

## ON THE DYNAMIC RELATION BETWEEN ECCLESIOLOGY AND CONGREGATIONAL STUDIES

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*The liveliness of the discipline of ecclesiology depends on the cross-referencing between theological doctrines about the church and actual churches. In an intellectual pincer movement these authors argue that the theological discipline of ecclesiology has to be chastened by consideration of the congregations in order to be credible, and that congregational studies needs the input of the formal discipline of ecclesiology to connect the beliefs and practices of each community to the wider tradition.*

**E**CCLESIOLOGY IS PRESENTLY RESPONDING to two sources of pressure from opposite directions. On the one hand, a more exact knowledge

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<sup>1</sup> This article was prepared by these two theologians of different denominations who pursue different ecclesiological subdisciplines. Originally, papers corresponding to parts 1 and 2 were developed in a dialogue between the authors for a conference titled "Ecclesiology and Ethnography: Exploring the Emerging Conversation between Theology and Congregational Studies," held September 27–29, 2007, at Yale Divinity School and organized by Christian Scharen representing the Yale Center for Faith and Culture. The dialogue across denominational and disciplinary lines accounts for the authors' citations of each other's works. Because the papers converged, they are combined and offered under a single title. Roger Haight is mainly responsible for part 1 and James Nieman for part 2. They are both grateful to the organizers of the conference for the opportunity offered them to work together.

of the historical origins of the church and the variety of forms the church has assumed across its historical life challenge the idea of a normative ecclesiology. On the other hand, emergent churches in all parts of the world, particularly in Africa and Asia, sometimes appear to stand at the margins of being identifiably Christian. These two concerns intersect in the study of some congregations where broad doctrinal claims about the church are being tested by a realistic scrutiny of the concrete political and social dynamisms driving particular churches and the practices of actual congregations. Part of the liveliness of the discipline of ecclesiology today stems from an interaction between the desire to preserve the essential character of the church and the need that it adapt to new historical situations, between a normative concept of the church and the need that it become inculturated in the life of its members.

The foci of these two pressure points are addressed by two distinct sub-disciplines of ecclesiology, the one pursuing a normative concept of the church, the other studying its historical manifestations, most concretely in congregational studies. Taking up these lines of force, this article develops a response to the following questions: How does formal academic ecclesiology relate to congregational studies, and vice versa? The article contains two parts. The first assumes the point of view of academic ecclesiology, and from that perspective theorizes on the relationship between these two ecclesiological subdisciplines. The second assumes the perspective of the discipline of congregational studies and reflects on how that field of study bears on the more general understanding of the church as such. The two probes into this relationship yield remarkably similar conclusions concerning the mutual relevance and influence that each discipline should have on the other in advancing a more holistic understanding of church.

## PART 1 FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF GENERAL ECCLESIOLOGY

We begin this analysis of the relationship between general or formal ecclesiology and congregational studies from the broader vantage point of the former as distinct from the particular focus of congregational studies.<sup>2</sup> This part is divided into three sections. The first establishes further the methodological presuppositions from which these ecclesiological reflections arise. From that basis it formulates an understanding of the relationship between general ecclesiology and congregational studies in four

<sup>2</sup> That is, since the perspectives of the two authors are both “ecclesiological,” no one term suffices to distinguish the breadth of the one field from the particularity of the other. For our purposes, “formal” or “academic” or “general” will be used to specify the broader field, however inadequate this designation may sometimes be.

theses. The third section will then test those theses by entering into dialogue with an earlier writing of James Nieman on congregational studies and ecclesiology on the specific topic of the marks of the church.

### **Ecclesiology from Below**

This first foray into ecclesiological language, especially regarding presuppositions and method, is designed to lay out some of the presuppositions and principles in the study of the church that govern part 1 of this article. Ecclesiological method and language are far from standardized. Thus we begin by mapping the field on which this particular game will be played. This may be accomplished by a contrast between ecclesiology from above and from below and a consideration of some of the consequences that flow from a method that proceeds from below.

The phrases “from above” and “from below” in ecclesiology operate by analogy with their use in Christology. The key word in both terms is “from”; the phrases designate a point of departure and a method, not content. Christology from above begins the process of understanding the person Jesus Christ with statements of authority that name the confessional beliefs of Christians about Jesus Christ; these may be drawn from Scripture or from the classical doctrines about Christ; they are metaphysical in character. By contrast, Christology from below begins the formal process of understanding and explaining who Jesus Christ is by first focusing on the appearance of Jesus of Nazareth in history and the religious experience of him that lead to the doctrinal interpretations. Christology from below begins with history and traces the genesis and development of christological belief. Although the point of departure of this Christology is historical, it concludes with equally confessional interpretations of Jesus and hermeneutical appropriations of them. The result is critical affirmation of Jesus as the Christ in whom is found God’s salvation.

The contrast in ecclesiology is analogous. In ecclesiology from above, understanding the church begins with and is based upon the authority of Scripture or classical doctrines. It usually presupposes a specific church. Its nature and qualities are characterized by biblical metaphors—“the body of Christ” is a good example. The origin of the church is construed in doctrinal terms with Jesus Christ as the founder, so that the ministries and corresponding structure of the church correlate with God’s will. By contrast, ecclesiology from below begins historically with a historical account of the genesis of the church beginning with the ministry of Jesus. In a critical historical account, Jesus’ role in the origin of the church is shifted from being founder to being the foundation of a church that comes into being later in the first century in the memory of Jesus and under the influence of the Spirit. Ecclesiology from below traces the gradual formation of the

church during the first century, using historical and sociological categories and also recognizing the early church's experience and testimony to the power of God in the whole movement, that is, its theological dimension. In contrast to the tendency of ecclesiology from above, ecclesiology from below notices the pluralism of church polities during the course of the church's formation.

Much more should be said about the qualities of these two types of ecclesiology, but the point here is simply to stipulate that this whole essay unfolds within the framework of an ecclesiology from below. From the perspectives of both authors this method offers a more adequate approach in our historically conscious and theologically critical age. On that premise, we can lay down at least two qualities of a historically conscious ecclesiology that will have a bearing on the subject matter of this essay.

First, an ecclesiology from below not only begins with history but also continues to attend to the existential historical community that calls itself church. The historical point of departure also remains as the consistent referent of what is said about the church. We know nothing of a heavenly church before grasping the church of history. The shift to a historical genetic base or starting point for understanding the church widens the field of vision. A historically conscious ecclesiology from below has to attend to the whole Christian movement. Ecclesiology through the ages and in particular after the Reformation has become a tribal discipline; each church has its own ecclesiology; each finds its own polity reflected in the New Testament, and so on. Against this trend, ecclesiology from below imposes on the ecclesio-logist what may be called a "whole-part" optic. One's own particular church is not the whole church, although the whole church in a theological sense is manifest in it; rather, the particular church is both authentic church and part of a larger embodiment of the church of which a single church is a part.<sup>3</sup>

A second quality of ecclesiology from below cautions against a reductionism in a historical and sociological interpretation of the church. The data for ecclesiology include the empirical history of the genesis and development of the church and also the development of the beliefs of the community about its nature and purpose. The church in its beginnings and constantly through its history bears witness to the presence and power of God in its origins, development, religious life, and its future. It lives in and by the power of Christ and the Holy Spirit as the source of the transcen-

<sup>3</sup> The word "church" is analogous because of the variety of its referents: the whole church, a denomination, a national or regional organization, a theological/judicial unit such as a diocese or synod, a parish or congregation. Generally it is apparent when "church" refers to the whole Christian movement. The context often makes it clear whether "particular church" refers to a denomination (Greek Orthodox, Presbyterian, etc.) or a congregation. Sometimes "particular church" can logically and meaningfully refer to both.

dent energy that brought it into being and, as promise, sustains its life into the future. There can be no historicist or sociological reduction of the church in an ecclesiology from below to a merely human organization. The historical data include the confessional witness to a transcendent dimension of the church.

#### **Four Theses on the Relation of General Ecclesiology and Congregational Studies**

From the basis of an ecclesiology from below, we can now move to four theses that together broadly define the disciplinary relationship between general ecclesiology and the more focused discipline of congregational studies. The first thesis governs the others: it posits that the study of the church has to be simultaneously historical and theological. From this thesis flow the next three theses, which move in the following direction: on the supposition that the basic unit of the church is the congregation, one can say, broadly speaking, that congregational studies determine the object of ecclesiology. Even so, formal ecclesiology, appealing to theological data, determines the nature and purpose of this social institution. However, the normative theological claims about the church are chastened and measured by congregational studies. The relationship is thus interactive and dynamic.<sup>4</sup>

1. *The study of the church must attend simultaneously to the historical and theological character of the church.* A very first principle of ecclesiology deserving attention states that the church exists in a twofold relationship: it is simultaneously related to the world and to God. Because of this duality, the church must always be understood simultaneously in two languages: concrete historical language and theological language, sociological language and doctrinal language.<sup>5</sup> With a moment's reflection it becomes self-evident that the church exists in a twofold relationship to the world and to God. The point of making the distinction, then, lies in the attention it focuses on the difference between these relationships so that we can see clearly how they relate to each other. The two relationships coexist and

<sup>4</sup> The use of theses in this exposition allows a succinct statement of a position that, of course, needs to be further nuanced and thus invites dialogue. Confines of space also explain the terse didactic style of this article.

<sup>5</sup> The phrase indicating that the church is one reality described in two languages is drawn from Edward Schillebeeckx, *Church: The Human Story of God* (New York: Crossroad, 1990) 210–13. He writes: “The church community as mystery cannot be found behind or above concrete, visible reality. The church community is to be found *in* this reality which can be demonstrated here and now” (213). The divine and human dimensions of the church are like divine grace and human freedom: when they are related conceptually, they are “thought of as being next to and alongside each other, but in truth they are one and the same thing, a text to be deciphered in different language games” (212).

mutually influence and condition each other. This has first of all a bearing on how we understand the church, both generally and at any given time and in any particular instance. On the one hand, the church cannot be understood exclusively in theological terms; on the other, it cannot be understood in exclusively empirical, historical, or worldly terms. The principle forbids any reductionist understanding of the church in either direction.<sup>6</sup> Schleiermacher expresses the tension for understanding the church this way: a merely theological interpretation of the church would be empty and unreal; a merely historical interpretation of the church would miss completely its inner reality or substance.<sup>7</sup>

The twofold relationship that constitutes the church means that two sources of energy flow into the church, one coming from the world, the other coming from God. The twofold relationship to the world and to God should not be conceived as defining a stable state, passive and inert. The duality points to a dynamic interaction of nature and grace. The relationship of the church to God marks a line of power within the lives of the people who constitute the church and through them to the wider community itself. The same is true of the relationship to the world. Schleiermacher also describes these two interacting forces in the church with the perhaps misleading language of the “invisible” and “visible” church. He writes, “Thus the *invisible* church is the totality of the effects of the Spirit as a connected whole; but these effects, as connected with those lingering influences of the collective life of universal sinfulness which are never absent from any life that has been taken possession of by the divine Spirit, constitute the *visible* church.”<sup>8</sup> But the visible aspect of the church should

<sup>6</sup> James Gustafson defines theological reductionism in this way: “By theological reductionism we mean the exclusive use of Biblical and doctrinal language in the interpretation of the church” (James M. Gustafson, *Treasure in Earthen Vessels: The Church as a Human Community* [New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1976] 100). By contrast, historical and social reductionism would mean the exclusive use of social historical language in the interpretation of the church. The key word in both is “exclusive.”

<sup>7</sup> Schleiermacher expresses this principle in terms of abstract invariant qualities in the church and changeable features: “If the attempt were made to set forth the self-identical and invariable element in Christianity in complete abstraction from the historical, it would scarcely be distinguishable from the undertaking of people who imagine that they are expounding Christianity when in point of fact what they offer is pure speculation. And if anyone tried to present solely the variable in Christian history in complete abstraction from the self-identical, his aim would apparently be the same as that of people who, penetrating no further than the outer husk of things, permit us to see in the history of the Church nothing but the complex and pernicious play of blinded passion” (Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart [New York: Harper & Row, 1963] § 126, p. 585.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* § 148, p. 677.

not be reduced to or equated with what is sinful. It includes the whole positive dynamics of history, society, and institution.

Schleiermacher is close to Schillebeeckx on this point. There is only one church, and it is an empirical, historical phenomenon. The Spirit of God released by Jesus the Christ is at work in this church, however, and the activity of God as Spirit sets up a tension between the drag of the sinfulness of the world within the church and the uplifting and divinizing effects of the Spirit. The term "invisible church" refers to all those effects, the sum total of them, that flow from God as Spirit. This distinction underscores that the church can never be reduced to a human organization and never romanticized with a theological language that leaves the organization behind. It also represents these two sides of the church as a dynamic interaction of forces. On the personal level, God's Spirit or grace moves to open up the lethargic and egoistic dimensions of human freedom into self-transcendence and service of the other. On the social level, as water becomes sign or symbol of God's action within human existence in baptism, so too the social-historical and institutional aspects of the church, which often appear to limit human freedom and confine the Spirit, can be transformed into platforms for genuine spiritual activity. According to the principles of sacramentality and accommodation, God acts in the world through creatures, human agents, and institutions.<sup>9</sup>

We began by distinguishing between ecclesiology from above and from below in order to clarify a perspective. The strategy is to distinguish in order to unite elements coherently. These principles put these aspects of the church back together again. We can now draw out some of the dimensions of this dialectical understanding of the church. On the basis of this tense understanding of the church that exists in an interaction of two forces, one can derive some axioms for understanding the relationship between ecclesiology and congregational studies. The word "derived" is not used in the sense of an objective logical deduction. Rather, this construal of the elements constituting the church and regulating an approach to understanding suggests the three theses that follow.

2. *Congregational studies ultimately specifies the object studied by ecclesiology.* This statement is, in fact, contentious and would have to be argued ecclesialogically with churches who take the basic unit of the church to be the diocese or synod or some group larger than the congregation, but this argument can be made irenically.<sup>10</sup> On the supposition that the church

<sup>9</sup> See John Calvin, in *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960) 4.3.1 (1053–54).

<sup>10</sup> One can distinguish between a basic unit of the church measured in terms of its existential influence on members (the congregation) from a basic unit measured in juridical terms (the diocese or synod). Because they are measured differently,

people experience most directly and existentially is the congregation, however, the discipline whose focus is precisely that empirical historical community provides the first definition of the ecclesial community. Congregational studies analyzes on the ground the primary referent or subject matter of ecclesiology. The larger church consists in various forms of communion among these basic churches. This thesis therefore does not undermine the fact that many churches define their basic units on the larger scale of the diocese or synod.

3. *General ecclesiology, rather than field studies, determines the formal nature and mission of the church.* This thesis states that congregational studies does not define the formal nature and mission of the church, because that nature and mission is constituted by God, confessed in faith, and analyzed by theology as it manifests itself in all the churches. The specific difference or formal determining element that makes this religious community a Christian Church lies in its confession of faith in the role of God in its life and the activities that relate it to God in response to God's initiative in its life. Roughly speaking, using a framework of hylomorphism, congregational studies describes the material object, while theology or ecclesiology specifies the formal dimension of the church. What makes the church truly church consists in God's power within it as channeled to it through God's creative power revealed in Jesus Christ and experienced as God's Spirit. This does not mean that congregational studies lacks a formal theological component, for formal ecclesiology generally maintains that the whole church exists within the congregation.<sup>11</sup> Instead, the discipline of general or formal ecclesiology has a better purchase on the normative

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what is said here relative to the congregation need not conflict with juridical boundaries.

<sup>11</sup> Hans Küng writes eloquently of how the whole church is found in its many distinct manifestations: "There is, then, a multiplicity of local Churches (those of Ephesus, Philippi, Thessalonica, etc.) in which the one Church manifests itself: the Churches of individual towns and villages. And there is a multiplicity of regional Churches (the Church in Judea, Galilee and Samaria, in Galatia, Macedonia, Asia, etc.) in which the one Church is also present: the Churches of individual provinces, dioceses, nations and continents. And finally there is a multiplicity of different types of Churches (the Hellenistic, the Judaeo-Christian, etc.) which often coincide with regional Churches but sometimes also, as a result of population movements, are dispersed throughout different regions: the Churches of different rites or denominations" (Hans Küng, *The Church* [New York: Sheed & Ward, 1967] 274). Note too the "essence" of the church that Paul says binds all the churches together because they all share in it: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Eph 4:4–6). This essence is present in large communions and small particular congregations.



character of theology through its consultation with the many churches that include the congregations.

4. *Congregational studies determines the credibility of the formal theological account of the church.* This thesis states that congregational studies determines the credibility of a theological account of the church precisely by its concrete appeal to history, that is, by providing realism. Theology always tends toward the normative. Theology is not an exclusively empirical discipline, for it describes the way the church should be on the basis of the object of the community's faith in God as God is revealed in Jesus Christ. Theology's language frequently prescribes ideals and thus often seems at odds with what appears on the ground.<sup>12</sup> All are familiar with this language about the church. Congregational studies, which is the most specific and concrete historical approach to the church that is possible, is the antidote to *theological* reductionism. Through congregational studies one can critically measure the credibility and ultimately the authenticity of the theological language about the church.

### Illustration from the Marks of the Church

We now bring the theses argued in the previous section to bear upon an exemplary case. The case is drawn from an article by James Nieman that applies congregational studies as a way of lifting up a kind of lived theology that is implicitly forged by a congregation.<sup>13</sup> The focus on the marks of the church is suggested by the fact that this article clearly describes the nature and function of the marks of the church, and a comprehensive ecclesiology can scarcely omit commentary on this classical locus in the discipline. From the perspective of our part 1, the case readily illustrates the theses about the mutual influence of congregational studies and formal ecclesiology. This analysis of the marks will show, first, an example of how the marks are presented in congregational studies; second, how they are named and explained in theology; third and most importantly, how the empirical congregational perspective influences the theological claims.

<sup>12</sup> The marks of the church, which will be taken up in this article provide an area where the connection between the language of the church about itself and what people observe is not obvious. Take the example of the church's holiness. It is important to recognize the objective dimension of the holiness of church institutions such as Scripture, sacrament, and the responsibility of office. But the simple assertion that the church is holy despite the sinfulness of its members seems paradoxical. The embarrassment felt by Catholics in North America in the wake of the revelation of clergy sexual abuse and cover-up indicates that the language of a "sinless church" lacks credibility in contemporary society.

<sup>13</sup> James Nieman, "Attending Locally: Theologies in Congregations," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 6 (2002) 198–225.

1. By definition, congregational studies focuses on specific individual communities. It aims at understanding the particular community being studied and, by analogy, other communities like it. It is less a normative discipline, in the sense of applying external criteria, and more a search for the integrity of the inner logics of the congregation itself. Thus, from the perspective of congregational studies, Nieman presents the marks of the church as ideals or norms generated by the community out of their faith life that serve as criteria for self-evaluation. Traditionally, four such marks have been announced in the Nicene Creed as unity, catholicity, apostolicity, and holiness. These have also been multiplied by various theologians and churches to further specify ecclesial ideals. These qualities emerge from within the life of the community. They are not drawn from outside the community and do not measure other communities by comparison. All of them are “connected to the church’s core experience of Christ as the one in and through whom we participate in the *missio Dei*.”<sup>14</sup> The marks of the church are “a way of naming the functions endemic to every local assembly in its own self-professed desire to be church, a standard that can only be assessed from within.”<sup>15</sup> Nieman himself enumerates seven such marks of the church. These could be roughly correlated with the traditional four, but that is not the point for congregational studies. Rather he represents them as active qualities of a particular community that define it from within, specify it by characterizing the life of its members in Christ and with one another in community. The marks define this community: “marks by which the wholeness and integrity of a congregation may be widely recognized (and therefore held *in common*) yet at the same time enacted in the ordinary ways endemic to a particular assembly (and therefore *commonplace*).”<sup>16</sup>

2. In contrast to congregational studies, the purview of general ecclesiology ranges over the entire history of the church. Even ecclesiology pursued from below is a far more abstract discipline than congregational studies. A theological account has to attend to the marks of the church provided by the historical tradition. Because of the scope of ecclesiology from below, attention must transcend the internal norms set by any particular community and look for those shared by all communities. Theology does not and cannot abandon its role as a normative discipline: its normativity is precisely what distinguishes it from an empirical social science such as history, sociology, or cultural anthropology. Theology searches for the norms that arise from the church’s being related to God. It inevitably appeals to the New Testament. In effect, it looks for God’s norms for the church at any given time. Surely these have to be interpreted anew in each

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 223.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 224.

new historical context in order to remain the “same.” On the one hand, these norms are hardly external but arise from every congregation’s life in Christ. On the other hand, because of the real internal relationship of all congregations to one another, these norms can appear to come from outside any given congregation, especially insofar as these norms are related to God’s initiative that transcends all churches and is addressed to the churches from beyond themselves.

This transcendence deserves more comment. The theological tradition of the church speaks of four marks of the church: one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. In fact, the history of ecclesiology yields great variety in how these marks are interpreted. Of the many common features of the interpretations, though, one stands out: the source of these marks or qualities is God, or God’s grace, or the effectiveness of God’s power in the community, what Schleiermacher (unfortunately) called the “invisible church.” When the church truly exhibits these marks of authenticity, the community itself recognizes the power of God as the agent.

3. The fourth thesis in the second section above posited a dialectical interplay whereby congregational studies determines the credibility and the authenticity of theological claims. How does that work in the case of the marks of the church? In fact, the church does not appear to be one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, but precisely divided, resistant to communion, too fragmented for all the churches to be faithful to apostolic origins, and radically plagued by sin. If the marks of the church are not a theological sleight of hand, they must be brought down to earth and made to reflect the actual life of the congregations. Congregational studies thus serves as a kind of reality principle for formal ecclesiology, a test for whether the theological claims are credible.

One way to ensure this credibility would be to correlate the marks of the church in the sense discovered by congregational studies with those of formal theology. Nieman mentions seven marks and expresses them in terms of action: an integral church remembers its origins, confesses Christ, hopes or anticipates God’s future, gathers and bonds as a community in response to God, orders its community life, engages the world in service of the values of the reign of God, and enters into some form of communion with other churches. It would not be difficult to find a rough parity between the traditional marks of the church and these actuated community ideals.

Another way to ensure credible formulations of the marks would be to explain the traditional marks of the church themselves in the realistic ways that congregational studies allows. In other words, allow the possibilities of actual communities to function as the measure for a realistic interpretation of the marks of the church. This exercise would show that unity can only be realistically predicated of a church that allows pluralism, that is, a unity

that allows differences. Unity cannot mean uniformity. Catholicity will have to mean a universal wholeness and integrity of the great church in a communion among churches that acknowledge and accept real but valid differences among themselves. Churches cannot themselves be truly catholic without being open to other churches that are really different. Apostolicity will also have to recognize the pluralistic character of the church in the New Testament and the variety of different agencies that emerged in the earliest church for ensuring fidelity to tradition.<sup>17</sup> Finally, holiness will have to be understood as being based on God's grace that is at work within a congregation but in tension with the resistance to it that is called sin.

We conclude this first probe with a formula that expresses the relationship between general or formal ecclesiology (in this case, ecclesiology from below) and congregational studies. The two distinctive disciplines imply each other and interact dialectically, dynamically, and constructively. In an ecclesiology from below, congregational studies first directly examines from a primarily but not exclusively empirical perspective the object of ecclesiology, defining it concretely in its most elementary unit, the gathered community. Next, theology identifies the church as church through reflection on the symbols that convey God's relation to this community and the community's relation to God. Theology defines the church as a specifically religious and Christian organization. Finally, congregational studies chastens the normative claims of theology with real possibility, making them credible. In the end, this formula envisages a friendly and fruitful relationship between these two disciplines.

## PART 2 FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CONGREGATIONAL STUDIES

Part 1 of this article has upheld the ecclesiological side of our joint discussion. Part 2 will address the same relationship from the perspective of congregational studies. It too is divided into three subsections. The first will define the perspective assumed by congregational studies as it is represented here. The second will lay out four theses that draw out that perspective in more detail. The final section will reflect on the new challenges and

<sup>17</sup> The historical vehicles for ensuring fidelity to origins and unity among the churches in the earliest church were many: recourse to the Jewish Scriptures, the formation of a New Testament canon, agreement on central festival dates and liturgical formulas, solidification of the structure of leadership in the monarchical episcopate (where bishops were analogous to a pastor in the later church), succession in ministry to mirror continuity of community Christian life, manuals of discipline, interchurch meetings, visitations, and leaders of neighboring churches laying hands on new bishops of other churches, among other interchanges.

possibilities opened up by a partnership between formal ecclesiology and congregational studies.

### A Perspective on Congregational Studies

The view of congregational studies adopted here should not be confused with a kind of ethnography without remainder. Instead, our perspective is rooted in the field of practical theology, including its special focus on studying congregations and the local theologies expressed therein. Practical theology implies that theology, as the church's distinctive discourse, provides the appropriate way to open up the special ecclesial character of particular Christian assemblies. In other words, when we begin to sense the theological work of congregations, then we are seeing the church acting as church rather than as some other similarly sized and structured nonprofit organizations. Our interest in studying congregations, therefore, lies in the hope that, when they recognize through this theological work their own distinctive character as church, they can better assess their own identity, mission, and health.

This means that congregational studies, as understood here, presumes an intersection between social research methods and the field of theology, a point that will be developed and refined in what follows. On the one hand, this approach relies on ethnographic tools, but only insofar as they are useful for disclosing local theologies. There are certainly many other valid and useful ways to use ethnography to study congregations (as organizations, subcultures, and so forth), but the point here is to focus social research on what is distinctive about these groups as church. On the other hand, the method advocated here relies on the field of theology, but with greater weight on *primary theology* found in congregational action (what Aidan Kavanagh once called "the church caught in the act of being most overtly itself"<sup>18</sup>) than on the secondary reflections and systems typical in the academy.<sup>19</sup> This statement intends neither to restrict theology to church life nor to denigrate the value of academic theological insight, but instead to ensure an attitude attuned to the ecclesial purposes of theology enacted by its basic users—a commitment that does challenge some scholars to revise their perceptions of what counts as theology. In sum, congregational studies should treat theology as its proper aim and focus, for the sake of enabling congregations to claim an ample, distinctive role as church in the world. Part 1 of this article argued from formal ecclesiology

<sup>18</sup> Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology: The Hale Memorial Lectures of Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, 1981* (New York: Pueblo, 1984) 75.

<sup>19</sup> Edward Farley, "Interpreting Situations: An Inquiry into the Nature of Practical Theology," in *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology*, ed. Lewis S. Mudge and James N. Poling (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987) 9.

to the need of concrete empirical studies. The goal of part 2 is now to propose, from the perspective of congregational studies, how the field of theology might be a helpful partner in this process. We will pursue this goal in four interrelated theses.

Before turning to them, however, it is important to note how we refer to the respective fields of congregational studies (using ethnographic and other tools) and theology (especially that part concerned with ecclesiology). As a matter of convenience, we have spoken of each in a rather unitary fashion as separate, internally cohesive areas of study. This is only a convenience, however, for things are not quite so neat. As the few published histories of congregational studies<sup>20</sup> and the vast range of current research about congregations make quite clear, “congregational studies” is an umbrella term, so that what more-or-less coheres as the field referenced by that term cannot be considered just one thing. This is partly due to the diversity of methods employed, with some approaches relying on qualitative and ethnographic tools, others on quantitative forms and comparisons, and still others on mixed strategies. In addition, the plurality of methods in congregational studies is due to varied aims of research, such as whether the study relates congregations to comparable social and cultural phenomena, or whether it is engaged with the church and its theological commitments.<sup>21</sup>

By the same token, of course, the field of theology is also no unified reality. Historical, systematic, or philosophical theologians, for example, are naturally more interested in textual sources or in the interrelation of ideas. Given this important role in the larger ecology of theological studies, these theologians may rightly have little direct interest in the concrete situations of and activities in living congregations. Even when we consider

<sup>20</sup> See James F. Hopewell, *Congregation: Stories and Structures*, ed. Barbara G. Wheeler (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987) 19–39; and Allison Stokes and David A. Roozen, “The Unfolding Study of Congregational Studies,” in *Carriers of Faith: Lessons from Congregational Studies*, ed. Carl S. Dudley, Jackson W. Carroll, and James P. Wind (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991) 183–92.

<sup>21</sup> The point is not to criticize or invalidate other approaches but to be clear that there are distinctive commitments in various forms of congregational studies. For example, some who study congregations focus on the cultural dimensions a local church manifested in its symbolic work or group processes. Their approach leans on tools drawn from ethnography, the embedded fieldwork central to cultural anthropology that is used for observing and describing human activity. (See, for example, Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Bible Believers: Fundamentalists in the Modern World* [New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University, 1987]). By contrast, others are more interested in exploring demographic contours across many congregations. Their approach uses quite different methods, such as survey instruments and statistical analysis that are characteristic of quantitative sociology. (See, for example, Mark Chaves, *Congregations in America* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 2004]).

only the theological subfield of ecclesiology, various branches focus their attention on broader questions such as ecumenism, matters of organization and polity, or links to other doctrines. An ecclesiology from below, sympathetic as it is to partnership with congregational studies, is but one part of this complicated disciplinary picture.<sup>22</sup>

#### **Four Theses on the Relation of Congregational Studies and General Ecclesiology**

With these cautions in mind, we turn now to four theses that express, from the perspective of congregational studies elaborated above, how that field relates to general ecclesiology. As with those offered in part 1 of this article, the theses below begin with a foundational claim about the relationship between the empirical/historical and the theological. The three remaining theses unfold the implications of the first: on the question of how the study of congregations should therefore be focused, on the dual moves such study should incorporate, and on the reflectively critical aims that study should seek.

1. *The study of congregations needs more than ethnographic tools.* Since theology is not simply a game of ideas in the rarified atmosphere of the academy, we find it tangibly unfolding in other arenas as well, including congregational life. While it is more obvious in ritual actions and more subtle and fragmented in meetings, work projects, conversations, or budgets, theological work potentially happens throughout a congregation. We say “potentially” because, of course, sometimes a budget is just a budget. What makes ethnographic tools so valuable in this regard is that they provide a discipline for closely and deeply attending to the empirical forms theology can take. In field research, the qualitative methods of participant observation, semistructured interviews, artifact and place study, and document analysis are used to attend to what is happening theologically. Such tools not only help us notice theological work but also connect this work to other human and material matters in the congregation, so that theology is not left insulated from social and cultural realities but fully implicated in them. Moreover, as we noted in part 1, empirical research provides a credibility test for theological reflection about the church, helping even ecclesiology done from below to be more grounded and realistic.

<sup>22</sup> Again, the point is not a complaint about other ways of doing theology. In fact, what follows will show that we need them, even if they have little initial interest in congregations. This means, however, that we must first discover those persons in ecclesiology and theology who are willing to be partners and enter into a basic conversation about congregations as such, and then call upon these partners to interpret what we are doing within their larger disciplines.

Ethnographic tools cannot do this alone, however; the field of theology is needed in two closely related ways. First, out of the many things to notice in a congregation, how do we know what counts as theological activity? To use an earlier example, ethnography is poorly equipped to distinguish when a budget makes a theological claim or when it is simply a budget. Congregational studies, therefore, looks to the field of theology to attend not only to its customary focus on doctrines and texts but also to the less familiar but equally complicated matter of the ordinary, concrete ways people do theology through their actions, resources, gatherings, and so forth. Second, once we are clearer about what counts as theology, do ethnographic methods still sometimes get in the way? If research tools assume that religious activity is driven only by secular motivations, for example, it is doubtful one can take theological realities very seriously.<sup>23</sup> While it is typically the case that ethnography is far less biased than this, perhaps other tools would be even more attuned to the “theological frequency” of congregational life. In a different project, Nieman has begun to explore whether methods originating in narratology, cognitive task analysis, social semiotics, esthetic appreciation, and normative case studies might be more sensitive to theology as it happens in local assemblies.<sup>24</sup> Here again, however, these tools often arise from nontheological fields. Therefore, the field of theology can help us discern whether these or other new tools inadvertently import unhelpful biases that impede our ability to see theology at work locally.

2. *The study of congregations should focus on practices.* This thesis may sound at odds with the second thesis of part 1, that the congregation ought to be specified as our object of study. There we argued that the empirical, historical community is the form of church that people experience most directly, which is what congregational studies analyzes and what ecclesiology should treat as its primary referent (rather than larger forms of association among these basic communities). This impulse can be extended further, however. Those who study congregations know how difficult it can be to specify where the boundaries of such groups are actually located. Religious behavior, identity formation, and so forth occur in diverse parts

<sup>23</sup> The pervasive tendency of some forms of social research to reduce all human behavior to “rational choice” explanations (i.e., that people are little more than cost-benefit calculators) is but one instance of how methodological commitments may obstruct the ability to see other motivations (such as religious or theological ones) active within groups. For an extended critique of rational choice explanations, see Christian Smith, *Moral, Believing Animals: Human Personhood and Culture* (New York: Oxford University, 2003).

<sup>24</sup> This research is supported by The Lilly Endowment, Inc., through a grant entitled “Discerning Theologies: New Methods for Studying Congregations,” grant #2006-0027-00.



of the lives of congregants, even if they receive quite concentrated attention within the congregation. Our focus should therefore be on the activity of those who gather through congregations, theological work that may well extend beyond the congregation itself, rather than assuming that the arbitrary and often vague social boundaries of such a group will suffice to specify what we are studying. Toward this end, although we begin by looking at the empirical reality of the congregation as a group, our real focus should be on the practices enacted therein.

Confines of space prevent our elaborating the rich conversation emerging in many fields about what constitutes a practice. Elsewhere, Nieman has argued that any practice has five basic features: it involves tangible actions, is socially embedded, is meaningful for participants, offers strategies for right use, and seeks an intended purpose.<sup>25</sup> In relation to studying congregations, such a view of practices would give further focus to what we examine. Empirical research would look at these concrete, shared, meaningful activities, how they are done and for what reasons. Rather than saying that we study the congregation in general, we would look at these particulars, tease them apart, understand them more deeply, and connect similar practices in terms of how they work within and beyond the congregation's life.<sup>26</sup> This is fine as far as it goes, but just because a practice is important in a group does not necessarily mean it is theologically telling. Therefore, the real value of any practice is understood in terms of a field of interpretation by which it makes sense. (For example, the practice of pitching makes quite different sense if the field of interpretation is baseball, cricket, or horseshoes.) This is where theology can again enter in, to help frame the connections (if any) between a pattern of practices in a congregation and the larger interpretive field of theology. Looking at practices therefore affords a way not only to focus empirical research, but especially to link what we discover in congregations to the broader field of interpretation that is the ambit of formal theological reflection.

3. *The study of congregations is both descriptive and prescriptive.* In the brief history of congregational studies, a thesis like this amounts to step-

<sup>25</sup> James Nieman, "The Idea of Practice and Why It Matters in the Teaching of Preaching," *Teaching Theology and Religion* 11 (2008) 123–33.

<sup>26</sup> Such an approach can therefore be located within the stream that Nicholas Healy characterizes "by a concern to 'bring to discourse' or make explicit the often overlooked or taken-for-granted practices of the churches and congregations so that they may be brought into closer conformity with the word of God. Here attention is directed to the practices themselves, which are critically and constructively analyzed in light of contemporary challenges (theological and others) and, as it may be, abandoned, changed, reconstructed or maintained unaltered." Nicholas M. Healy, "Practices and the New Ecclesiology: Misplaced Concreteness?" *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 5 (2003) 290–91.

ping into a minefield. Some ardently defend that such research should be purely descriptive and hold no further stake in the matter. Again, we may rightly doubt whether this really happens so neatly. Frequently, simply conducting field research, let alone sharing that information with congregants, initiates a process of local reflection and assessment that soon becomes a catalyst for change. Descriptive work already carries the seeds for prescriptive work. Prescriptive tendencies still happen no matter whether we try to bracket them out or how subtly they emerge. Since the point in studying congregations, as advocated here, is to assist in their identity, mission, and health, this does not appear as a problem. Those who study congregations should simply acknowledge both of these dimensions, which have elsewhere been called the indicative and subjunctive sides of practical theology: the “what is” and “what might be” of the congregation.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, this acknowledgment can happen without necessarily leading to the heavy-handed imposition of advice, programs, or other consultant agendas, which is usually what we fear when treading onto prescriptive terrain.

Of course, it is one thing to say that we should also attend to the prescriptive side of studying congregations, quite another to say how this would work. How do we go a step further to pose challenges, raise alternatives, and contribute to a larger critical and strategic task without harming those we study? Theology could play a key role in this further step by revisiting how the marks of the church help with assessing local theological practices. We need not return to the Reformation-era debates that used these marks in an exclusionary, competitive, and essentialist rhetoric to assert who was truly church and who was not. A more irenic approach might be mediated through the so-called Nicene marks of unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity as noted in part 1.<sup>28</sup> Whether this list or another, such marks express the integrity of the *missio Dei* in which any form of the church participates. Too often, congregations are judged by externally imposed standards (size, diversity, programs), which leaves most feeling inadequate on some scale or another. By assessing local practices in terms of historic marks, however, the standards become internal to the character of every church as body of Christ.<sup>29</sup> Theologians could therefore help

<sup>27</sup> Kathleen A. Cahalan and James R. Nieman, “Mapping the Field of Practical Theology,” in *For Life Abundant: Practical Theology, Theological Education, and Christian Ministry*, ed. Dorothy C. Bass and Craig Dykstra (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008) 62–85.

<sup>28</sup> As to whether these four should actually be called “marks of the church,” see Gordon W. Lathrop and Timothy J. Wengert, *Christian Assembly: Marks of the Church in a Pluralistic Age* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004) 17–18.

<sup>29</sup> In this respect, the so-called Nicene marks are especially revealing. They occur in the context of a creed by which the believer professes a relationship with the

congregations assess their particular ways of embodying this character, rather than leave them subject to depleting comparisons only with each other. This prescriptive dimension then becomes the natural counterpoint to the descriptive, a clear picture of local practices answered by an honest challenge about how these might be more faithfully enacted for the sake of a witness common to all assemblies.

4. *The study of congregations should reclaim theological reflection.* One complaint about congregational studies in some quarters is that it contributes to the objectification of local assemblies. Congregations become passive vessels studied by outside experts, which reinforces their already diminished sense of agency in a complex and demanding social ecology. Whether or not this objectification actually occurs, the complaint raises the legitimate concern that it may not be enough that such research amasses insights about congregations, but that it also should help them become more active agents in their public role as church. One place this turn toward active agency is particularly poignant relates to theology. We earlier noted that congregations embody primary theological work. Even so, how often are those primary forms of theology subjected to a probing, informed review at the local level? Lacking this critical dimension, congregations become atrophied at theological reflection and risk remaining entrenched in what are literally parochial behaviors. There seems to be an ethical responsibility for those who study congregations to take up an educational aim in that work, drawing congregations into the secondary analysis of their primary theological practices for the sake of their long-term health and thriving.

One way this educational aim could happen is simply for theologians to generate the kind of historical and comparative ecclesiology from below that has been introduced by Haight.<sup>30</sup> Presented with accessible resources about the many concrete ways congregations have operated faithfully in other times and places, contemporary assemblies can thereby encounter new practices, move beyond how things have always been done, and draw their own prescriptive conclusions. Beyond this, we also need to reconnect particular assemblies with the larger stream of faithful practices to which all congregations are beholden in their catholicity (i.e., wholeness or integrity). Although the primary unit of the church that people experience is the

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trine God. That is, marks are not abstract organizational criteria or group standards, but are rooted in a living relationship with the God known chiefly through Christ Jesus and tangibly manifested by the Spirit's power through the concrete forms of the church. When congregations assess themselves, each in their own ways, in light of such marks, they are then asking how they make a particular witness to God's ways for us, and to human thriving in light of such divine initiative.

<sup>30</sup> Roger Haight, *Christian Community in History*, 3 vols. (New York: Continuum, 2004–2008).

congregation, the latest published round of the U.S. Lutheran–Roman Catholic dialogue reminds us that there is another way to speak of the local church: that of the regional network overseen by those called to that task (like a diocese or synod led by a bishop, but not strictly that historical arrangement).<sup>31</sup> The connection between mutually accountable assemblies is also an ancient, venerable way to think of the local church, with clear advantages in our highly eclectic and privatized society. How might theologians enrich the study of congregations by helping assemblies claim again the responsibility they have to one another in a particular locale? All this is to reassert an agenda of theological education, reconnecting specific congregations with the larger wisdom of the entire church, and for reasons far beyond mere compliance or cooperation.

### **New Challenges and Possibilities for Ecclesiology**

Although one might add or subtract from the four theses above, we now move on to complicate them further. In particular, we want to consider now the opportunities these proposals offer respectively to the field of theology and to the ethnographic study of congregations, and in so doing point to several unresolved challenges that remain on the table.

1. For the field of theology, we have noted that a closer connection with congregational studies would grant the opportunity for a reality check, particularly in the area of ecclesiology. If we are interested in theology that stands in service to the church, then it is essential that it engage accurately and amply with the local realities, sorrows, and hopes of actual assemblies of the faithful. Without this check, theological study can risk becoming insulated from the world in which it tries to speak, and thus its gifts of wisdom and reflection become muted or subverted. Not only is the field of theology hurt by this, but congregations also desperately need the connections, perspectives, and mediation theology can bring.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Randall Lee and Jeffrey Gros, eds., *The Church as Koinonia of Salvation: Its Structures and Ministries*, Common Statement of the Tenth Round of the U.S. Lutheran–Roman Catholic Dialogue, pref. Charles Maahs and Richard Sklba (Washington: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2004) nos. 41–46.

<sup>32</sup> As Schillebeeckx once remarked, “the subject of the interpretation of faith is not really the theologian but the Christian communities of faith themselves—the church in its broad spectrum and its cultural distribution over many centres. Here theology is merely a help to the community of faith. Academic theology then tries to integrate the new experiences, the new praxis and the reflections of local communities into the totality of the ‘church’s recollection’ and into the great reserves of the experiences of faith of the whole church down the ages. Theology thus at the same time prevents these new experiences from remaining sporadic or ultimately causing disintegration. Thus academic theology ‘mediates’ to the base the rich experiential traditions in the churches down the ages, and prevents the base from being cognitively isolated. Theology itself is enriched by the new experiences and

This opportunity carries with it significant challenges at two different levels. First, at a basic level of operation, it assumes we really know what counts as a “credibility test” for theology. That is, simply because study of a congregation using ethnographic tools might reveal what actually is the case, in what respect would we say that information should or should not reshape what we think theologically? This question of what counts as evidence for validity or credibility remains a contested issue in the use of qualitative ethnographic tools alone,<sup>33</sup> and only becomes more complex when we try to turn the criteria that govern one field of inquiry to serve as tests in quite another field. We need to give greater thought to how the empirical features of congregations can actually serve as a reality check for theologians attentive to local assemblies.

Second, at a deeper level of engagement, the effort to use descriptive material as part of an integrated and responsible theological reflection raises the perennial issue of the place for human experience or the empirical situation in the field of theology. The proposition of part 1, that congregational studies describes the material object of the church while theology or ecclesiology specifies its formal dimension, leaves open the thorny issue of how the concrete and the spiritual dimensions of the church relate. Although it cannot be elaborated here, Schillebeeckx’s discussion of the relation between experience and revelation offers a useful starting point for a conversation on this issue.<sup>34</sup> There are doubtless other ways to begin as well. In the end, we need to face this deeper issue if we wish to relate ethnography and ecclesiology over the long run, especially to avoid the presumption that either field can determine in isolation from the other whether or how empirical realities make a difference.

2. Turning to the ethnographic study of congregations, the broad claim in this part of the discussion has been that a closer relationship with theology brings the opportunity for attending more closely to the distinctive character of the church. The underlying concern here is to preclude any tendency toward a sociological or historicist reduction of the church only to its human scale. More than this, however, the aim is to appreciate more completely what faithful people claim to be doing when they gather as church. If we are not simply imposing a “bad faith” assumption on this claim from the outset, then congregational studies should look at the entire range of what local assemblies practice and hope, which includes the theological.

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reflections from theology which grows in and from the life of the communities of faith” (Schillebeeckx, *Church* 35).

<sup>33</sup> See John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM, 2006) 121–24.

<sup>34</sup> See Schillebeeckx, *Church* 15–28.

This opportunity of naming the identity of the church is linked to two further implications that may be considered unresolved challenges. The first involves the thesis that congregational studies, although clearly a descriptive enterprise, is also unavoidably normative and should therefore accept that role and engage it intentionally. In truth, we did not go very far to say how this should happen or what its limits might be. A few years ago, Nieman worked to assemble the history of the Congregational Studies Project Team, a small group that has, for nearly 30 years, produced and refined some of the most important teaching resources in the field. In the course of reviewing their archives and interviewing every living person on that team, it quickly became apparent how early this issue of normativity began to dog their work and was built into the fabric of the field. How do we steer a course between the Scylla of uninvested description and the Charybdis of disempowering consultancy? This is a question that will not disappear, and if we want congregational studies to be engaged with both the “is” and the “might be” of the church, it requires our sustained attention now.

A second implication that appears challenging concerns the scope of what we study when we look at congregations. Here again, theology is shifting our attention in both narrower and broader directions. In the narrower direction, the study of congregations needs to develop a robust dialogue with practical theology in order to understand more closely how to analyze a practice as theological work. This will be crucial if we expect to be more precise in our work, and avoid general overviews of congregations that can bury us in data and numb the power of insight. In the broader direction, the study of congregations needs to explore how the historical and ecumenical insight about the local church as a network might expand the field’s view of congregations. To be sure, several excellent sociological studies have adopted this scale of attention,<sup>35</sup> but the challenge is to make this part of the ordinary approach of congregational studies, resulting not only from reasons of sound social but also of good theological research.

We conclude this second probe by stressing that, aside from the opportunities and challenges in both fields, the main reason congregational studies needs theology, and vice versa, concerns the benefit for actual

<sup>35</sup> See Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Pillars of Faith: American Congregations and Their Partners* (Berkeley: University of California, 2005); Penny Edgell Becker, *Congregations in Conflict: Cultural Models of Local Religious Life* (New York: Cambridge University, 1999); Nancy L. Eiesland, *A Particular Place: Urban Restructuring and Religious Ecology in a Southern Exurb* (Piscataway, N.J.: Rutgers University, 2000); and Omar M. McRoberts, *Streets of Glory: Church and Community in a Black Urban Neighborhood* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2003).

congregations. The great strength of ethnographic methods is that they offer the tools for disciplined self-awareness, a critical consciousness for congregations in a descriptive vein. Enhancing this descriptive power, the great strength of theological studies is that it offers a way to reconnect with a wider tradition and discover genuine alternatives for action, a critical consciousness for congregations in a prescriptive vein. Both fields help congregations recognize their roots in a wider wisdom and their accountability to other partners, and thus leave congregations more attuned to being the church than when left to themselves. If this is the end we keep before us in our ethnographic and ecclesiological interest in congregations, not only will our respective fields be enriched, but the faithful communities they study as well.

### CONCLUSION

In the end, this article is located in a long-standing scholarly conversation about how to understand the church both faithfully and realistically. Our remarks offer two contemporary, discipline-based responses to a cluster of questions raised by James Gustafson nearly half a century ago:

How can the same phenomenon, the Church, be understood from two radically diverse perspectives? Does the use of doctrinal language require inherently the language of social thought? Does a social interpretation of the Church necessarily exclude the more distinctively theological and doctrinal interpretation? If the two are not mutually exclusive, how can the significance of the social processes and elements be theologically understood?<sup>36</sup>

As they are each portrayed in this essay, ecclesiology and congregational studies offer complementary ways for holding together social and theological understandings of the church in its local reality. Their mutual relevance for one another is not just a happy coincidence of recent trends but suggests a more holistic interest in understanding the church. We no longer ought to be satisfied with approaches that reduce ecclesial existence to its functions and processes on the one hand or its ideas and ideals on the other. The alternative offered by the two fields discussed above holds the social and theological aspects of church in healthy tension. This alternative promises not only scholarship that renders a more accurate sense of what the church truly is today, but also a more holistic vision for what it can yet become as a sign of Christ's life for the world.

<sup>36</sup> Gustafson, *Treasure in Earthen Vessels* 100.