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Ecclesiology Under Construction

A Report from a Working-Site

SVEN-ERIK BRODD

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

In this introductory chapter Sven-Erik Brodd discusses some of the central themes that are considered in the trajectory of this volume, such as ecclesiology as an empirical discipline, ecclesiology as a theological discipline in a secular university, different definitions and scholarly approaches to ecclesiology, and questions of normativity and divine revelation as an inevitable condition in and for ecclesiological studies.

Brodd's chapter gives the reader a sense of the context in which the authors in this volume have conducted their research. As Brodd underlines, such contexts are important life worlds for scholarly work. Theories and methods are not created and used in isolation.

In the trenches, where the actual work of reading, writing, interpreting, and analyzing is done, there are many factors that are part of the necessary preconditions for research. Brodd points to some of these factors and integrates them in an overall argument for Ecclesiology as a theological discipline with great potentials for studying the church as a theologically defined empirical phenomenon.

Sven-Erik Brodd (born 1949), professor in Ecclesiology at Uppsala University since 1993. Between 2004 and 2006, Brodd was also a

member of the Faculty of Education at Uppsala University. He was the Dean of the Faculty of Theology between 2001 and 2009 and thereafter Deputy vice-rector for the six faculties in the domain of humanities and social sciences at Uppsala University. Brodd received his doctoral degree at Uppsala University in 1982, and his dissertation was on *Evangelical Catholicity*, its content and function.

From 1982–1985, Sven-Erik Brodd was employed as a researcher at the Swedish Government Research Councils. Between 1985–1990 he was director of the Church of Sweden's International Research Department and served as an advisor in international affairs to the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches in Geneva.

Brodd has been a visiting professor at General Theological Seminary, New York and at Chichester University, England. He has published several books and a large number of articles and papers in Swedish and international periodicals and books.

Brodd has participated in different international research projects, and he initiated the first international theological project—financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and realized by four African Universities (2005–2008)—on the response of the Churches to HIV and Aids.

Scholarly work takes place in a context, based on tradition and aiming at future shared insights. Thus, with any given exceptions, studying ecclesiology is not an enterprise undertaken by isolated individuals but by persons influenced, inspired, and encouraged, opposed, and disputed by the environment in which they work.

In the introductory part of doctoral theses there are usually “acknowledgements” of various sorts indicating this. There are references to dissertation directors or supervisors reading “endless drafts of the text,” and to colleagues to whom the author is indebted for their advice and support. Sometimes there is a sort of brief theological autobiography that locates the author in a specific ecclesial tradition. But I have not found any deliberations about the milieu, the theological “ecosystem,” so to speak, in which the scholarly work has been brought about. To get any answers to that, one has to wait until yet another scholar undertakes research on a person or a movement establishing the “background” of persons, ideas, or events.

Theologians know too little about each other's circumstances or real working conditions. Sometimes, when meeting at conferences or visiting

each other's universities and institutions, we become fairly aware of what is going on, and we recognize similarities and differences and thus learn from each other. But normally language barriers, confessional boundaries, and other hindrances make this sort of exchange on working conditions impossible. At the same time it is important to underline that there is an exchange of ideas between researchers, perhaps even on a personal level, which initiates life-long friendship.

The purpose of this book is not to present a full-blown treatment of ecclesiology, its theories and methods, but rather to contribute to the understanding of how we, at the outskirts of Europe, in a secular university, in Uppsala, Sweden, are working with ecclesiology. For us this work is not finished—it is “under construction.” It is done in a “working-site,” (or to use the eponymous American expression of this book, it is done “in the trenches”) and it is probably the case that the process of construction is as important as the edifice itself.

Ecclesiology as a scholarly discipline is very young, even compared, for example, with social sciences. It is internationally visible and diverse and is producing new working styles and contents. Our experience, based on different international evaluations of the research done at the university and in the faculty of theology, is that colleagues undertaking the evaluation have their own understanding of ecclesiology as a norm for their stance. We simply have difficulty explaining what we are doing. This is still another reason for this book.

What we have been doing in Uppsala is embracing various types of ecclesiological research, mostly developed out of theoretical curiosity and practical needs for understanding. We have borrowed ideas from where we have found them and developed them into theories and methods that we have found to be productive. So, one of the expectations reading this must not be to find any very precise set of coherent concepts and a subtly defined scholarly subject. It is more of a short survey of how we have tried, during the last twenty years, to handle ecclesiology as an unavoidable and fundamental element in the Christian faith, and an attempt to offer some hints of its future.

THE TERM ECCLESIOLOGY

When the German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer visited Uppsala in 1933, he wanted to give a lecture about “concrete ecclesiology” (konkrete Ekkelesiologie), but his Swedish hosts had no idea what that cryptic title would imply. Bonhoeffer was persuaded to give a lecture about the visible and

invisible church, at the time a common Lutheran problem.¹ The term ecclesiology was, for those theologians with good connections with the Church of England, first associated with the study of church buildings. In the Swedish language the term ecclesiology was introduced during the 1970s and remained rather obscure until it was pushed for and actually gradually accepted, not least because of the wrestling with ecclesiology and ecclesiological themes in an ordinary research seminar (*Kyrkvetenskap*) in the Faculty of Theology at Uppsala University.

Let me stay briefly with the term ecclesiology. From conversations with Nordic and international colleagues I have understood it to be a common experience that sometimes the concept has been either confusing because of its roots in dogmatics and thus *eo ipse* is seen as confessional and normative or, in parts of the Nordic world, something alien. This has also been the experience in the Uppsala ecclesiology seminar. As late as 2001 it was concluded in a doctoral thesis that “ecclesiology certainly is an alien word in the Swedish language, really only used in a limited academic and theological context.”²

In a 2008 Uppsala thesis the author, an English scholar in the field of Orthodox ecclesiology, has to relate both to the background of the term in the Anglican tradition, i.e. the study of church buildings and style, and also to the fact that “the category ‘ecclesiology’ as such” is both a novelty and sometimes questioned in Orthodoxy.³ This reflects, of course, an awareness that ecclesiology as seen from outside is somewhat strange. Seen from within it is a challenging and dynamic field of studying the church.

Ecclesiology from the Uppsala perspective is very much an unfinished project and will hopefully remain so. It is, as expressed in these introductory remarks, something under construction.

A Meta-Reflection in an International Context

Looking around the academic world it becomes rather clear that in many places there is an ongoing struggle with how to handle ecclesiology. Sometimes it is located in the context of an academic discipline, integrated into dogmatics, practical theology, ecumenics, church history, canon law, etc., and is just becoming evident through individual scholarly works. Sometimes, as in the Faculty of Theology in Uppsala, ecclesiology is established as a discipline in its own right. The fundamental difference between the two models is that one makes ecclesiology one component among many,

1. Ryman, *Brobyggarkyrka*, 37–38.

2. Edgardh, *Feminism och liturgi*, 16.

3. Hall, “*Pancosmic*” Church, 22–23.

while the other establishes ecclesiology as a comprehensive and integrating perspective. Liturgy and ecclesiology, for instance, become parallel tracks in the field of theological studies in the first case; in the second case, liturgy is integrated into ecclesiology.

This dynamic but rather fragmented situation has inspired different researchers to discussions, from a more theoretical perspective, of how to understand ecclesiology in the framework of other disciplines while establishing and preserving its own characteristics.⁴ There is also a development starting in these discussions on theory, namely the developing ideas of specific methods in ecclesiology.⁵ One of the tasks of the research seminar is certainly to test the limits of what is possible in an academic milieu. That demands a dialogical and open setting.

There seems, however, to be a lacuna in our knowledge about the actual meta-processes going on when the idea of conceptualizing ecclesiology is confronted with concrete research or with actual university politics. This is a type of ongoing reflection about the scholarly work as such: what are we doing and why are we doing that in ecclesiology? It is a reflection on what ecclesiology is emanating from concrete academic work. In Uppsala this is done in the research seminar.

RESEARCH SEMINAR: AN INTRODUCTION

In a foreword to a book presenting some results of an externally funded research project (*The Meaning of Christian Liturgy*) situated in the framework of the research seminar, the North American liturgist Gordon Lathrop describes the seminar as “one of the most interesting long-term graduate level theological projects found in current European and American university life: the ecclesiology (*Kyrkvetenskap*) seminar at Uppsala university in Sweden.”⁶ These kind remarks suggest it might be helpful to briefly explain what a research seminar is in the Swedish university milieu.

In all disciplines or departments there are research seminars—what earlier was referred to as “higher seminars.” Members of the seminar in *Kyrkvetenskap* (Ecclesiology) are doctoral students, research master’s students (the master’s degree was introduced in Uppsala University in 2007),

4. Ormerod, “The Structure;” Ibid., “A Dialectic Engagement;” Ibid., “Ecclesiology and the Social Sciences;” Sterkens, “Challenges for the Modern Church;” Watkins, “Organizing the People of God;” Ibid et al., “Practical Ecclesiology;” Haight, “Historical Ecclesiology;” Ibid., “Systematic Ecclesiology.”

5. Bretherton, “Coming to Judgment;” Barruffo, *Sui problemi del metodo in ecclesiologia*; Dianich, *Ecclesiologia*.

6. Lathrop, “Foreword,” viii.

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postdoctoral researchers, and senior scholars. In 1997, when Gordon Lathrop was a member of the seminar, it counted among its members six different denominational belongings and managed at least to read eight different modern languages. That has, of course, shifted over the years.

The research seminar meets once a week. It works with texts presented by its members, discusses theory (including disciplinary theoretical problems), methodological challenges, and communicates information, for example, about individual members' participation in networks, experiences from visiting other institutions, and travels abroad.

The responsibility of the individual members of the seminar, not least the doctoral students, is important. Tutoring is not instructions but deliberations out of which the student has to make decisions. When the student presents a text or an idea in the research seminar, the goal is to give positive critique in such a way that the member of the seminar can find it useful. We have tried in this case to break a long tradition in Sweden that focused on rather negative criticism.

But the research seminar is also a forum for professors and doctors in the discipline, as well as invited guests, to get their work scrutinized and to discuss theoretical and methodological problems.

In the seminar we also invite guests, who give presentations. Sometimes they also are called to scrutinize parts of doctoral works.⁷ That means that we get new impressions and contacts, and this participation in the work of international well-known scholars contributes to the development of the discipline as well as the individual scholars.

The preceding serves an introduction that demands some reflection about the history of ecclesiology. The chapter, thus, proceeds in two parts. The first part (pp. 7–11) comprises the necessary reflection about the history of ecclesiology. The second part (pp. 12–28) focuses on the various meanings of ecclesiology and can be read separately without the historical background of part I.

7. For instance, over the years Gail Ramshaw (USA), Gordon Lathrop (USA), Miroslav Volf (USA), Kari Veiteberg (Norway), Nicolas Healy (USA), Stanley Hauerwas (USA), John de Gruchy (South Africa), Ola Tjørhom (Norway), Teresa Berger (USA), Graham Ward (UK), and Paul Avis (UK), have visited the seminar.

I.

The History of Ecclesiology at Uppsala University

In order to make the core of this presentation understandable, I have to give some historical background, partly because the development in Sweden sometimes differs from the development internationally, and partly because the reasoning needs a context.

The dominating church in Sweden has been and is the national Church of Sweden, and up to the 1960s that affected the Faculty of Theology, both in form and in content. The Faculty of Theology (as, for example, in Germany, the basic academic institution at a university) was in various ways confessional. The professors were almost without exception priests in the Church of Sweden, the faculty sent representatives to the General Synod of the Church of Sweden, and the professors were represented in the diocesan chapter of the Archdiocese of Uppsala.

ACADEMIC STUDY OF THE CHURCH IN RECENT HISTORY

Already during the first decades of the twentieth century the issue of the Church was present in the Church of Sweden and in academic theology. In 1912 Gustaf Aulén (1879–1977), then a docent in Uppsala, later an internationally well-known theologian, wrote a thesis about the concept of the Church.⁸ Other famous Uppsala theologians who worked on the question of the nature of the Church, were Nathan Söderblom (1866–1951)⁹ and Einar Billing (1871–1939).¹⁰ The result of their work was conceived as the Folk Church idea. Already during the nineteenth century the Church had been in focus both in the revivalist movement, in the emerging Free Churches, and among the high church Lutherans. The Free church theologians, however, were left out of the Faculties of Theology in Uppsala and Lund.

The last noteworthy example of the confessional academic studies of the Church was the so-called “new view on the Church,” which emerged at the end of the 1930s and had an international impact during the 1940s and the 1950s.¹¹ It was a cooperation between New Testament scholars and systematic theologians in Lund and Uppsala. To most of them, the Church

8. Aulén, *Till belysning*.

9. Brodd, *Evangelisk katolicitet*, 101–34.

10. Wrede, *Kyrkosynen*.

11. Usually one single book is singled out to represent this movements, translated into English and German, namely *En bok om kyrkan*, *This is the Church*, *Ein Buch von der Kirche*.

was instituted by Christ, was sacramental in character, and was actually an ongoing incarnation of the Lord.¹²

During this period, the academic study of the Church remained confessional and dogmatic. The references and authorities that theologians used mirrored that orientation. Simultaneously, the confessional position (based on e.g. Martin Luther, the Church Fathers, the Scriptures, or whatever authorities used) formed the foundations of their conceptual constructions and coherent understandings of the Church. The studies were deductive and historical in character, and historical texts were used argumentatively—and every now and then polemically. The distance to practical theology and praxis at large was apparent. During the 1970s everything changed.

ECCLESIOLOGY IN THE CONTEXT OF A FACULTY OF THEOLOGY

Since the 1970s, theology departments in many universities around the world have been reorganized, and the various disciplines have been submitted to changes in structure, content, and theory. The study of the Church in the Faculty of Theology at Uppsala University is no exception to that.¹³

When, as a newly ordained priest in 1974, I was accepted into doctoral studies in Practical Theology, the immediate forerunner to what became the discipline of ecclesiology, it was mainly a historical discipline. The focus had been largely on the Swedish reformation and history of liturgy, sacramental theology, canon law, and other themes of a practical theological character. But it also included topics of research related to the social sciences of religion. That made the discipline the sum of its parts, and it lacked an overall focus. In spite of that, of my fellow doctoral students one became professor in Church history in Gothenburg, another in Sociology of Religion in Uppsala, another professor in Pedagogics of Religion in Lund, and still another one, Oloph Bexell, in Ecclesiology and later Church History in Uppsala.

What happened in the university at large and in the Faculty of Theology in Uppsala during the 1970s was a theoretically grounded reshuffling of the structures. New disciplines, such as Sociology of Religion and Philosophy of Religion, were added, and the old disciplines, such as Dogmatics, became Studies in Faiths and Ideologies (nowadays once again changed to Systematic Theology). The basis for this was a transformation from a more or less confessional theology to religious studies.

Practical theology changed its name and became Studies in Churches and Denominations. Sociology and other elements of social sciences were

12. See for example Brodd, “The Church as Sacrament.”

13. Andrén, “Kyrkvetenskap.”

moved, and dogmatics, as far as it related to the study of the Church in a more narrow sense, was integrated into the reordered discipline. These changes demanded a theoretical anchoring.

Swedish university theology had, since the nineteenth century, been what the Lundensian theologian Gustaf Wingren called a German province.¹⁴ To the extent that there had been a theoretical discussion about the character of practical theology it had been stamped by that. Whatever the position taken, practical theology was always a *theologia applicata*, an applied theology, mostly historical in nature. This dimension gave practical theology a sort of legitimacy also from the perspective of religious studies. There had been systematic theological elements in the studies presented in the discipline, but they had always been subordinate to the historical perspective and not clarified as such.

Practical Ecclesiology?

What had already taken place in Uppsala, before the new university structures were implemented in 1973, was that the discipline had become the sum of its sub-disciplines. In the 1989 Faculty program, however, it was said that the research field is “practical ecclesiology.”¹⁵ When the University asked the government to give permission to advertise the professorial chair in 1991, the Faculty deliberated on “practical ecclesiology” and interpreted it as “the study of the Christian Church (in its different traditions and denominations) precisely as Church and with specific attention paid to its concrete expressions.”¹⁶ The letter to the government also quotes the Faculty program of 1982, in which it says: “The research [in the discipline] regards ecclesiology as viewed through history and at present in Christian churches and denominations and as it takes shape in various forms in harmony, tensions and conflicts.” In the 1982 Faculty program, as well as in the advertisement for the chair ten years later, it was said that the development of the discipline had led to the integration of the earlier sub-disciplines and the introduction of a disciplinary integrity. The task was, “in the framework of ecclesiology, to keep together and research various ecclesial manifestations, in order to clarify the reciprocity, interaction—and content—in theological structures within the life of the Christian Church.”

14. Wingren, “Deutscher Einfluss.”

15. Fakultetsprogram, *UHÄ-rapport 1986:24*, 14; *Teologisk forskning. Fakultetsprogram 1989*, 13–14.

16. The universities in Sweden are state universities. Up to the end of the twentieth century, the universities had to ask the government for approbation of each professorial chair, and the government—and at one time, the King—appointed the professor proposed by the university.

The question is, however, how it was possible for the Faculty of Theology to reach these conclusions. This took place when the faculty was transformed from being a place which was rather “Lutheran” in character to a place for religious studies, and when Åke Andrén (1917–2007), the holder of the professorial chair since 1954, retired in 1983.¹⁷ In 1974, I introduced Karl Rahner’s view on practical ecclesiology as one possibility of pursuing practical theology,¹⁸ and Andrén used that one year later in a presentation of the discipline.¹⁹ It was, however, developed by another professor in the field, Alf Härdelin (1927–2014), but then in the framework of spirituality, which he at the time presented as a possible conception of the reshaped discipline.²⁰

When the renamed discipline (Studies in Churches and Denominations) no longer had to formally consider its confessional heritage, new theoretical possibilities were opened. In search of a disciplinary identity, the faculty found Karl Rahner’s presentation of practical theology to be helpful. His distinction between dogmatic ecclesiology (*Essentialekkesiologie*) and practical ecclesiology (*Existentialekkesiologie*) offered a possibility to give the discipline both a framework and a center.²¹ This was, as mentioned, mirrored in the research programs of the faculty during the 1980s and when the profile of the chair was decided at the beginning of the 1990s, ecclesiology was the center of the discipline. The content remained, however, undefined. This became a challenge for the whole research seminar, and the development of ecclesiology in Uppsala can be traced not only in articles, in journals, and in books but also in doctoral theses presented during the years.

In 1995 the name was changed again, now to *Kyrkovetenskap*, and given the English translation Ecclesiology.²² The question is: How is it possible to change a discipline that is characterized by its different sorts of research using a concept that is not unambiguous?

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A DISCIPLINARY IDENTITY

The chair of ecclesiology was very much in accordance with the Swedish university tradition that was stamped by the idea of the strong discipline.

17. Brodd, “Åke Andrén.”

18. Brodd, “Vad är praktisk teologi?”

19. Andrén, “Kyrko- och samfundsvetenskap.”

20. Härdelin, “Spiritualitet—ny deldisciplin.”

21. Andrén, “Practical Theology.”

22. Brodd, “Kyrkovetenskap.” See also the Norwegian theologian Olav Skjevesland, who reflects on ecclesiology in Uppsala as Practical Theology. See Skjevesland, *Invitasjon*.

The professor *ordinarius*, who was at that time appointed by the Swedish government, was expected to mould the discipline in a more or less autocratic way. When I took office in 1994, this had begun to change so what was called collegiality could include not only professors but also other categories of teachers and researchers, even if, I dare to say in retrospect, it took a long time. In reality the development of ecclesiology in Uppsala has been very much built up by those who have worked with their master- and doctoral theses in the research seminar.

In 1994 the research seminar contained almost 40 doctoral students, most of them inactive. I met all of them for conversations and many chose to conclude their doctoral studies. Some wanted, however, to finish their work and did so. This means that at the end of the 1990s there were doctoral students accepted in Practical theology, in Studies in Churches and Denominations and in Ecclesiology. During (at least) the first ten years of my professorship, many of the doctoral students were presumably confronted with ideas of the identity of the discipline that were foreign to their own doctoral work, while at the same time new doctoral students were accepted under the new theoretical understanding of the discipline. This, of course, created tensions.

Another problem has been the theoretical tension between those who actually wanted to keep the traditional practical theological character of the discipline—i.e. making ecclesiology the traditional doctrinal element in a wider conception of the discipline—and those who wanted to develop theories making ecclesiology the all embracing theme. This means that discussions about theory have accompanied the research seminar through the years and still do, even though the change from a more general practical theology to ecclesiology as the kernel and frame is now well established. In this development the professor heading the discipline has, of course, a crucial role. This change would, however, never have been possible to achieve without the participation of colleagues, including doctoral students. And I also think that there has been a sort of mutual influence of ideas involving all parties during this historical process.

In the next part, I will elaborate on the term ecclesiology and present different theories and methods in the research seminar—and discuss what holds it all it together.

II.

Several Meanings of Ecclesiology Under Construction

After this historical review (Part I), we are back to the term ecclesiology: Is it possible to make ecclesiology a center and focus of a whole discipline without a firm conceptualization? The word ecclesiology has, in any case, three meanings: it is the object of the study, it is the way of studying something, and it is the result of the study.

At the beginning, still under the influence of Rahner's distinction, we actually separated ecclesiology (doctrine) and ecclesial life (practice). We did that for some years, and this approach is also used theoretically in some scholarly works in other Nordic countries, but we have since abandoned this. There were several reasons for that, for example that this difference favors an idealistic view of ecclesiology that it in one way or the other supports a theory of doctrine that is not only distinct from practice but separated and sometimes makes practice doctrinally irrelevant. It creates, to allude to the German Lutheran theologian Edmund Schlink, a sort of ecclesiological docetism that is difficult to handle in ecclesiological research.²³

Another question was about the possible connotations of ecclesiology. Who is the owner of the concept? Is it possible to cross the borders of the Church and identify and analyze ecclesiologies outside the Church? The first modest step we took was in a thesis about the understanding of the Church in the Swedish Social Democratic Party. The author had to defend the idea that political texts could be studied ecclesiologically because it was said by his opponents that only a church could have an ecclesiology.²⁴ So the question remained of how intimately the term ecclesiology should be attached to doctrine.

THE MAIN CHALLENGE: KEEPING DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE TOGETHER

We have continuously been asked what we mean by Church; what is the object we study? Originally we answered that question rather pragmatically. The researcher decided how to define what is Church from his or her understanding of the object studied. In texts claiming a normative understanding of Church this position of the researcher had to take into consideration the three strata in ecclesiology that we had established: ecclesiology as an

23. Schlink, "Das wandernde Gottesvolk," 687.

24. Ahlbäck, *Socialdemokratisk kyrkosyn*.

analytical tool, ecclesiology as an object of study, and ecclesiology as a result of a scholarly investigation.

In short, that means both that the object is identified as an ecclesiological phenomenon or object (not, for example, as exclusively sociological or historical) by means of research theories, and that the result then is ecclesiological in character, answering the adequate ecclesiological questions.

That, however, did not entirely solve the problem of the use of the concept of Church in our theories and methods. So there has been a development in our understanding. We can still talk about *the Church* (definite), which implies given normative and exclusive traits, and we can also handle that theoretically. But we can also talk about church in an undefined way which according to given criteria can be studied also in texts and practices that do not claim to deal with or represent church in any traditional meaning. So we can analyze a novel or research results in political science, for example.²⁵

In the beginning we were very reluctant to study any other materials than written texts, partly because of the focus on given doctrinal presuppositions. Doctrine was the sole object in ecclesiology. There was also a historical argument for this, which took into account both the practical theological heritage of the discipline and a wish to avoid it once again becoming the sum of loosely added elements. Later on, other competences were integrated in the seminar giving new perspectives on the importance of social sciences; not least the possibilities ethnography offered ecclesiology. That opened the door for cooperation with other disciplines.

The last example of components of the theoretical framework in ecclesiology is the different perspectives offered by studying implicit ecclesiology, operative ecclesiology, meta-ecclesiology, or fundamental ecclesial practices. One of the challenges to ecclesiological research is to combine deductive and inductive studies. The churches can be studied not just from what they teach but also from the way they practice. It is important to bear in mind that different mindsets in the life of the believers in a particular church disturb the deductive processes grounded in magisterial documents and the ideas offered by individual theologians.

In practice there are hidden ecclesiologies that are operative and contribute to the understanding of the churches.²⁶ These operative ecclesiologies are often presented as meta-ecclesiologies; the church is described as something, for example as a school or as communicative fellowship. When

25. Brodd and Weman, *Kyrka i olika meningar*.

26. Brodd, "Upptäckter av dolda uppfattningar;" "Kirche als Kultursystem?"; "The Hidden Agenda;" "L'agenda nascosta."

latent ecclesiologies are revealed, they may be related to—or give rise to—a constructive ecclesiology of some sort, which is based, for example, on implicit communication theories.²⁷ Hence ecclesiology has the possibility of proposing conceptualizations that will be different from other theoretical fields and disciplines and thereby make evident what was earlier unknown.

On the other hand doctrinal, textual ecclesiology continues to be important. This research is often based on history but is not necessarily historical in character, which complicates the work. Examples would be ecumenical texts or doctrinal texts from different periods.²⁸ During the period when we stressed the study of texts, we distinguished between ecclesiology and ecclesiality, holding that the first was dogmatic and the second the expression of ecclesial life.²⁹ Later on this distinction came to be applied differently, and ecclesiality became an interpretative tool in ecclesiology.

Thus, the main challenge is to keep together various kinds of ecclesiological research in a productive way. From time to time that gives rise to discussions in the research seminar about what is common for the work undertaken, and those conversations remain important. The goal is to realize that the different projects held together by the seminar are together perspectives of one reality where practice and doctrine are held together. What we agree on is that ecclesiology is a theological discipline.

ECCLESIOLOGY AMONG OTHER DISCIPLINES

We are quite often asked how ecclesiology relates to other disciplines, both in the Faculty of Theology and in the university at large. There are several underlying connotations in that question, not unique at all in a university where natural sciences and social sciences, disciplines are continuously redressed or abandoned in favor of others.

One question that has followed the seminar during the years is whether the idea of ecclesiology is integrative enough, that is, what is the factor that is shaping the integrity of the discipline. In ecclesiology it has been the construction of ecclesiology as a discipline that has kept the discipline as such going, not in a theoretical vacuum but in *praxis* by answering to certain needs in actual ongoing research. It means that the usefulness and adequacy of theories for specific research has been decisive. The references to—and developments of—ecclesiological theories and methods in doctoral theses

27. Brodd, “Papal Ministry;” “Kyrkan som kommunikativ gemenskap;” “Electronic Church.”

28. Brodd, “The Trinitarian.”

29. Brodd, “Ecklesiologi och ekklesialitet.” See also the comments to this made by the Danish theologian Hans Raun Iversen, “Ekklesiologi og ekklesialitet.”

written in the discipline hints at the fact that there is an integrative force in place in the ecclesiology worked with in Uppsala. I think that we have found a way to make ecclesiology a discipline capable of integrating, for example, liturgy,³⁰ ecumenics,³¹ canon law,³² Mariology,³³ and religious life.³⁴

But there is also a need for interdisciplinary work in ecclesiology, because of the complexity of the object studied, namely ecclesiology. I will soon return to that. One example: as already mentioned there is a tradition of a church historical character in the discipline. Here, two comments might be necessary. On the one hand, history, including church history, has been stamped by positivism, both internationally as well as in Sweden. That gives little or no room for theological interpretations of history, even if post-positivist theories give some openings for that. On the other hand, the Church is incarnational, and theologically the history of the Church is labeled tradition, which is, in one way or another, constitutive of the Church. Therefore the history of the Church ought to be an integral part of ecclesiology.

I can offer another example of the specific character of ecclesiology, this time in relation to political science. If ecclesiology is threefold (with an object, means, and result), that means that it differs from disciplines like political science, which can study the ecclesiology of, for example, a political thinker using theories inherent in political sciences, without presenting ecclesiology as a result of the study. The difference is that ecclesiology might use the same method as the political scientist, but the ecclesiologist has to combine it with theologically-based theories to understand the texts and/or practices ecclesiologically. As there is a difference between “study of theology,” as an object and theological studies, theology has to be integrated into ecclesiological theory, which affects the result.³⁵

Another challenge from our critics has to do with what, in a simplistic way, is called inductive and deductive studies. Here we have made a conclusive decision related to the use of social sciences according to theories and methods offered by them to establish texts that can be analyzed ecclesiologically. We can use these texts in combination with written texts and thereby establish a common text for all materials possible to read. The purpose is, of course, to attain knowledge otherwise not accessible.

30. Oljelund, *Kristi kropp och Guds folk*. A more extensive presentation in English is Oljelund, “Method in Liturgical.” See also Hjälm, *Liberation of the Ecclesia*; Brodd, “Kyrkosyn och gudstjänst;” Brodd, “Liturgy Crossing Frontiers.”

31. Pädam, “Toward a Common Understanding;” “The Diaconate after the Signing.”

32. Heith-Stade, *Marriage as the Arena of Salvation*.

33. Adolfsson, “Mother of Jesus, Mother of Me.”

34. Brodd, “A Female Face of the Church.”

35. Brodd, “Kyrkosyn och kyrkohistoria.”

As mentioned, ecclesiology as a research discipline developed from a study of the doctrines of the Church or studies of groups' and persons' understandings of the Church to include also ecclesial practices.³⁶ The next step was to include ecclesiological analyses of political standpoints, music, and other cultural phenomena, where it is possible to elucidate implicit or explicit ecclesiological patterns in cases where until now these phenomena have been studied as "religious." We think that the Church or church without the definite article is no religion. To attribute the concept of religion to church makes it either too narrow or too broad, i.e. important aspects of the Church are lost or decisive elements in the description of religion—which are irrelevant for ecclesiology—are added. The introduction of the concept of Christianity in the modern sense makes that obvious. In nineteenth century history of religion, Christianity, by means of abstraction, became a religion possible to compare with other religions.

In talking about the theoretical basis of ecclesiology and its relation to other disciplines, it seems necessary to say something about the relation between the parts and the totality of ecclesiology. Of course, even if every single study undertaken in ecclesiology in Uppsala were to recall the theoretical foundation and the relation to other disciplines, that would still not be a complete description of the individual research done. This seems self-evident, but experiences make it necessary to say it. The individual scholarly work is undertaken in a specific scholarly culture, affected by the theoretical and methodological debate, integrating influences from the work in the seminar but at the same time not restricted to that. Creative new inputs in the research seminar are of the utmost importance, and I think it would be disastrous if, from the methodological and theoretical point of view, all the research followed the same pattern, in a monolithic and imitative way.

Ecclesiology as a research discipline is not something fixed and given; it remains under construction. The object, the Church, in any given meaning, is something *sui generis*. It is a unique, ideal, and empirical community, which is a presupposition for the practice and understanding (historically and theologically) of all Christian faith in history and in contemporaneity. The content of this *sui generis* is ecclesiology, and the discipline of ecclesiology is the study of that.

At the same time—and now I am returning to the idea that we study ecclesiology—we do not only research the Church, but also church, and lastly ecclesiology. Once more, what is the relation between the three? It is not so simple that we can reduce the problem and say that the study objects of the Church and church just are included in the overarching concept of

36. For more on the discussion on practice, see Bexell, "Om kyrkans praxis."

ecclesiology, even if that is true. The use of church, without the definitive article, implies that we can study phenomena like a performance of Bach's St. John Passion to understand what ecclesiology might be found in that event, what elements of being church is present, and how to understand the totality of the event (music, texts, the gathering of people, their behaviors, etc.) ecclesiolegically. Then we still can say that we study church in some sense. But when analyzing what ecclesiology emerges from studies of, for example, dominating financial flows, management, or personell administration in a specific Church, we are talking about studying an *implicit* ecclesiology. We are researching a cluster of non-theological factors, which we cannot define as the Church or church. So, in the end, when we talk about the object, it may be the Church, church, ecclesiology, or a combination. But if the object may be diversified like that, the study taken on is always ecclesiology.

Ecclesiology as an Integrative Force

Several times I have mentioned the importance of integrating various elements in the study of ecclesiology, not as the sum of them but allowing ecclesiolegically motivated questions to structure studies of liturgy, art, ministry, Trinitarian models, or whatever. This does not imply that these or other themes or objects cannot be studied otherwise, but the ecclesiological perspective puts them in a specific perspective that might be surprisingly new. The questions and the themes become integrated in a wider entity of which they are parts, namely ecclesiology. I am not only referring here to the redundancy of sub-disciplines in favor of a disciplinary integrity but also to the theory that ecclesiological perspectives on a subject, say diaconal work, which can bring about new insights into the nature of both *diakonia* and the Church. This is self-evident, and a reminder is therefore necessary.

My experience of this actually started when I was the director of the Church of Sweden International Study Department and had to deal with the rather limited question of whether or not the deacon was a part of the threefold ministry. There were two dominating ideas in earlier discussions and also in earlier research: that it was possible to deduce the diaconate from the concept of *diakonia* (in the German Protestant meaning of *Diakonie*) and that the ministry of deacons was formed by its tasks. Impressed by John Collins's research³⁷ and later on inspired by the researchers in the Anglo-Nordic Diaconate Research Project (ANDREP)³⁸ I brought together formerly isolated elements from tradition, canon law, pastoral practices,

37. Collins, *Diakonia*.

38. For a summarizing and assessing presentation of the project, see Hall, "Research on the diaconate."

etc., into the framework of ecclesiology and from the perspective of ecclesiology, it became possible to describe a diaconate that “is important not simply functionally, nor in itself, but ecclesiologically for understanding what the nature of the Church is.”³⁹

One should also say that to a part of this ecclesiological enquiry was added a sort of necessary historical deconstruction of ideas.⁴⁰ The result, anyhow, was that ecclesiology proved productive in working out problems that otherwise had been handled in rather fragmented ways.

ECCLESIOLOGY IN A SECULAR UNIVERSITY

Sometimes I am asked to account for the theoretical basis of ecclesiology as a discipline at a secular university. My answer departs from Saul’s dramatic meeting with Christ on the road to Damascus, later recalled in St. Paul’s letter to the Galatians, “I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it” (Gal 1:13). Three times in Acts (9:4; 22:7; 26:14) what Christ said is remembered: “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” The identification between the small churches and Christ is made evident. This identification is given already in the teaching of Christ before the resurrection, e.g. in John 15:1–15: “I am the true vine and you are the branches.” This is developed by St. Paul in the analogy of the Body of Christ. At the same time the analogy between Christ and church is always paradoxically contradicted by the sinfulness and failures of the Church, the People of God *in via*, always on its way to perfection, always the object of Christ’s grace. In the framework of academic theology, this is not an object of faith but a fundamental part in a theory.

Firstly, it gives possibilities of acknowledging the character of the object of research, for example its claims to be of a theandric nature. A foundation in any theory in ecclesiology is that all aspects of the researched phenomenon are taken seriously, to avoid unnecessary deficit. It is also a part of the necessary *benevolentia* of the researcher. If the Church is theandric, it opens up for the study of all aspects of human life in the Church from the perspective of ecclesiology.

Secondly, the Christological basis for ecclesiological research is in principle Trinitarian, which gives the opportunity of widening ecclesiological study and ecclesiologically investigating a broad spectrum of themes, not least from the perspective of implicit ecclesiology, motivated by the simple argument that where Christ is, there is also the Church.

39. Rowell, “Editorial preface,” 256, Brodd, *Diakonatet*; “A Diaconate Emerging from Ecclesiology.”

40. Brodd, “Diaconia through Church History.”

Thirdly, there is a possibility of discovering, defining, and ecclesiologically researching various phenomena that normally are not identified as church. This is also theologically motivated by the insights from the New Testament and tradition. Neither “vine” (John 15:4) nor “ship” is automatically associated with a social body like the Church or church (indefinitely), so why not study church as a financial system⁴¹ or as music?⁴² In any case, given the presence of the Church in unexpected circumstances, it should be one task of ecclesiology to reveal this, identifying elements of church or ecclesiological elements wherever they are traceable.

Making the identity and difference between Christ and church the basis of an ecclesiological theory underlines that, fundamentally, ecclesiology is theology.

One question that could be raised is if it is possible to have a theoretical framework, which can so easily be interpreted in faith categories. The problem is, however, that we need hermeneutical tools, not so much when we study traditional ecclesiologies or traditional ecclesiological phenomena as when we cross that border.⁴³ One example is research of management and administration in a church. The idea is that we actually can explore various ecclesiologies by doing that, even if they differ from a church's doctrinal teaching about itself. To make that study more than a business study, to make it ecclesiological, there must be hermeneutical tools available. These tools consequently function on such an abstract level that they allow the acknowledgement of biblical concepts like Body of Christ or traditional concepts like ship being no more “ecclesiological” than concepts borrowed from economics, when a church or an ecclesiology is described in economic/financial terms.⁴⁴

The necessity of a fundamental theory becomes obvious when texts and practices are researched using the basic question of whether they are ecclesiological or not. Then there ought to be some idea of what is looked for. If a novelist is writing about a war during the sixteenth century reformation period, and the researcher wants to analyze the ecclesiology in the story, which might be essential but not accessible for a scholar of literature, then she uses all the ideas the author might have in her understanding of

41. Brodd, “Stewardship and Ecclesiology.” This article is a contribution to the ecclesiological reflections in the Lutheran World Federation. Also, for a critical discussion of my article (the German edition), see Zeuch, “A comunhão na confissão;” Brodd, “Stewardship Ecclesiology: The Church as sacrament.”

42. Brodd, “Ecclesiology and Church Music.”

43. Brodd, “Ecclesiological Research and Natural and Human Sciences;” “Ecclesiology.”

44. Brodd, “Church, Organisation;” Nordlund, *Isomorfismar i kyrklig organisation*.

church and all the author's knowledge about sixteenth century ecclesiology. Still she needs a fundamental theory in order to avoid a methodology based on accidental elements, a theory offering additional and new insights compared to studies in the department of literature. The understanding of the HIV and AIDS pandemic differs depending on whether it is analyzed from the perspective of medicine or ecclesiology.⁴⁵

In sum, to study ecclesiology in a secular university is not faith-based, but it must be theoretically grounded. The fundamental tools offered for this are presented by a given divine revelation, and I cannot actually see any alternative to that.⁴⁶ It is, however, non-confessional, multi-confessional, or ecumenical. The alternative would be an atheistic approach, which is alien to ecclesiology and therefore a hindrance for an adequate understanding of the object studied. When several traditions are present in the research seminar, no position is self-evident and that positively influences the creativity but also acts as a reminder of the need for clarifications. Visiting confessional theological faculties abroad it is rather easy to identify the confessional culture that to a great extent influences the choice of research problem and of subject and theory.

In the research seminar we have discussed this position and asked whether it creates a sort of dichotomy between belief and scholarly theory. I think this is complex, but if we talk about the given divine revelation, which is a necessary element in understanding the Church and why the Church acts as it does, the theory does not exclude the researcher's personal belief in divine revelation but gives a non-believer access to equal possibilities for ecclesiological research. This also means that the more "empirical" the research is, the more important the theological analysis. Theology presupposes the divine revelation and cannot be an additional extra in ecclesiology; it must be integrated into the scholarly work itself. The question is how this affects the research process and how it can be controlled by the researcher in her work.

Evaluations by International Panels

International panels evaluated the discipline of Ecclesiology in 2007 and in 2011.⁴⁷ It was well received with good ratings but the international panels

45. Brodd, "Theological Focus."

46. Brodd, "Die Zukunft der Theologie;" "Theology/religious studies." Erik Eynikel criticizes me for making an old-fashioned division between religious studies and theology, but that has to do with my postulation of a divine revelation. Eynikel, "Western European Theological Challenges."

47. The entire Uppsala University, with all its faculties, research disciplines, and research centers was evaluated in 2007 and 2011. The international panels assessed the

showed some uncertainty about the identity of the discipline. In 2007 the panel writes that “the discipline needs to develop its identity in the cross field of Systematic Theology and Church History.”⁴⁸ In 2011 the panels wrote: “Ecclesiology as an independent unit, separated from Systematic Theology (especially Dogmatics), Church History or Practical Theology; it is peculiar in the field of theology. Formed in 1995, it understands itself to cover areas of classical dogmatics, practical theology and church history.”

The panels acknowledged 2011 that the identity of the discipline had developed since the last evaluation, that it “steadily produces a good number of doctoral theses,” that it is involved in international networks and symposia, and “that a considerable amount of titles is published in international anthologies and periodicals.” Still, the panel wrote, the discipline’s “identity separated from its natural partner disciplines seems problematic.”⁴⁹

It could be said that, apart from the political errand of the panel during the last evaluation when their remit was to establish larger units out of the disciplines, there is confusion about what ecclesiology is as a discipline. We are doing well, but we have not managed to explain the inner coherence of the discipline.

Church History and Ecclesiology

The panel’s discussion about Ecclesiology and Church history requires some comment. It has, of course, been very much discussed in the international context, and important ecclesiological research has been historical in character, to mention only Yves Congar as an example. The historical dimension in ecclesiology is important because tradition is a decisive element in being Church, and, at least after the Incarnation, the Church is a subject in history. Nevertheless, there is a difference between the two disciplines, mainly because of how the object is studied.

It is important here to mention the impact professor Oloph Bexell has had in the discipline. I was Dean of the Faculty of Theology from 2000 to 2008 and thereafter Deputy Vice-Rector for the scholarly domain of six faculties in humanities and social sciences from 2008 to 2014. Bexell took major responsibility for the discipline from 2000, when he was appointed Professor of Ecclesiology, until 2006, when he became Professor of Church History. Before that he was my colleague and associate professor since 1993. Two of the authors in this book, Stina Fallberg Sundmark and Gunnar

quality of research. *Quality and Renewal 2007*, *Quality and Renewal 2011*.

48. *Quality and Renewal 2007*, 242.

49. *Quality and Renewal 2011*, 253.

Weman, are among those who wrote their doctoral theses under the supervision of Professor Bexell.

In his inaugural lecture to the University in 2005, Bexell presented his understanding of the discipline.⁵⁰ He repeatedly emphasized that it is historical in nature but also a theological discipline studying concrete practices:

Ecclesiology thus balances the historical- and praxis-orientated and the ecclesiological-theoretical issues. [. . .] Ecclesiology [*Kyrkvetenskap*], is then a historical discipline that analyzes theologically the churches own reflections on their peculiar nature, as this is concretely manifested by practices in history and contemporaneity. The discipline is kept together by the sum of its fundamental ecclesiological questions at issue.⁵¹

The ongoing debate in Uppsala was about the domination of research dealing with twentieth century phenomena. Another problem we discussed was whether we should keep the distinct profiles of “sub-disciplines.” Bexell defended the “sum,” while I wanted a total integration in a comprehensive ecclesiological conception of the discipline. And lastly, we discussed the relation between systematic theology and ecclesiology. Oloph Bexell reminded us that there was a real threat that dogmatics would dominate the historical studies of ecclesial practices.⁵² These contributions remain important elements in the ongoing discernment of ecclesiology.

EXAMPLES OF ECCLESIOLOGY IN DOCTORAL THESES

In 1994 we had a “box,” the discipline, but the content was neither decided on beforehand nor concealed by a presupposed tradition; instead, it grew by means of ongoing work in the research seminar. What is unique in this case is that ecclesiology was developed very much by the doctoral students and later also by the students writing their master theses. Therefore, it seems appropriate to introduce some examples of the work done in the seminar by presenting a few of the 30 doctoral theses completed since 1995—which in various ways mirror the development and content of ecclesiology—and see how they can contribute to the understanding of the identity of this “peculiar” discipline. Or, to put it differently: if the small community of

50. Bexell, “Kyrkan som forskningsobjekt.”

51. Ibid., 103.

52. The debate during a seminar arranged by The Royal Academy of Letters, History, and Antiquities from the twelfth to fourteenth of November 1998 is very well recorded in Heberlein, “Var står vi.”

researchers that is called the research seminar is a working-site, could one say something about the concrete work going on?

Giving a brief introduction to the theses below, I obviously refer to the completed doctoral work. That implies that the given year for the defence of the work is preceded by a process lasting at least four years, stamped by labour individually and in the research seminar, and contributing to the development of our self-understanding.⁵³

When Kjell Blückert presented his doctoral thesis *The Church as Nation: A Study in Ecclesiology and Nationhood* in 2000,⁵³ he initiated a series of doctoral theses offering new and original approaches to the study of the Church, well-anchored in international ecclesiological academia. He thereby also reflected the intense work with theoretical questions going on in the research seminar. In his extensive theoretical discourse, Blückert introduces the concept of “meta ecclesiology” when studying the ideas of church and nation in the developing modern Swedish nation-state. What he was struggling with is the problem of identifying ecclesiosities, which are not explicitly dealt with in texts but become obvious in analyses of political discourse or action, for instance, and can be conceptualized as theories; in this case the church can be identified as nation.

On the meta level it is possible to “reconstruct” an ecclesiology by means of analyzing three “levels”: the visions of the Church, the Church in praxis, and the dynamic and mutual influences between the empirical church and its context of culture and society. “The first level is a study of ideas, the second is a study of how these historical ideas materialize in institution and spiritual life and how they are thought to be materialized. The third level is a pure study of history: a study of the context of the text.”⁵⁴ In the framework of historiography Blückert analyses “implicit ideals of the church and certain philosophical implications” in a reconstructed history.⁵⁵

In 1995 Ninna Edgardh introduced feminist studies to the research seminar, resulting in her doctoral thesis *Feminism and Liturgy—An Ecclesiological Study* (2001). This was in a way a turning point and a start for a process of change in the self-understanding and certainly the character of the seminar. From a more or less practical theological discipline dominated by historical perspectives, it moved on its way to include new perspectives.⁵⁶ I had been in office one year, and most of the participants in the seminar

53. Blückert, *Church as Nation*.

54. Ibid., 96.

55. Ibid., 313.

56. Edgardh, *Feminism och liturgi*.

were thus more established than we. Ninna Edgardh actually worked with both feminist theory and made feminist liturgies the object of her research. The problem was, however, that the research seminar fundamentally lacked competence in feminist theology and even more so in feminist ecclesiology. About the latter it should be said that Ninna Edgardh had to follow the very few theologians working on feminist ecclesiology at the time. Further, a part of the process was to educate the research seminar. This is, of course, a normal procedure, and part of the idea of the research seminar is to broaden the scholarly scope, but in this case the point of departure was from nothing.

The question to this is, of course, if it was responsible to accept Ninna Edgardh as a doctoral student under these circumstances and if she made a sound judgment when applying for the post. The answer is obviously positive since she is now professor in the discipline.

The subtitle of her dissertation *Feminism and Liturgy—An Ecclesiological Study* reveals an ongoing debate in the research seminar as to whether ecclesiology is merely an object to study, explicit or restructured, or if it also implies distinct or even separate theories and methodologies. In her thesis Ninna Edgardh is working with three areas: liturgy, feminism, and ecclesiology. “Ecclesiology in the meaning of concrete liturgical form of Christian church is one of the areas studied,” she writes. “But ecclesiology is also my overarching perspective by which I seek to keep together dogmatics and liturgical practices, feminist ambitions and Christian, and empirical and observable church and the church of faith and visions.”⁵⁷ The object of the study is liturgies created for women by women unaware of the underlying or implicit ecclesiological elements or even of ecclesilogies that are possible to uncover by means of ecclesiological analysis. Edgardh also uses the operative concept of “reconstruction” for the deductive establishment of ecclesilogies she finds in the analyzed liturgies and their contexts.

In a conference in 1998 hosted by the Swedish Royal Academy of Letters, History, and Antiquities, Kjell Blückert and Ninna Edgardh, both then doctoral students, were among the speakers.⁵⁸ Edgardh spoke about “Ecclesiology as Gender Studies.”⁵⁹ She noticed a gender-blindness in ecclesiology in general and certainly in her own discipline. She argued that feminist analyses make ecclesiologically relevant practices and texts visible and that this is a precondition for access and understanding of vast fields in understanding what is church. She also underlined the importance of understanding the empirical data from a theological perspective. Blückert,

57. Ibid., 17.

58. *Kyrkvetenskap som forskningsdisciplin*.

59. Edgardh, “Kyrkvetenskap som kvinnoforskning”

in his contribution, “The Church as—Studying Ecclesiology from Different Horizons,” discussed my position that it is acceptable in the study of ecclesiologies to postulate a divine revelation, not grounded in a personal faith but as a scholarly position, as an expression of the researcher’s *benevolentia* in his relation to the object of research.⁶⁰ Very much of the conference was centered on this idea.

Mikael Mogren’s doctoral thesis, presented in 2003, was called *The Romantic Church: Conceptions of the Ideal Church on Earth by the New School [of Swedish Romanticism] up to 1817*.⁶¹ Mogren stated from the beginning that ecclesiology refers to conscious or unconscious conceptions of church, the latter, of course, being established through analysis of ideas and practices. He also established that an ecclesiology is not necessarily a coherent system of ideas but can even consist of contradictory parts. Without using the term meta-ecclesiology, Mogren constructed the concept of “romantic church” (cf. the title of the dissertation), which should be distinguished from the “ideal church” that belongs to the ideal world and the “empirical church” which is the concrete Church of Sweden at the time.

The “romantic church” is made up of perceptions of the “ideal church” when it coincides with the “empirical church” and the material and the phenomena included in that church. The texts written by the romantic authors are very diverse and often written in such a way that they consciously hide the theological content. The “romantic church” became operative when it was shown that the two worlds in Swedish romanticism, the ideal world and the empirical world, were not totally separated but that there were possibilities of transcendence in the empirical church as well as in the embodiment of the ideal church. This made it possible for Mogren to introduce Sacramentality as a hermeneutical key, and the formulation of that hermeneutical key was generated from the romantic text used. Mikael Mogren used the hermeneutical key to lock up three areas for analysis of three perceptions: of religion, of gender, and of art. The result was that Mogren was able to “reconstruct” the “romantic church” by identifying philosophical, cultural, or other elements that could be translated into theological language.

Sune Fahlgren, in his doctoral thesis in 2006, introduced the concept of preachership as an ecclesiological category: *Preachership and Church: Six Case Studies of an Ecclesial Fundamental Practice within the Free Church Traditions in Sweden*.⁶² Preachership is a construction used in order to iden-

60. Blückert, “Kyrkan som.”

61. Mogren, *Den romantiska kyrkan*.

62. Fahlgren, *Predikantskap och församling*. See also Fahlgren, “Preacher and Preachership.”

tify a personal function, task, and identity without becoming involved in traditional questions about ordination and ordained ministry. Preachership is a structuring factor in being Christian in communion, in being church. It is established in the social interplay between preacher and listener, the room they share, the message, the situation, and other factors. Even when people listen to a radio broadcast of a sermon, or when people during the 1960s listened to sermons on cassette tapes, a virtual community was created, fulfilling the role of church in some sense and establishing characteristics of being church.

The basis for Fahlgren's research is the theory of operative ecclesiology, namely that the praxis of a Christian community, when analyzed, can disclose one or several hidden ecclesiologies. The underlying hypothesis in his work was proven, namely that different kinds of preachership unveiled various kinds of ecclesiologies, different ways of being church. Therefore preachership is described as an "ecclesial fundamental practice" defined by inductive analysis of the preaching event—preacher, sermon, listener, reception, and situation. The object of the research makes it obvious that the common ecclesiological model in this case can be designed "communicative community."

In her 2008 thesis, "*Pancosmic Church*"—"*Specific Românesc*." *Ecclesiological Themes in Nichifor Crainic's Writings between 1922 and 1944*,⁶³ Christine Hall analyzed the ecclesiology of a controversial but nevertheless prominent Romanian Orthodox figure in the field of culture and politics, a man who was also an Orthodox theologian. Hall identified Crainic's "life experience" as composed of personal experiences, cultural ideas, and Orthodox spirituality founded in mystical and ascetical theology. Like Mogren earlier, she brought together a diverse material and handled it by means of a cluster of ecclesiological concepts from which she created her hermeneutical tools. Hall also made use of the dialectics between Crainic's idea of the "pancosmic" Church and the empirical church, in relation to "*specificul Românesc*," a concept of the Romanian "particularity" carried by ideas of an ethnically grounded Romanian identity. Hall's thesis was historical in character but was not church history in a traditional way. Her analysis showed that it is possible to bring into view political and cultural history as an object of ecclesiological analysis.

The "ecclesiological approach" in Jonas Ideström's 2009 thesis, *Local Church Identity—A Study of Implicit Ecclesiology with the Example of The*

63. Hall, "*Pancosmic Church*." Hall has, in her continuous research, developed her understanding of the intimate relation between spirituality and ecclesiology. See for example Hall, "Spiritual tradition and ecclesiology."

Church of Sweden in Flemingsberg,⁶⁴ is presented as “theologically reflective and abductive.” In this case, abduction offers the possibility of concurrence with disclosed empirical data and theory, which offers the possibility to develop the theory from the perspective of data. The object for Ideström’s study is manifestations of a concrete church, a “social body,” a study undertaken through means presented by social theory. At the same time, the church as a social body is also the Body of Christ and therefore the theological analysis is necessary. This social body, defined by being the body of Christ, is not a static phenomenon but always in via, moving and developing. The central concept is “implicit ecclesiology,” which is used by Ideström “to summarize the understanding of the relationship between ecclesiology and ecclesiality,” and the concept is also to designate “un-understanding of being church, which is visualized when a theoretical perspective is used when studying various forms of expressions taken on by that church.”⁶⁵

I have chosen these doctoral theses to illustrate some of the differences, the diffusion of sometimes new ideas, and the continuity characterizing the research seminar in ecclesiology. These theses also hint at the possibility of studying different kinds of practices and utilizing analytical tools and instruments that are not traditional in theology.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: ECCLESIOLOGY AS AN ECUMENICAL ENDEAVOR

Let me return to the initial reference to Bonhoeffer and the lack of understanding of what ecclesiology is and my mentioning of the idea of making ecclesiology the center and frame of an academic discipline. When describing the scholarly milieu, it becomes obvious, I think, that ecclesiology as the object of the study, the way of studying something, and the result of the study is complex and multiplex and must remain so, because that creates the dynamics of the work and offers new challenges. There is, however, a unity in that diversity requiring reconciliation. This reconciliation takes place when different theoretical and methodological positions reciprocally communicate in such a way that they become mutually fruitful.

Observing ongoing doctoral work in the seminar in 2014, what, for example, do work about catholicity and ethnicity in South Africa, Bonhoeffer’s ecclesiology, an identification of ecclesiology in people’s experiences of music in the church, or Max Thurian’s ecumenical model, have in common?

Observing that members of the research seminar do not constitute a monolithic but a rather diverse group of people from different ecclesial

64. Ideström, *Lokal kyrklig identitet*.

65. Ibid., 23–24.

traditions, what, for example, do a Roman catholic, a Congregationalist, a Baptist, a Pentecostal and an Orthodox theologian, have in common?

Observing that the members of the research seminar themselves not only profess different ecclesiologies but also have various understanding of how that functions in the academia, how can historical and deductive theories and methods be on good terms with those who are working inductively in various ways?

To me it is important that the participants in the research milieu have different ecclesial affinities. It would obviously be rather dull if every work were cast in the same mould. But this is also very demanding on all the members in the seminar, and no one knows if it is possible in the long run. In the introduction to his thesis “Ordination of Deacons in the Churches of the Porvoo Communion,” Tiit Pädam elaborates on ecclesiology and ecclesiologies and concludes: “Ecclesiology is thus a mosaic, consisting of various elements which only together constitute a whole.”⁶⁶

One could say that the work in the research seminar has distinct affinities with the process in ecumenical dialogues and that we might learn from that. An ecumenical dialogue should not be negotiation but a common effort to understand the given divine revelation.⁶⁷ The aim is to understand the actual positions, explain them from their historical background, and investigate whether a dominating perception is the only possible one and if the traditional doctrinal formulations could be reformulated in such a way that conveys a common understanding for the time being. To do that, it is necessary to relate doctrine to practice. I assume that these experiences should be taken into account in ecclesiological research. A conscious but self-critical position in relation to one’s own tradition contributes to a necessarily broadened and deepened understanding of the Church. It is very much a question of overcoming prejudices and thereby detecting new possibilities of understanding.

66. Pädam, *Ordination of Deacons*, 16.

67. Brodd, “En gemensam förståelse av den gudomliga uppenbarelsen.”