "But it is too early to say what will happen with regard to a blessing for polyamorous relationships."

The thesis has been successfully defended.

Provided by University of Gothenburg

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