Apostolicity – The question of Continuity and Authority

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Abstract

This article was presented as a research paper for the Ecumenical Theology Course at the Ecumenical Institute Bossey in Switzerland. Apostolicity and the relation to the apostles and the early Christians is a big discussed topic in several ecumenical dialogues. First the article analysis the method and context of five different ecumenical dialogue documents. It goes from multilateral Faith and Order documents like "Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry" and "The Church Towards a Common Vision" over the "Porvoo Common Statement" to two Lutheran/Roman-Catholic documents. Then it identifies some characteristic dimensions of apostolicity and brings the results from the dialogues together. A reading of apostolicity as the narrative of continuity and authority to god and Jesus Christ occurs through the chapters. Especially in the question of ministry apostolicity plays an important and differentiated role. The article focuses in the end on the episcopal ministry and develops the differentiation of horizontal and vertical apostolic continuity. Apostolicity is described as a gift of god and becomes obvious through God’s action in the ordination act. Finally, the article summarises all results, ideas, and new approaches.

Keywords: Ecumenical theology; apostolicity; continuity; authority; baptism; eucharist; ministry.

Introduction

In the Nicene creeds, Christians affirm their belief in the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. Concerning the interpretation of these four marks of the Church, the first three words are easiest to understand. There is only one Church because there is only one God we believe in.¹ Second, the origin of the holiness of the Church is in the All-Holy God and witnessed through holy people of all ages.² The third word ‘catholic’ says something about the whole Church and the universality of the Church. Because of differences and divisions, the Church is not fully the whole Church.³ The last word is in my view the most difficult one. In some churches like the Armenian Apostolic Church ‘being apostolic’ is part of their name and identity. In other traditions, self-identifying as apostolic is not emphasized. In ecumenical dialogues, the meaning of apostolic succession and their different interpretations has been discussed, including the historical continuity of the laying on hands since the age of the apostles. Some churches recognize being apostolic as an essential element of their ecclesiology, while for others it has different significance for their ecclesiology. The term apostolic

¹ World Council of Churches, The Church Towards a Common Vision, Faith and Order Paper No. 214 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), §22.
² TCTCV, §22.
³ TCTCV, §22.
or apostolicity is not very easy to explain in a few words for lay and theological people. What does it mean to be apostolic or to participate in apostolicity? In my paper, I will identify some elements or characteristics of apostolicity based on five different ecumenical dialogues in order to come to a closer and better understanding of apostolicity. I will examine ecumenical convergence and actual agreements with regard to apostolicity and point out the remaining points of disagreement. The main questions for my research are: In which thematic areas does apostolicity appear? What role does apostolicity play within the dialogues? And, connected to this, the question “How is the relationship between continuity and authority with their different dimensions shaped?” arises.

In the first chapter, I analyze the context and methods of the documents in order to show their differences in motivation and possible similarities. I then identify elements or characteristic features of apostolicity. This chapter examines on the one hand “positive” points, in which the understanding of apostolicity in the different traditions is very similar or common, and on the other hand points of disagreements, in which the understanding differs from each other and discusses the connection to the topic of ministry. In my conclusion, I summarize the results of my paper and share some ideas about apostolicity.

Apostolicity in Ecumenical Dialogues

For this research paper, I chose five more or less different ecumenical dialogues and documents respectively. For me, it was important, that the documents are not only between the two same traditions or otherwise from the same contexts or not actual, because apostolicity is a topic for all Christian traditions and refers to the creeds we all say/pray together in our churches. Moreover, ecumenical means for me trying to analyze one topic in light of the different interpretations of the traditions and churches. The five documents, I discuss are “Communion in Growth”, “Declaration on the Way”, the “Porvoo Common Statement”, “Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry” and “The Church Towards a Common Vision”. They will provide a good and selected overview of the current discussion for the work on this paper regarding apostolicity. I am aware, however, that these dialogues and their traditions are only exemplary contributions of the current ecumenical dialogues on this topic.

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4 I use both words because there are different theological interpretations of the use. Mainly there are two positions: one position: we say the creed. The other position: we pray the creed.
5 This approach makes my decision more difficult because for this paper is a limitation of words. In the prolegomena for this paper, on the one hand, it was important for me to use documents, which we read in the ecumenical theology class. On the other hand, the dialogues must be published in English and should reflect the current state of ecumenical research on this topic. Another consideration for the selection is the theological dialogue with the Roman-Catholic church in my context, in which the question of apostolicity and ministry is discussed very often.
6 Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland/Catholic Church in Finland, Communion in Growth, Declaration on the Church, Eucharist and Ministry (Helsinki: Grano, 2017).
7 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America/United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Declaration on the Way (Washington DC: Augsburg Fortress, 2015).
8 Council for Christian Unity of the General Synod of the Church of England, The Porvoo Common Statement, (London: 1993).
9 WCC, Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, Faith and Order Paper No. 111 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1982).
10 TCTCV, §22.
Context and Methods of the Documents

This subsection analyses the nature, method, and context of each document.

One of the most important multilateral ecumenical documents is the 1982 published Faith and Order (F+O) Paper “Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry” (BEM), which has had a big influence on theological dialogues in the ecumenical movement and due to its widespread reception, is ascribed a special sort of authority.11 The method and type of this document is ‘convergence’, which means that the authors show both achieved agreements and aspects of growth towards agreements as well as the issues and differences, which still exist. The words and phrases are carefully crafted in order to do justice to the different traditions.12 The approach is not structured by ecclesiology, but it deals with ecclesiological topics. The perspective is multilateral and international/global.

The second multilateral and international paper is the Faith and Order text “The Church Towards a Common Vision” (TCTCV) from 2013. The approach in this text differs from BEM and shows a clear and structured ecclesiological perspective, which unfolds an ecumenical ecclesiology as a basis for the ontology of church, faith, sacraments, ministry, ethical and moral challenges.13 This document harvests the results of several different dialogues and responses to BEM. Its two objectives are renewal and theological agreement on the Church.14 The language is more self-confident and has a more progressive character than in BEM – not aggressive or impulsive, but still respectful of the different traditions. Both F+O-documents have a good theological basis describing commonalities, issues, and diversities raising fruitful questions and ideas for growing together. The binding characteristics for churches/traditions are a very low level. This means that both documents are not ratified by the member churches and have no influence on the churches as institutions and their structures. These texts symbolize a laboratory of ecumenical convergence and disagreements. Churches can choose to respond or even not. No church has been pressured into making doctrinal or practical changes, but F+O hopes for development in its ecumenical dialogues because of the convergences displayed in both documents.

The “Porvoo Common Statement” (PCS) develops a theological rationale that affirms full consensus on the topics of apostolic and historic succession in the light of “a high degree of unity in faith and doctrine.”16 The joint declaration is concluded between Anglicans and Lutheran churches. It is a regional international level.17 Similar to the other dialogues already mentioned, the PCS was not developed without preparatory work but represents many years of preparation and development in agreements in Anglican-Lutheran dialogue, as well as awareness of other international and

11 The different documents of the Ecumenical Theology and many other documents refer and relate itself many times to BEM. That is the reason, why BEM has a special sort of authority in ecumenical dialogues.
12 BEM, vii.
13 One example: „Some churches stress that […] Others place the main emphasis…” WCC, BEM, §32.
14 A view on the table of content shows and explains the theological development of the four chapters from “God’s Mission and the unity of the Church” to the last chapter “The Church: In and for the world”; TCTCV, iii-iv.
15 TCTCV, viii.
16 PCS, §33. For more information about the agreements compare Chapter 3 of PCS, especially the 12 sections in §32.
17 The participating churches in PCS are the Church of Denmark, the Church of England, the Estonian Evangelical-Lutheran Church, the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland, the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Iceland, the Church of Ireland, the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Latvia, the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Lithuania, the Church of Norway, the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Church of Sweden and the Church in Wales.
The language has a clear, precise form and a strong binding character at the highest level, which influences the future life of the participating churches. This document now means that all signatory churches share the Eucharist, invite one another to the ordination of bishops, and acknowledge each others’ ordained ministries. In its argumentation, apostolicity has an essential role.

Another bilateral statement is the “Declaration on the Way” (DW) from the Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue in the USA, published two years after TCTCV in 2015. Obviously, it is a national and bilateral document. The working method is a “differentiated consensus”, even if it is not explicitly mentioned. The authors consider the document itself as a “consensus on the way”. Remarkably DW’s chapters are arranged beginning from their own national agreements over to the referring to other national, regional and international agreements in the Lutheran-Catholic Dialogues to the remaining differences. In all three chapters are subsections about Church, Ministry and the Eucharist. Starting from the ecclesiological origin of the church, in which the topic of apostolicity first arises, DW opens up ministry and following to this the topic of Eucharist. One of the main lines of argument in the document is apostolicity, which contributes something for developing the topics or shows the relationship between being apostolic and the relationship of each chapter to another. The commission emphasizes very strongly the influence in the world of such ecumenical dialogues and also points of continuity with others of their own dialogues. On a high-level binding in character, the language provides solutions, which are “instances of the imperfect but real and growing unity of Catholics and Lutherans”, and describes the still remaining differences, which are dividing.

The most recent document is from the Finish Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue: “Communion in Growth” (CG). For the work on CG the Finish theologians decided to use the methodology of “differentiated consensus” as in the “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification” (JDDJ). Also significant for the document is its strong reference to other dialogues, but mainly to BEM, PCS and JDDJ. CG’s perspective is ecclesiological and starts with a chapter about the church. The next part develops an understanding of Eucharistic communion and connects the Eucharist and Church with one another. The third chapter follows with the topic of communion and sacramental ministry. The document’s approach differs from DW, because it shows for each chapter a historical outline, a common understanding of the topic, and only for parts two and three ideas for overcoming the dividing issues. Chapter four narrates the results of the “differentiated consensus”. Surprisingly this dialogue shows another approach than Lutheran-Catholic-Dialogue in the USA, because the sacrament of the Eucharist is derived from the understanding of the church. This distinction is evident throughout the whole document, which I notice also in the following chapter. Both documents CG and DW not only have an ecumenical-theological dimension, but

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18 PCS, Foreword.
19 All participating churches ratified this document.
20 PCS, §58. This paragraph and §59-61 tell more about a mutual acknowledge and their ecumenical vision.
21 The official name of the partners is: Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
22 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America/United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: DW, preface p. xvii.
23 Very close, but not unique to the highest level of PCS.
24 DW, p. 121.
25 Published in 2017.
also a practical-liturgical dimension, in which they transform the theological agreements in their practical meaning. For example, CG has a large chapter about common Eucharistic and ordination prayers. Furthermore, these two documents show their progressive character in a 'new' common perspective on a common way and in formulations such as: “Receiving these agreements [...] recognizes that there are no longer church-dividing differences with respect to these statements and emphasizes their cumulative importance.”

To conclude this chapter, it is evident that all five of these documents deal with different more or less obvious perspectives on the topic of apostolicity, connecting's the wider topics of church, ministry and the Eucharist with one another and showings a factor of interrelation as a common ground. TCTCV, DW and CG especially show that ecclesiology and their common understanding including being apostolic is one of the main topics in the current ecumenical dialogues. In addition, the different methodologies show common aspects, different emphasises and three different levels of a binding character within such documents.

Characteristics of Apostolicity

After showing the context and methodologies of these texts, it is important now to analyse their ideas and arguments to show their commonalties and their differences as regards the question of apostolicity.

One result of my closer inspection of the documents is the observation that apostolicity is indispensably connected and related to ecclesiology. Moreover, being apostolic means that the Church finds herself grounding in her ongoing continuity and authority, which Jesus gave to the apostles and sent them to live out both in preaching, teaching and practices. The foundation of the Church lies in Christ, who instituted the Church. Church without God is not possible, because she is a gift of God and no human work or building. Also, the Church shows her real origin by being the body of Christ, which provides a type of sacramental character called shared framework. Through this institution, the Church gains the authority of God. In a next step, it leads to the continuity of church and of the authority, which becomes visible in the life and practise of the apostle. Furthermore, an understanding of apostolicity develops the ideas that the Church is a sign, an instrument and a foretaste of the in-breaking Kingdom of God. The experienced space of the Church is a divine reality, because all of the Church comes from the triune god, even though it is a human reality, because Jesus Christ as Son of God instituted the Church and sent the apostles.

26 DW describes in the fifth chapter the next steps on the way, which are theological and practical.
27 The names “Declaration on the way” and “Communion in Growth” are both significant for this reason. Similar to this approach is the idea of Susan K. Wood, who is part of the US-study group. She develops in her article “The correlation between ecclesial communion and the recognition of ministry” the idea of an imperfect communion – See Susan K. Wood, “The correlation between ecclesial communion and the recognition of ministry”, One in Christ, 50 no. 2, (2016): 238-249.
28 DW, 121f.
29 DW, §9 and CG, §26.
30 CG, §26.
31 TCTCV, §1.
32 CG, §2/3.
33 PCS, §36.
34 PCS, §18/32f; TCTCV, §27; CG, §47 and DW, §2+12.
out to the people. The Church is also an anticipatory reality, because the people of God have an eschatological hope for the second coming of Christ. After all, the authority and continuity culminate in the Church, which is the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.

This opens up the question about how we can see or experience this authority and continuity of the whole church in the mission of Christ in our human reality. One characteristic dimension is the aspect of proclaiming the gospel and celebrating the sacraments, which has a deep relation to the life and witness of the apostles. Initially the apostles were the witnesses of the preaching, death and resurrection of Jesus and had a responsibility to proclaim the good news of salvation. Thereby this, based on the apostolic practise, supports and develops the apostolic faithfulness of the people through the action of the Holy Spirit. All this is part of the ministry of Jesus (mission dei) and helps to carry out this special mission. Through the ages until our time, the continuity of the Church related to the Christ and the apostles is visible, because all traditions and churches fulfil this characteristic dimension of proclaiming and celebrating or receiving the sacraments in a similar or different way. BEM talks about different gifts, which through the act of proclaiming the gospel and service became visible and show continuity of the people with the apostles. In contradiction, the continuity of authority, which Jesus gave to the apostles, appears only in the aspect of the small experienced responsibility that “every Christian receives gifts of the Holy Spirit for the upbuilding of the Church and for his or her part in the mission of Christ.” The documents agree on this point, which unlocks some initial ideas about the apostolic faith. Another view – that of Pentecostalism – confirms this dimension, because they focus also on the gospel and consider deeds and creeds as essential of the apostolic faith and life. Apostolic Faith is therefore another characteristic dimension, which is not really defined in the documents.

The function of linking apostolicity with various themes of ecclesiology becomes apparent in the fact that “being apostolic” and the apostolic heritage is important for many themes. Depending on the topic, it is more or less important. Compared to the Eucharist, apostolicity plays an essential role in the question of ministry. Here too, the question of the relationship between continuity and authority appears in the different subsections and illustrates another characteristic dimension of apostolicity. Apostolic Faith, the first characteristic dimension and ministry are intertwined and interrelated in apostolicity. This is confirmed in Anglican-Methodist dialogues, in addition to the discussed texts. Generally, the dialogues distinguish between apostolic succession, historic succession and episcopal succession. If you bring these together, authority emerges through “visible” or historic continuity, because through the laying on hands by bishops at the act of ordination that authority and responsibility, which Jesus gave to the apostles, is transmitted from person to person.

35 TCTCV, §23.
36 DW, §11.
37 CG, §168-172 and DW, §5+6.
38 DW, Chapter: Agreements in Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogues, §4.
39 CG, §168; TCTCV, §2/§3/§23; DW, §11 and PCS, §37.
40 BEM, Ministry §5.
41 TCTCV, §18.
42 Frank D. Macchia: The Oneness-Trinitarian Pentecostal Dialogue: Exploring the Diversity of Apostolic Faith, Harvard Theological Review, 103, no. 3 (2010): 330.
43 Miriam Haar: Apostolicity: Unresolved Issues in Anglican-Methodist Dialogue, Ecclesiology 9 (2013): 41.
44 DW, §13 and TCTCV, §48+49.
The texts approach ministry through the general priesthood of the people, where everyone has a special task.\textsuperscript{45} For the organization of ecclesial life, however, specialized and responsible people are necessary for preaching and leading the sacraments and bearing public witness.\textsuperscript{46} This ministry is subordinated to the ministry of Jesus and is self-understood as continuity and actualisation of the divine origin of ministry and is a necessary element for the being of the church.\textsuperscript{47} The discussion talks about the different types of the ministry. One question is that of historic succession. Some churches/traditions claim themselves to have the continuity and the authority since the apostolic age through the laying on hands by ordination.\textsuperscript{48} They say that ministerial succession serves and saves the continuity of the church.\textsuperscript{49} This suggests that the question of ministry changes and develops further the relationship between continuity and authority. Because both are passed on through ordination – but mostly the continuity of authority emanating from Jesus – ministry is another more historically focussed characteristic dimension of apostolicity.

In this area, the question arises as to whether one can perceive the continuity of apostolic ministry, even though the transfer of authority is either non-existent or interrupted and thus there is no visible continuity in the ministry. PCS states very clear the argument that historic succession is a sign of the presence of continuity to the apostolic origin and the Holy Spirit\textsuperscript{50} and is not a guarantee for “the fidelity of a church to every aspect of apostolic faith, life and mission.”\textsuperscript{51} In the more recent dialogues, the discussion shifts from historical succession to episcopal succession\textsuperscript{52} (within discussions of ministerial oversight), because the question of continuous episcopal authority arises.\textsuperscript{53} In the role of a bishop, on the one hand, continuity to the apostolic origin and the ministry of oversight/episkopé, which should be exercised in personal, collegial and communal dimensions, reveals the authority of the bishop; on the other hand, authority shows continuity with Christ and the apostles in carrying out the responsibility of the apostolic mission.\textsuperscript{54} This illustrates, for example, the following quote from CG: “When the bishops proclaim the gospel, they act in the name of Christ and with his authority.”\textsuperscript{55}

Further episcopal ministry reveals, that the authority is neither powerless nor without direction, but it is an authority with commission, which has power and direction from Jesus into the world.\textsuperscript{56} Some traditions, which participated in the dialogues or documents, state that for them what is important is the laying on hands at the ordination of bishops and the real historical relation to

\textsuperscript{45} TCTCV, §17-20; BEM, Ministry §1-6; PCS, §32i; DW, §14 and CG, §194-199.

\textsuperscript{46} BEM, Ministry §8. The need for a specialised group for leading and building up the church is also affirmed by Viorel Ionita in his article about apostolicity in the perspective of the Romanian Orthodox Church. In: Martin Illert and Martin Schindelhütte eds, Theologischer Dialog mit der rumänischen orthodoxen Kirche, Beihefte zur Ökumenischen Rundschau 97, (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlaganstalt Leipzig, 2014), 54,64.

\textsuperscript{47} DW, §15-16 and CG, §194-195, §204.

\textsuperscript{48} In the aspect of ordination.

\textsuperscript{49} PCS, §40-43 and CG, §219,§231 and §234.

\textsuperscript{50} PCS, §50.

\textsuperscript{51} PCS, §51.

\textsuperscript{52} See also: Haar: Apostolicity, 45-46.

\textsuperscript{53} TCTCV, §48-53; DW, Agreements in Lutheran-Roman-Catholic Dialogues §24 and CG, §205+231.

\textsuperscript{54} BEM, Ministry §26; TCTCV, §52; PCS, §46 and CG, §231.

\textsuperscript{55} CG, §238.

\textsuperscript{56} BEM, Ministry §14; DW, Chapter: Agreements in Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogues, §19 and TCTCV, §52.
the apostles.\textsuperscript{57} We can call this as a horizontal dimension.\textsuperscript{58} CG brings up a “new” idea about the college of bishops. There, the hands are lain on the bishops, but it is not the activity of the other bishop: rather, it “comes down ‘from above’.”\textsuperscript{59} CG develops a vertical perspective of the receiving of episcopal succession and shows God’s action in the act of ordination. All Bishops assemble together with Jesus, participate in this special moment and Jesus send them out like the apostles to live out the divine mission. This is a shift from human-shaped emphasis as regards continuity to an emphasis on the divine continuity in the act of ordination. The bishop has a special role within the community, but even he cannot exist without the people in the community. For the ontology of the bishop, the congregation is an essential presumption or condition, because his being is, on the one hand, interrelated to the congregation and, on the other, it is vis a vis/against (gegenüber)\textsuperscript{60} the community in the sense of the distinction between lay and ordained.\textsuperscript{61}

In the recent ecclesiological dialogues, I have considered, the question of ministry, in addition to the turn to episcopal succession, comes to a head in the question of the primacy and specific or special role of the bishop of Rome/Pope. Some agreements are on the biblical foundations of the Petrine Ministry. Likewise, this special kind of ministry belongs to the apostolicity of the whole Church and could be a kind of bishop for unity.\textsuperscript{62} DW states very clearly that “all ministry […] serves the unity of the worldwide church”\textsuperscript{63}, but there is also a lot of work to do about this issue.\textsuperscript{64} Once again, in this we must consider, which place authority takes and how the importance of continuity is interpreted.

From these newer approaches, ecumenical dialogues must address the question of continuity in relation to ministry. As so far mentioned, some traditions emphasise the essential character of human “institutional”\textsuperscript{65} continuity and have a horizontal perspective on this topic. Urgent homework is needed both to find a more precise definition for the aspect of “signs” and to reflect on the plausibility of making human continuity absolute in relation to the other characteristic dimensions of apostolicity.\textsuperscript{66} Developing this idea further, a new possible reading of continuity and authority in relation to ministry emerges. The propagation of both occurs in the divine action at the ordination to the episcopate. This gift of God to his church, which depends on the ministry for its being and is similar to the gift of grace in the justification\textsuperscript{67}, enables the linking of the horizontal and the vertical perspective through human participation in the act and performance of the apostolic

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{57} DW, Remaining Differences and reconciling consideration, Subsection Ministry, §1 and §5; PCS, §47-48 and BEM, Ministry §39.
\item \textsuperscript{58} Ionita, „Apostolizität der Kirche aus der Sicht der rumänisch-orthodoxen Kirche“, 61. He distinguishes in his article between a horizontal and a vertical dimension.
\item \textsuperscript{59} CG, §231. DW speaks also in this direction even if not so strong, when „the ordinand receives an anointing of the holy spirit, who equips that person for ordained ministry. “ See DW, §22.
\item \textsuperscript{60} DW, §20.
\item \textsuperscript{61} BEM, Ministry §12+13; TCTCV, §20+52; PCS, §44; DW, Chapter Agreements in Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogues, §20 and CG, §197.
\item \textsuperscript{62} CG, §260-275 and TCTCV, §55-57.
\item \textsuperscript{63} DW, §26.
\item \textsuperscript{64} DW, Chapter: Remaining differences and reconciling considerations, §6.
\item \textsuperscript{65} Gesa Elsbeth Thiessen: Apostolic and Prophetic: Ecclesiological Perspectives, Cambridge: James Clarke Company 2012, p. 24.
\item \textsuperscript{66} Also the other traditions without the emphasis on the episcopal succession/historic succession have to work on their ecclesiologies to come to a better, closer and hopefully a common understanding in their dialogues.
\item \textsuperscript{67} Further a research into the connection between justification and the gift apostolicity could be very fruitful because JDDJ and following dialogues in this line provide a good groundwork.
\end{itemize}
ministry. Apostolicity is thus defined in terms of continuity and authority, which presuppose the interrelated aspects of God’s activity together with the Holy Spirit as well as human participation and activity. These are in an equal relationship to each other.

Conclusion

In the beginning of this paper, I analysed the five different ecumenical dialogues with their different approaches. They used the methods of convergence, differentiated consensus (including the perspective of imperfect communion/on a common way) and consensus. They have enabled me, in my description, to offer a multifaceted synopsis of the elements of apostolicity. This analysis showed that apostolicity is connected mainly with ecclesiology and ministry, especially in TCTCV, DW and CG, where one can recognise an ecclesiological turn in the dialogues. I then listed some characteristic dimensions of apostolicity, which emerged in the documents. In this consideration of the church and its aspects “proclaim the gospel, leading the sacraments, carry out missio dei” and the apostolic faith, it strikes me that mutual understanding and (partial) agreements are perceived. On the other hand, the consideration of the apostolic ministry provided some agreements but also a large selection of issues as regards understanding and interpreting ministry. The question of the relationship between continuity and authority runs through this process. Thus, in the various characteristic dimensions you find different emphases and interpretations, likewise divine or human continuity/authority. As already described, CG introduces a new idea in relation to the ministry. This new idea paves a new way for the consideration of continuity and authority. Some traditions have a very strong horizontal and human perspective on this, but CG manages to show that episcopal ministry describes a vertical perspective which emphasises God’s action in the act of ordination and includes also as an essential element human participation. Again, I would like to point out existing relations of both gifts of god of apostolicity and justification.

I cannot show a conclusive definition of apostolicity in my paper, because the different traditions have different emphases and dictionaries articles have difficulties to define apostolicity. Exemplary, the dictionaries explain only the different confessional (non-) emphases or describe apostolicity as one element of the Church. But it has been possible to show the many characteristic dimensions of apostolicity and to gain an understanding of apostolicity mentioned in recent dialogues and documents. These dimensions support the development of a reading of apostolicity as narrative of continuity and authority in relation to god and Jesus Christ. Similar to the grace and justification, apostolicity is a gift of God/Jesus to the humans and the Church as a whole Church finds their origin in the apostolicity. The apostles were the first persons, who received this continuity and authority and exercised them through the characteristic dimensions of proclaiming the gospel, leading the sacraments, carry out the mission and the apostolic faith. The emerging process of ministry in the early Christianity specialised this characteristic dimensions and let to a culmination of the

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68 Really engaging for my theological work is the example of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland, which participated also in PCS. I have noticed that theological-ecumenical thinking continues intensively, even if ‘good successes’ have already been achieved on one topic. Ecumenical Dialogue is still going on in the light of our faith and the Holy Spirit.

69 CG develops this idea when it speaks about receiving episcopal succession as bishop.

70 “Apostolicity” in The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) and Wilfried Härle, Apostolicity, (Boston: Brill, 2007), 337.
narrative continuity and authority as apostolicity in the ministry, which has solidified over the centuries as a strong horizontal perspective. With my mentioned results and ideas in my paper, you can recognise a turn from a strict human continuity and horizontal perspective in the topic of ministry and its apostolicity to a linked perspective. This approach on the one hand describes the gifting and making present of apostolic continuity and authority by God, on the other hand, emphasises the human participation and succession in the apostolic ministry. Following this approach, the role and function of the Holy Spirit in relation to apostolicity needs to be elaborated and explained in a deeper research.

Finally, the different characteristic dimensions shape the apostolicity as narrative of continuity and authority in different ways and emphasis, from which different entrees, possibilities of understandings and interpretations of apostolicity emerge. The turn of approach, which I already described, in relation to the apostolicity is at the same time a challenge and a big chance for the ecumenical dialogues to grow together as community on the common way. Through this step, we will come closer to the fully realisation of apostolicity or being apostolic, when we speak about the Church as a one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

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