

Introduction: Recognising and Crossing Borders in Hymnody and Liturgy

At borders

In Finland, we are used to encounters at borders and across borders. Being the most distant country in Western Europe, Finland has a common border of more than 1,300 kilometres with Russia. That border is not only geographical but also cultural and ecclesiastical; East and West have traditionally met in Finland. Right now, however, these encounters are difficult, or even impossible, due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. After decades of building cooperation and creating connections, Finland's eastern border has become a border between NATO and Russia. It is not an exaggeration to express that in Finland, the long common border is realised and experienced more strongly at the moment than at any time since the Second World War. The sad reality is that right now, there are no encounters at that border – and especially not across it.

Even though Finns like to emphasise that we are part of Western Europe and one of the Nordic countries, there remains the fact that our country is different from the other Nordic countries. Language forms one border between Finns and Scandinavians: when others speak their mother tongue in joint Nordic gatherings, Finnish-speaking Finns have no opportunity to do so. The relatives of the Finnish language are not in the West, but in the East. The borders formed by language are discussed in this volume in the shared article by Samuli Korkalainen, Tuuli Lukkala, Kristel Neitsov-Mauer, Per Kristian Aschim, and Jan Hellberg, who delve into the language policies in multilingual contexts of liturgical singing.

In addition, Finland differs from other Nordic countries in the ecclesiastical sense because this country has had traditionally two national churches, the Lutheran and the Orthodox. Sometimes in history, the border between these churches has been sharp, but today, we fortunately live in an era of ecumenism. There are numerous encounters at the borders of denominations, both on an official level and in local parishes, and above all, between individual people. However, the border still exists and there are many situations where it cannot be crossed. Even though we pray together, we cannot share the Holy Communion together.

This volume contains two articles written together by several people, both of which have Lutheran and Orthodox perspectives side by side. The first one is the previously

mentioned text written by Korkalainen et al. In the second one, Leena Lampinen, Hilikka-Liisa Vuori, Tuomas Meurman, and Riikka Patrikainen explore mental and bodily borders and ways to cross them in the worship context. They suggest that encounters are possible through safety and respect, as well as by maintaining protective and positive borders. Acknowledging and accepting differences creates a fruitful starting point for interaction across borders within worship.

Both denominational and state borders divide churches. Traditionally, churches operate within the borders of one state, and they do not have parishes in other states, except in some exceptional cases. This practice has been in effect since the so-called Constantinian Shift, when with the actions of the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great (272–337), Christianity first became a legal religion in the Roman Empire and then the only religion allowed (see, e.g., Hill 2020 [2007], chapter 3). For example, in the Nordic countries, there have been strong Lutheran state churches, which have played a central role in building and maintaining national identity and the state system. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that in a theological sense, no Christian church can fundamentally be a national institution, because the essence of Christianity includes universality, and crossing borders. Since the first Christians, it has been considered important to proclaim the message across national and other borders.

However, this has never been completely self-evident, not even at the very beginning: the first negotiations on the subject took place among Jesus's disciples, as expressed in the Bible, in the Acts of the Apostles. Even contemporary churches must constantly examine their own history and present-day practices critically so that they do not drift into exclusive national communities. Currently, the Russian Orthodox Church serves as a warning example since it has given its support to the war of aggression in Ukraine, and combined Christianity and national interests in a way that does not correspond to the theological understanding of the vast majority of Christians. The goal of Christian theology should be the Kingdom of God, which breaks and crosses borders, instead of building them.

Closed borders

Based on all of the above, it was only natural for the Finnish Society for Hymnology and Liturgy to organise an international conference with the title Encounters at Borders and across Borders in May 2022. When planning the conference and thinking about different borders, we suddenly had to face a completely new situation when the global Covid-19 pandemic built new borders and strengthened existing ones. Nations closed themselves within the borders of their states. The boundaries of municipalities and provinces suddenly became significant. The most painful were the borders imposed between individuals: in

many cases, even family members were not allowed to meet each other. The conference planned for the 25th anniversary of the Finnish Society for Hymnology and Liturgy in 2021 had to be postponed by a year.

Due to Covid-19, there were also new boundaries between churches, dioceses, and individual parishes. During the first months of the pandemic, the Lord's Table was not a place for cross-border encounters, but rather a risk of spreading a deadly disease. In this situation, modern technology proved to be an excellent tool for encounters at borders and across borders. Surprisingly, a 'liturgical buffet' was served, when one could follow live-streamed services from around the world, just sitting at home in front of one's laptop.

At the same time, however, it became apparent that the theology of questions related to social media and digital connections had not been considered deeply enough. For example, in Finland, the bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church announced very quickly that it was not allowed to celebrate the Holy Communion at home remotely (see, e.g., Toivanen 2020). This led to a situation in which members of the Lutheran Church of Finland could not receive communion for a long time, unlike, for instance, in the Orthodox Church in Finland (see Takala-Roszczenko 2023). Following this, the first step was that after remote services, the Lord's Supper was distributed separately to individual parishioners or families in the churches (see, e.g., Kallatsa & Mikkola 2020). But did it fulfil the theology of the Eucharist? Was not it more of a caricature of a communion?

Jochen Arnold's article in this volume shows that the solution of the Finnish Lutheran bishops was not the only possible one, and certainly not self-evident. Many Lutheran churches implemented other kinds of practices. At the same time, the article highlights the fact that the question should still be addressed, even though the pandemic no longer restricts gatherings. Social media is an everyday reality for people now, and the churches should also finally accept the fact. In fact, should not the Churches of the Reformation have the theological prerequisites for a discussion about whether the Real Presence needs the same physical location to be realised, or whether it can also be possible with digital connections?

Even though present-day Lutheran church leaders in Nordic countries agree that the Eucharist is a mark of the church, they should think more about the history of their own churches. Before the twentieth-century liturgical renewal movements, the Holy Communion was rarely available in Nordic Lutheran churches due to the Pietistic theology that had been added to the sacrament. How was this infrequency of communion rationalised? Moreover, did the old Pietistic views resurface when the Finnish Lutheran bishops denied parishioners the Lord's Supper so quickly at the beginning of the pandemic?

The alignment of the bishops and the liturgical practices of many parishes also indicated one border that was already thought to have faded: a border between the congregation and the liturgy. It seemed surprisingly easy to cut the congregation out

of the service when parishioners were forced to watch a screen at home without any concrete way to participate. However, as one of our anonymous reviewers reminded us, there cannot be a liturgy without congregation, because the liturgy in the true sense of the word *is* the celebrating congregation: *leitourgia* comes from *leitōs* (people) and *ergon* (service). Therefore, the liturgy and the congregation are not two separate entities.

Naturally, when the pandemic closed the churches there was no established field of research on the question of digital theology or digital communion, but very soon many theologians all over the world were involved in discussion. Jochen Arnold refers to some of them in his article, but there are many more of them (see, e.g., two thematic volumes of *Cursor*, 3/2020 & 5/2023, and Mikkola 2020). We hope that this volume and Arnold's article will contribute to reigniting the discussion on the topic because after the pandemic had subsided, it seems to have been forgotten.

Crossing borders

In Western churches, even at the time of the Reformation, when borders between churches were strictly drawn and excommunications were continuously employed by one church against another on doctrinal matters, there was something that was maintaining a certain unity and crossing borders, namely church music. Besides the existence of a common repertoire that was inherited from the time of the united church, which many churches continued to maintain, musical works that were considered beautiful or popular were likely to be adopted by different churches. Several churches had not entirely abolished the use of Latin, as a consequence of which new Latin-texted works became the common heritage. In addition, speakers of the same tongue might share a vernacular church music repertoire across denominational borders (Bertoglio 2022: 290–291).

A present-day example of this kind of unity in music is Anna Pulli-Huomo's article in this volume, in which she discusses the role of music – French Roman Catholic organ music in this case – and the role of the organist as a creator of interaction in the Lutheran liturgical services. Drawing from autoethnographic artistic research, Pulli-Huomo explores how music crosses borders and can find its place and meaning in an environment that differs from the original one. The familiar order of the service, among other things, supports this process. Like the article of Lampinen et al., Pulli-Huomo's text mentions the importance of an accepting, welcoming, and communal atmosphere as an element that can enhance the experience of participation.

It is very gratifying that with Pulli-Huomo's article, we also get an example of how an artistic research method promotes the production of new knowledge in a liturgical musical research field. It is necessary to establish this kind of interdisciplinary conception

of spirituality to formulate new authoritative knowledge that penetrates even more deeply into the liturgy. It can and will benefit various contexts of both academies and churches, and cross many borders.

Elsabé Kloppers discusses border crossings from the viewpoint of hymns. Hymns are, as Kloppers points out, 'active in a variety of settings in the public sphere, where they connect personal lived religion with public religion and politics'. Hymns cross many kinds of borders, such as cultural and national ones, to mention just a few, and hymn singing can transform people and their various identities, as well as political or social systems.

As Chiara Bertoglio (2022: 291) states, for the phenomenon of music crossing borders, there are not only historical reasons but also theological causes which are based on the 'posited innate vocation of music to create unity and communion'. Firstly, music is a unique human activity because it is so pervasively grounded in the idea of 'plurality in unity'. The polyphonic nature of music is an exceptionally applicable instrument to express symbolically the mystery of the Trinity, and music embodies a vision of plurality as a gift. For instance, many forms of liturgical singing have 'expressed a view of divergence and difference in a polyphonic and harmonic framework, rather than a reciprocally exclusive polarity'.

Secondly, music is an essential element of liturgy and worship for most Christian denominations. As Bertoglio (2022: 293) underlines, 'music is not an accessory to prayer, but rather it can be considered as one of its fundamental components'. Music does not only increase the beauty of the praises of God, but by touching people's hearts and feelings, it 'contributes to uniting (once more) the potential for rationality and for emotionality which constitute the complexity of human experience'. Thirdly, the symbolic nature of music embodies the mystical dimension of faith. Theological discussion has utmost significance but can lose sight of the mysterious reality of God, while music can 'help in "keeping together" contemplation with meditation, dogma with prayer, praise with thought, preaching with jubilation'.

In addition, throughout history, there have been particularly powerful individuals who have played a special role in crossing borders. In his article, Miikkael Halonen introduces one of them: composer, organist, writer, and court music director Michael Praetorius (1571–1621). Halonen does not describe him only as a mediator between the Renaissance and Baroque eras, or between Northern and Southern Europe, but also introduces Praetorius's close connection to classical literature, and focuses on the pedagogical and ethical dimensions of his writings. In Halonen's article, temporal, geographical, and cultural borders are crossed. He presents an overview of how Praetorius positions himself within his contemporary culture of musical humanism and classical literature. Veneration of antiquity had a great impact on Praetorius's music but, at the same time, he was firmly following the conventions of his time.

Encounters at borders and across borders

In the conference, themes within hymnology and liturgy were addressed following its heading, through encounters at borders and crossing them. Borders that were addressed in shared sessions or individual papers and lecture recitals were: (1) borders between churches, (2) borders of religions or cultures, (3) geographical, regional, and linguistic borders, (4) borders between academic disciplines, (5) borders of hymn, spiritual song, and liturgy, (6) mental and bodily borders, as well as (7) borders set by the Covid-19 pandemic. All of these were addressed from the viewpoints of diverse academic fields. Both in the working groups and contributions of many individual scholars, scientific and artistic research were fruitfully combined.

The participants of the conference crossed many kinds of borders, such as geographical, linguistic, denominational, or those between academic disciplines. The presentations and discussions with others offered possibilities for other kinds of border crossings as well or, at least, enabled encounters at borders. This is something that we, the editors of this volume, would like to encourage. Being in connection with others, acknowledging one's borders and differences between people is a fruitful starting point for a constructive dialogue.

Keynote speakers of the conference were hymnologist professor Elsabé Kloppers from the University of South Africa, professor Jochen Arnold from Michaeliskloster Hildesheim, Germany, and Sirkku Rintamäki, who finished her doctoral project in artistic research in church music at the Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki about a year after the conference. The value of this anthology is increased by the fact that both of our foreign keynote speakers have written an article for it. All of the other articles are also based on the presentations held at the conference, deepening their content, which in some cases refers to broadening the perspective, in others to narrowing the focus. Several of these texts, although to varying extent and from different viewpoints, connect with the field of Christian congregational music (see, e.g., Ingalls et al. 2016 [2013]: 2).

Even though the conference was postponed by a year due to Covid-19, preparations for participation in it started in 2021. In these preparations, skills in meeting virtually acquired during the pandemic were used in a new way. Instead of a traditional Call for Papers, scholars from diverse fields were invited to join working groups that started to meet remotely in late 2021 or early 2022, to jointly prepare their respective sessions in the conference itself, which took place on location in the Aalto University Töölö in Helsinki. The intention was that scholars learn to know each other already in advance and cooperate in preparing their own portion of the conference. The working groups were a success and brought to the conference sessions which were implemented in a new way. Two of the groups continued to meet even after the conference and both of them have written a joint article for this volume.

When the idea of the conference and the publication has been to cross borders, it would be strange if the work did not contain any articles produced in a new way. Nevertheless, the fact that an article consisting of several authors each contributing from different perspectives brings some characteristic strengths, undeniably, it also brings some weaknesses regarding its demarcation and focus. Our anonymous reviewers noticed this point as well and gave fruitful suggestions to clarify the common research questions and shared conclusions. However, according to them, given the many pitfalls of co-authoring, our two groups succeeded well in the end to keep it all together. The different sections complement one another and present themselves as one coherent argument.

Acknowledgements

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Moreover, we want to thank all of the participants of the conference for interesting papers and panels, intriguing discussions, shared professionalism, and encouraging atmosphere. There are still many borders to be crossed, and new ones are also emerging in these turbulent and challenging times. For that reason, it is important to continue the discussion, to persevere in research with a broad and multidisciplinary approach, and to promote unity, connection, and interaction in Christendom. We hope from the bottom of our hearts that the articles in this volume will awaken in their readers a desire to pursue encounters at borders and across borders.

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