

## Why are Young Men Increasingly Attracted to Christianity? The Case of Finland

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### Abstract:

Recent studies suggest that young men's interest in Christianity has strengthened across Western postindustrial societies. This development has often been connected to a widening gender gap regarding value orientations, where women have gravitated towards left-leaning and liberal values, whereas men have maintained more neutral or conservative stances. This presentation discusses and challenges this assumption with findings from a qualitative study conducted in Finland.

The presentation examines young men's relationship to Christianity in Finland – a Nordic nation with a distinct religious background and a strong pattern of secularization in recent decades. It presents a study – part of a wider project – based on interviews with 30 young Christian men conducted between November 2024 and February 2025. The interviewees formed a heterogeneous group from various

backgrounds (religious and non-religious) and value orientations (liberal, conservative, and moderate). The paper presents a set of themes that arose from the qualitative analysis of the data. These themes include classical reasons why people come to faith in general, such as personal crises and the search for meaning, but also emerging themes that could explain why young men in this day and age might gravitate towards Christianity. They include themes such as *Christianity as a counterforce or counterculture*, *The role of social media*, and interestingly, *The crisis of masculinity and a positive male image*.

The study also discovered that the interviewees – representing equally liberal and conservative value stances – gravitated towards Christianity partly for different, but partly for the same reasons. *Search for meaning*, *Search for community*, and *Search for stability in a rapidly changing world* were themes that emerged from both liberal and conservative men, cutting across value lines.

The study sheds light on a timely question: what is going on with young men in postindustrial societies and how Christianity functions for them as a personal resource – a source of identity, meaning, and belonging – but also as a platform where identity and masculinities are negotiated in a polarized world that challenges men in multiple ways.