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Christine Love-Rodgers, Esther Jeon
Hannie Riley and Jussi Hyvärinen

The Changes in the Information Culture of Theological Research: The Faculty of Theology in the University of Helsinki as an Example

Dr Rev Matti Myllykoski

Chief Information Specialist, Helsinki University Library, Helsinki, Finland

Introduction

The term information culture originates from Finnish library research, and was launched by Mariam Ginman, an information specialist at Åbo Akademi. Her article "Information culture and business performance", published in 1987, dealt with the ability of the business world to respond to changes in the operational environment by collecting and structuring relevant information related to the external world in order to drive the company's success. This requires active monitoring of environmental changes and its flexible adaptation to the operations of the company (Ginman 1987).

Since Ginman's article, the study of information culture has expanded to also cover cultural values, attitudes and effects related to information. All organisations and communities have their own information culture, regardless of how these cultures are perceived, evaluated or processed. Usually, in information research, the concept of information culture is associated with the conscious actions of an organization or community, especially with processing information and data. However, information culture cannot be controlled because it is based not only on measurable quantities but also on values and beliefs (Oliver 2017).

The 'Hardcore' of the Scientific Research and the Big Framework of Information Culture

In this article about changes in the information culture in theological research, I approach the topic openly and inclusively. I try to outline the question in a way that shifts the attention from the scientific community to partly outside of it, more precisely, between the scientific community and the surrounding reality. Amidst the drastic changes that have taken place in recent decades, the role of the library has also changed radically. It can no longer position itself as a mediator of information, in other words, as a manager of a collection of printed books, but must constantly search for its new role in the cross-pressures of the digital revolution, the greed of commercial publishers, mundanity of social media, and open publishing.

Scientific research – and in this case, the theological one - is not related only to the organisation or community practising it. This is not the case in the sense that the scientific community is an internationally networked organisation that publishes and popularises its research in both domestic and international forums. All this forms only the 'hardcore' of the academic information culture.

The scientific community has an inherent hic et nunc perspective to its activities. You have to publish and flourish here and now; you have to be cutting-edge. In the scientific community, keeping up with changes in information culture mostly means active participation in international discussions and staying on the crest of its wave. This requires optimal integration of external factors related to the change, above all electronic publishing and social media, into one's own information culture. Publishing forums operating on the Internet, such as academia.edu and ResearchGate, have facilitated communication between researchers and moved their information culture outside of scientific libraries and their limited acquisition budgets. Technological development has intensified the academic information culture in various ways.

There are some specific questions related to this overall picture, which I will return to later. It is essential to note, however, that the information culture of research has a hard academic core to which external events are relevant only as far as they are related to the 'publish or perish' logistics of research (Moosa 2018).

In the world of research, the 'hardcore' of its information culture is linked to key academic objectives. This includes the creation and implementation of research projects that are convincing in all respects and suitably large, preferably in cooperation with other international actors. Flourishing also includes guaranteed research funding for young scholars, publishing in internationally renowned journals and publication series with a high impact factor, presenting one's own research in international forums, and so on.

However, the 'hardcore' of research is essentially linked – both in its efforts and contents – to a larger entity that affects the information culture of the research. The development of research is based not only on the successful selection of topics of scientific interest, but also on developments and factors outside the scientific world. The information culture of scientific research lives in a wide diachronic stream and an open synchronic field, which are strongly connected to each other. In all scientific disciplines, they both include interesting details, but this article focuses on theological research, which is a unique case among university disciplines.

Theology, Church and Society: Changes in the Triangle until the Early 20th Century

Theology of the third millennium is neither a natural discipline nor a discipline independent of its long history. In order to understand the current state of European Protestant theology, one must understand the historical changes through which theology has passed upto the 21st century. Understanding is based on posing elementary questions and looking for plausible answers.

Theology is the oldest European university science, which in its early days explained humanity and nature by taking the Bible and church doctrine as its unquestionable point of departure. After the Reformation, theology maintained its leading position, but after the breakthrough of the Copernican worldview, its authority began to decline. The growth and flourishing of the natural sciences and the triumph of the Enlightenment pushed theology far away from the centre of the sciences. From then on, theology has limited itself to exploring and solving its own questions and disciplines.

In particular, the independent historical and critical study of the Bible has made theologians aware of the diverse problems related to the history of Christian doctrine and has forced theology to become a modern scientific discipline. This development took place within post-Enlightenment Protestantism. At the beginning of the 19th century, F.D.E. Schleiermacher presented fundamental divisions into theological subjects: philosophical (systematic) theology, historical theology (biblical studies and church history) and practical theology. Relying on the growth metaphor that was in vogue at the time, Schleiermacher proposed that theology has its roots in philosophical theology, historical theology is its core, and practical theology represents its flourishing. It is symptomatic that Schleiermacher divided philosophical theology into apology and polemics. Thus, all theological research and teaching are scientific, but it is precisely the natural connection of research to the church that makes it theology and gathers all theological disciplines, albeit very different in nature, together as a whole. At the beginning of the 19th century, the agenda of Protestant theology became clearly apologetic: it had to defend the church and Christianity (Schleiermacher 1803).

This development affected Lutheran churches in Germany and the Nordic countries in a special way. In the aftermath of Napoleon's campaigns, the idea of nationalism was born, and it found its natural ally in Protestant churches. Under the protection of a strong state, protecting itself against subversive movements, theologians and clergymen developed state church ideology, which maintained and strengthened the position of the churches. From the middle of the century, socialism became the Enemy Number One of churches allied with state power. On the one hand, the educated upper middle class associated their liberalism with nationalism, but on the other hand, liberal thinking, together with the deepening and expanding scientific worldview, created a serious challenge for dogmatic churches. They were unable to respond to the theory of evolution and the all-encompassing understanding of the organic and historical nature of human culture. Focusing on orthodoxy, moralism and ritual spirituality, Lutheran pietism became integrated into the life of the state church and its self-protecting agenda.

At the turn of the 20th century, the Lutheran state churches of Europe were power-oriented, patriotic, orthodox and apologetic organizations fearful of change. Society was democratized and secularized at a rapid pace, but it did not affect the

membership of the churches, not even after the legislation concerning religious freedom was developed at the beginning of the 20th century. In Lutheran countries, theology served the church through hard times in the spirit of state church ideology. In Germany, idealistic philosophical models had guaranteed theology its own space in the university and society; even in Lutheran Finland, despite its very conservative basic nature, theology received its share of the German heritage (Grane 1987).

Theology and Church: Changes in Relations in the First Half of the 20th Century

“The church in the middle of the village”, Lutheran doctrine, ecclesiastical pietism, revival movements, patriotism and social influence. These parameters can be used to characterise Finnish Lutheranism and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland over the wars up until the 1960s. Theology was also done in Finland on these given terms. The civil war of 1918 destroyed even the little support that cultural Protestantism and liberal theology had in Finland. The experiences caused by the war made the church and theology even more patriotic and anti-change. At the same time, the position of revival movements in the church was strengthened.

This also influenced theological research: the dialectical theology models of Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann that were embraced in German Protestant universities and crushed the tradition of liberal theology were not of interest to Finnish theologians. Instead, Finnish theologians focused on the study of revival movements and the roots of the Lutheran reformation. Both projects were naturally patriotic in character, and the Luther research had strong ties with conservative German Protestantism. Both, with their developments and twists and turns, created a long-lasting tradition in the university theology practised in Helsinki (Murtorinne 2009).

Until the 1960s, Biblical exegesis was also ecclesiastical in nature. At the end of the 19th century and for a long time after that, within the scope of theology and the church, biblical interpretation was dominated by so-called Beckian theology, which was based on the biblicist, authority- and revelation-oriented understanding of the Bible by Johann Tobias Beck (1804–1878). When positions for Biblical scholars were established at the University of Helsinki at the end of the 19th

century, ecclesiastical circles hoped that the research would correspond to the teaching of the church, and so it did, and such developments continued over the wars. The radical currents of German exegesis (liberal theology, existential biblical interpretation, etc.) were rejected in clear words. Every effort was made to avoid questioning the authority of the Bible, and research topics were chosen from amongst doctrinally harmless fields of study. In their public speeches, the Biblical scholars emphasised that the Bible is divine revelation and the Word of God. Scholars like Aarre Lauha (1907–1988) and Aimo T. Nikolainen (1912–1995), who also served as bishops after the Second World War, tried to reject fundamentalism and at the same time convey the notion that good Biblical research served God's revelation in the Bible (Peltonen 1992).

Theology, Scientific Community, and the Church: The Way to the Present

The political youth radicalism of the 1960s challenged society and the church. As industry and new forms of work developed, some pastors also emphasised the importance of social work and declaration and challenged the church to change. At the same time, secularisation and material welfare moulded the way of life in all of Europe. However, the biggest challenge to the relationship between theology and the Lutheran church in Finland was brought about by the publications of the young Biblical scholar Heikki Räisänen (1941-2015) and the interviews he gave at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s. His arguments about the mythical character of the virgin birth of Jesus and the problems with the divine authority of the Bible at once opened up a radical critical perspective that all Finnish Biblical scholars before him had wanted to avoid. Many colleagues and clergymen criticised Räisänen's relativistic view on the Bible, and the reactions in the church were often horrified. However, in the following decades, the views of Räisänen, who became very successful as a scholar, became more and more common, also in the church (Peltonen 1992).

The development, growth, and employment of new scholars in theological disciplines were decisively influenced by the considerable increase in universities and research funding since the 1990s (State of Finnish Science 2000). The strengthening of theological disciplines and the growth of funding promoted the independence of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Helsinki from the church and ecclesiastical

polemics. Helsinki theologians got to know the international discussion of their own fields more and more widely than before, and they were influenced by it. With extensive and recognised international research projects, university theology has also been able to claim its place in the Finnish scientific community better than before.

Two decades ago, Simo Heininen aptly characterised the relationship between the church and university theology at time (Heininen 2001, 11): "There is no theology without the church, but it does not follow that theology should be commanded by the church. On the other hand, it is in the best interest of society is that religion, specifically the dominant religion of the society, is studied impartially and critically." The changes and developments brought by the current century have confirmed the independence and critical character of theology, but at the same time, they also seem to raise the question whether theology, or at least theological research, can exist without the church. The church remains the largest organisation whose needs are served by theology. However, its importance is in a slow but certain decline.

Theology is No Longer Needed for the Sake of the Church Alone

Some decades ago, some scholars at the University of Helsinki talked about abolishing the theological faculty and transferring the education of future pastors to the church. However, nowadays we very seldom hear of these proposals because things have changed. Unlike in the 1980s, Masters of Theology no longer graduate with a significant majority to a church position or to work as a teacher of religion in a school. Many of them have found other kinds of jobs in professional life. Furthermore, theology has strengthened its scientific role in academia. According to a report published by the Theological Education Committee of the Lutheran Church back in 2022, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland is still the single most significant employer of theologians. According to the survey, 29% of theologians were employed by the church, and 16% of them work as teachers. There were thus 55% of theologians working elsewhere. Of all theologians, 34% had completed a degree that does not qualify them to apply for the positions of pastor or teacher. Since theological education has become more scientific and distanced itself from its traditional role as a servant of the church, it has become more suitable for basic education in various fields of working life.

In recent decades, the loosening relationship between the church and theology has also been influenced by the rapidly advancing secularisation and pluralism of society. The number of members of the church has decreased considerably: in 1990, 87.8% of Finns were members of the Lutheran church, while according to the latest statistics (2023), the figure is 63.6%. In such a development, the concerns of the church have moved from theological discussion to practical matters, and it has to look for modern means to speak to secularised Finns. On the one hand, theologians have produced a good amount of literature popularising their research, but that does not necessarily aid pastors in their challenges with the changing society and local communities. At the same time, theologians have moved away from theology in the broader sense. As academic competition gets tighter and tighter, theological research produces more and more specialised experts.

On the basis of all this, it could be concluded that theology is losing touch with the church it has traditionally served. Due to its educational and scientific basis, theological training provides the masters graduating from the faculty with skills for working in various professions aside from the church and school.

In the information culture of theology, we find the same question of success, with which the study of information culture once began. The strengthening and internationalisation of the entire scientific community has served the independence of theology, and university theology itself has promoted the importance of theological education for society as a whole and for various professions. The relationship of theology to the church is loosening, but such developments have been slow and natural. University theology does not have to defend its existence by referring to the needs of the church, because theology is based on a strong and long-lasting research tradition. In many respects, it focuses on phenomena whose history and effectiveness are undeniably matters worthy of academic research.

Where Is Theology Going Now?

In the old days, theology meant doing theology, talking about God by embracing and interpreting the tradition of one's own church. With the revolution in the human sciences, Western theology also began to mean the scientific study of texts and phenomena related to Christian faith. The Schleiermacher model I have described

above has had a decisive influence on the emergence and establishment of theological disciplines as they are known today. The traditional fields, whose names we still embrace, do not correspond to all the research that is currently carried out in their realm. In addition, there have been changes in various fields of theological research, in the light of which traditional discipline limits seem outdated and artificial. This is by no means surprising, because theology has been practised in the old sense for two thousand years, and in its scientific form for several hundred years.

The accelerating development of information technology, the Internet, and social media since the mid-1980s has strongly influenced the information culture of theological research. At the same time, the scientific community studying theological topics has become stronger and more independent in its relationship to churches. Has the digital communication revolution affected the theological scientific community only technically, or are there also substantial dimensions to the upheaval? Does the accelerating control of knowledge alienate theological research from the church? When everything changes remarkably quickly, does theological research lose its relationship with its own past, where research was not as global and uncontrollably diverse as it is today?

In this chapter, I discuss theological disciplines from the perspective of information culture and try to problematize the changes that have taken place within them. The question is what the academic theology practised in Helsinki communicates with its publications about itself, and what kind of social profile it has created for itself. I am interested in the tensions that come about between tradition and change. Does changing theological research have an agenda that it pursues with its new conquests? How is the university theology ready to defend its justification for existence when the social status of the church is marginalised, and the number of its members decreases?

In addition to material related to the development of theology, my sources are listings of the publications of researchers of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Helsinki from 2019 to 2023, and I also use figures of theologically relevant materials of the University of Helsinki Library from 2021 to 2023. In light

of these, it is possible to evaluate quite well what Finnish contemporary theologians read and write. In connection with different research targets, I also highlight the names of some protagonists and key researchers, so that it would be easier for the reader to find more research through them. I have excluded from my review the Department of Religious Studies, which is only marginally related to the question of the change of theology, identity and information culture.

Biblical Exegesis

Biblical exegesis is traditionally divided into two areas, Old and New Testament exegesis. These discipline designations are problematic in many ways because they are based on the old theological understanding of the Christian Bible as God's revelation. The Old Testament refers to the Hebrew Bible of the Jews, which, in the light of scientific research, does not contain predictions about Jesus and his church, but is entirely related to Jewish history and Jewish theology before the beginning of our era. The New Testament, on the other hand, is a collection of early Christian writings that developed into an inspired and authoritative canon of the church during the first centuries.

Biblical scholars study the writings of the Bible as literary and historical documents of past times. At the same time, however, its research fields have inevitably expanded to cover new fields. In the exegesis of the Old Testament covers all the Jewish history and theology of the pre-Christian era, often including also Judaic studies focused on the rabbinic Judaism.

The study of early Judaism is connected to the study of the writings and history of the ancient peoples of the Middle East much more strongly than before (Martti Nissinen, Juha Pakkala).

Over a long period of time, the field of New Testament research has expanded to cover practically all Christianity of the first two centuries. The extended areas of research include the so-called apocryphal gospels and the writings of the apostolic fathers, as well as currents outside of proto-orthodox Christianity, especially the so-called Gnosticism (Antti Marjanen). Regarding proto-orthodox Christianity, some

kind of practical border has been drawn in relation to patristics, the earliest representatives of which are the apologists, especially Justin Martyr and Irenaeus. The titles of the research fields of exegesis could very well be changed into the study of early Judaism and early Christianity. It would require significantly more for the Evangelical Lutheran Church to stop talking about the Old Testament and call it the first part of the Bible, the Hebrew Bible.

The change in the objects of the research shows that exegesis studies the Judaism and Christianity of ancient times in a wide and versatile way as phenomena of their own time. Methodically, the latest research has brought with it modern methodological and substantive perspectives such as sociology, women's studies, and sexuality research. The holistic perspective has also been expanded by growing interest in archaeology and textual criticism. While the exegesis of the last century was still oriented towards Germany at least until the 1970s, Finnish contemporary exegesis is mostly English-speaking and globally oriented. It has, both methodically and substantively, covered a considerably wider field than it had until a few decades ago.

Church History

In Schleiermacher's vision, church history was oriented towards describing the development of doctrines and institutions. After the 20th century wars, the central focus of church history practised in Helsinki was still strongly and broadly on domestic issues, and research has since expanded to cover Finland's neighbouring regions, especially the Baltic countries and the Arctic regions. The development of the last decades can be easily described in terms of the idea that the study of Finnish church history is a natural part of the study of Finnish cultural history and cultural heritage. An excellent example of this is research on the life and work of Mikael Agricola (Simo Heininen). The expansion of church history practised in Helsinki has had wider social significance, a good example of which is the study of the German church struggle that had already started in the 1960s (Eino Murtorinne, d. 2023). In recent years, church historians in Helsinki have also explored medieval topics (Finland and the rest of Europe), which has been accompanied by an investment in digital humanities (Tuomas Heikkilä). The church history of the latest era is progressing with current and politically relevant topics, for example the current state of the Roman Catholic Church and anti-Semitism (Mikko Ketola).

The study of church history does not have to limit itself to the history of churches and other Christian communities, because it expands very naturally in the direction of ideological and cultural research and of the modern socio-political changes concerning Christianity. Keeping up with the development of digital humanities strengthens the research on a vast amount of source materials.

Systematic Theology

Systematic theology studies questions related to the truthfulness of the Christian faith in the contexts of both the long history and modern times of Christianity. In Protestant universities and colleges, it has a variety of subdisciplines, but in Helsinki, it is divided into dogmatics, philosophy of religion, theological ethics and social ethics, and ecumenism.

In practice, these fields can be very close to each other, and so researchers' interests sometimes exceed traditional discipline limits (Risto Saarinen). In addition to studying Christian theology, systematic theology often includes an interest in defending the Christian faith and clarifying its tenets in face of various modern issues.
A strong traditional area of Finnish systematic theology has been Luther research, which in its more developed form has also ecumenical relevance for the Roman Catholic Church (Tuomo Mannermaa, d. 2015). In the past decades, some systematic theologians in Helsinki have published internationally significant studies on medieval philosophy (Simo Knuuttila, d. 2022). Questions in modern religious philosophy are often related in one way or another to weighing the truth value of religion's claims (Sami Pihlström). The central topics of theological ethics in Helsinki have been equality issues, medical ethics, and artificial intelligence (Jaana Hallamaa).

Practical Theology

Until recent decades, the multidisciplinary practical theology has focused on different forms of activity in the church or churches. In past times, however, it has also moved into studies including a wider section of society. The new topics includes urban religiosity, altruism and charity, as well as civic actions and third sector activities (Anne Pessi, Henrietta Grönholm). The field of religious education has also expanded from traditional topics to religious literacy and multiculturalism (Antti Räsänen). The

traditional fields of practical theology, such as the study of worship attendance and parish work, still go on, but they seem to have become side plots alongside the new directions.

Change

The research profile of the theological faculty of the University of Helsinki and the related information culture have changed considerably over the past 40 years. The fields of study of all theological disciplines have expanded and diversified from their traditional starting points. The research has become significantly internationalised, and English has, at the cost of German, become the lingua franca of Finnish theological studies. The university theology in Helsinki sends a strong signal that it is a fully academic discipline that has claimed its place among other fields of study. The image of the theological faculty as an institution educating pastors for the church and teachers for schools is falling far into the past.

At the same time, information technology and its impact on research work have grown explosively. E-mail, the Internet, various types of digital publishing, open access, social media and so on have become part of the researcher's everyday life. They cannot be seen only as mechanical aids, but they have also significantly influenced the contents of research, from the selection of topics to the possibilities of digital humanities. What has this generation-long dramatic process of change meant for the Helsinki University Library, which since 2012 has served all the university's researchers, teachers and students as one library?

Challenges for the Library

In the fall of 2012, the humanities department libraries of the University of Helsinki, as well as the libraries of the Faculty of Theology and Political Science, as well as the student library, were moved under the same roof to Kaisa-talo (Fabianinkatu 30) and together with other campus libraries (Meilahti, Kumpula, Viikki) they became the Helsinki University Library (HULib). Already at that time, the library was slowly taking steps from a collection of printed books and reading spaces towards becoming a predominantly digital library. From the beginning of the millennium, the library began

to order in electronic form scientific journals that were previously ordered as printed issues. The library bought for its customers huge databases, through which they could access a wide variety of digital materials. But alas, the digital revolution did not turn financially benefit libraries or their users, but the benefit was claimed by publishers and their brokers, who were now able to raise prices. The digital material was no longer the library's own but rented goods, the use of which had to be negotiated from a constantly deteriorating position of a dependent client.

It is no wonder that HULib has, like numerous scientific libraries around the world, in various ways promoted open access (OA). However, OA publishing has gained ground quite slowly because its breakthrough in universities would have to be based on coercion: researchers would have to publish all their research funded by taxpayers' money in OA publications that have emerged over a long period of time. A further problem is that even open publishing costs money: the author or his institution must pay the open access publisher a processing fee for publishing an article or a book. This, in turn, has brought about the problem of so-called predatory open access: especially in India and Nigeria there are countless open access publishers who are not interested in peer review of scientific articles and ensuring their quality, but only in collecting processing fees for attaching a pdf file to the annuals of journals they have invented. Despite this, and because of this, it is already in the common interest of libraries and scientific communities to promote the adoption of a coherent open access policy both in Finland and throughout the European Union.

Along with legislation, there is only one problem with publishing scientific research paid for with taxpayers' money: meritocratic vanity. At the current stage of digital development, all scientific contributions could be forced to be published first in the repositories of scholarly institutions. The responsibility of accepting publications and guaranteeing their scientific quality would naturally fall on the institution of each author. For this reason, no peer review system of any kind would be needed. Nowadays, language check programs on the Internet are already at such a high level that they can be used to correct and improve the language of publications. All kinds of quality classifications of scientific journals are part of the same problem of meritocratic vanity. A scientific article is good or bad irrespective of the forum in which it has been published. In the profit-seeking system of the publishers, the question of

the quality of individual writing is mechanically connected to the journals in which they are published. As if in the world of visual arts, the frames would increase or decrease the value of the painting they are framing.

It is no surprise that in the Faculty of Theology at the University of Helsinki, open access publishing is progressing slowly. Researchers, most of whom still prefer toll access publishing, have the option, after a certain period of embargo (usually one year), to make the version approved by the publisher openly available to everyone. For this so-called parallel storage (green open access), universities have established repositories, in which some academic publications, mostly not the final versions but drafts accepted by the publisher, are stored. However, researchers prefer commercial sites (Academia.edu, ResearchGate), where they can also publish drafts of their articles within the conditions set by publishers.

There is therefore no change in the direction of completely open publishing in sight, neither here nor elsewhere. In 2023, theologians at the University of Helsinki published a total of 225 scientific papers, of which 186 or 82.7% were published in toll access publications and 39 or 17.3% in open access publications. Of the previous ones, 92 articles, or 40.9%, appeared as hybrid publications (a paid publication, but still purchased separately as an open publication) or as permitted versions in Helda, the open repository of the University of Helsinki.

When a scholar at the University of Helsinki publishes his or her article openly for everyone to read, in most cases, the University of Helsinki pays the costs of publication, mostly with the help of the library. It is still worth noting that the University of Helsinki does not recommend hybrid publications as a real channel for open access, unless the library has an agreement with the journal (Principles of Open Publishing 2017).

Open access publishing is progressing, slowly but surely, in its own margin. However, without a legislative basis (i.e. coercion), it will not develop into a dominant channel for publishing in the humanities. In any case, everyone can evaluate the results of the development themselves already. Open access journals and books can be browsed from large databases such as DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals) and DOAB (Directory of Open Access Books).

In the field of scientific publishing, the task of the library is to negotiate and rent as many scientific publications as possible and make them available to its customers. Although the use of e-journals seized the market a long time ago, researchers, teachers and students relate to e-books in varying ways, depending on the discipline and personal preference. On a general level, the transition to the use of e-books has been significant.

Already in 2011, about 80% of all journals ordered by the University of Helsinki library were e-journals, and now only a few scientifically significant international journals are published exclusively in print. The e-book revolution has taken place through book packages sold by brokers to libraries. For example, the eBook Central Academic Complete brokered by ProQuest contains more than 206,000 volumes rented by the HUlib. Such massive brokerage means death to the collections: librarians no longer control and cannot even control the mass of books that brokers include in their packages. In the HULib, the customers can use the so-called e-form for their personal order requests.

While scientific libraries have to save their expenses due to frequent cuts in their funding, they also have to monitor the lending figures of electronic materials, especially e-books. Librarians have to think about what to do with printed books or books included in e-packages that no one has borrowed for years. In any case, printed literature has to be weeded out over time, and especially older, unused literature ends up in large quantities in the National Repository Library in Kuopio. Regarding e-books, the question is much more difficult, because every single book, from the much-used to the completely unused, is increasingly part of the mass book packages that brokers deliver. Strictly speaking, scientific libraries no longer have collections or collection policies.

When research communities demand more and better publications from their scholars ('publish or perish'), these often become specialists in increasingly narrow fields. The library, in turn, is trying to serve their needs by acquiring a large and diverse – and increasingly expensive – mass of scholarly literature. In the world of mushrooming publications written by more and more specialised scholars, no scholar can keep up with the material published in their discipline. At the same time, scientific research rides on the crest of the wave: everything published gets old and forgotten much faster than in the old days.

In the library, we wonder why about 60% of the materials remain unborrowed, and this generally applies to the humanities. Some books are read in Kaisa House without borrowing them, and e-books can also be opened for reading from a computer without bothering to record them as borrowed. An even greater reason is probably due to the direction of increasingly specialised research topics in the development of the humanities. A high-quality and expensive monograph on a very specific subject is valuable to its author but does not gather readers in the same way as books of a more general level. The specialisation of theological studies can be seen in the library as an administrative and statistical problem: should it be possible to change the practices related to acquiring (i.e. renting) books in order to increase the lending rate? Perhaps a better solution would be to first analyse the situation carefully.

When the separate departmental libraries of the central campus of the University of Helsinki were brought under the same roof in the Kaisa building in 2012, the big changes we experienced were not yet in sight. Until then, it had been easy to follow the development of theology's literature needs, but the past 12 years have made the library's task considerably more challenging. In light of everything described above, it has become more difficult for theologians themselves to say what they ultimately want from the library. The easy answer would be to want as many high-quality materials as possible, but no library has enough money for that. The responsibility for tracking and ordering literature (e-form) has increasingly been transferred to researchers and teachers themselves. At the same time, the interaction between institutions and the library is inevitably weakening. As representatives of traditional scientific study, theologians are not front-line users of new services (such as research data services), and open publishing has not aroused a great response among them either. The library cannot act like chuggers (face-to-face fundraisers) and force its services on theologians. It would require quite a big cultural change to move from serving to interaction, the content of which is also an open question.

Finally: Does Theology Have the Right to Exist as a University Science?

The university theology in Helsinki has become more and more scientific and internationally acknowledged over the past decades. For professional theologians, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland is clearly a less significant organisation than it

was some fifty years ago. While traditional disciplines in theology are expanding and diversifying in terms of their research topics, theological education prepares Masters of Theology for an increasingly diverse range of professions that require academic training. Since it is somewhat easier to study theology than many other disciplines in the humanities, the Faculty of Theology in Helsinki serves for some students as a detour to study other subjects. At the same time, theology has also become a more interesting option for some others.

There are some big questions concerning the role of theology in society, but they do not seem to be actual or critical. They include the following: should the university theology be required to change in order to meet the needs of modern society? Should we think that theology does not even exist as a separate field of research but it rather includes various kinds of research on the dominant religion of our culture – a research whose value completely depends on the position and importance of Christianity and the church in our society?

One way to change the situation would be to break up the theological faculties and place the research of their sub-areas in a reduced form in the program of existing faculties and departments. Such a radical ideological solution would save money and redefine the position of traditional theological disciplines in a secular society. However, dispensing with university theology is not in the interest of scholars representing humanities and social sciences, because it is known that other sciences would not benefit from such a miserable fate of theology: in the end of the day, such political decisions would be all about austerity measures directed towards the universities as a whole.

It is therefore more plausible to assume that theology will continue as an academic subject, but it will naturally develop together with its different research areas towards religious and cultural studies. It is anyone's guess how such a slow change would affect the development and financing of various traditional theological subjects over time. The public and social interest in theology partly depends on how interesting theologians manage to make their science.

Conclusion: The Change Has Been Amazing

The change in all sciences from somewhere in the early 1960s has been staggering, and the change has only accelerated with the third millennium. University theology has been involved in this change, and its own change has always had its own special features. The long and taken-for-granted common path of theology and the church has gradually turned into intersecting paths in recent decades.
The change has been accompanied by a few things that led in the same direction. The number of members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland has decreased considerably (1990: 87.8% and 2023: 63.6%), and at the same time the Faculty of Theology in the University of Helsinki has become more clearly integrated into the scientific community, especially with the increase in funding that started in the 1990s. The fields of theological sciences have expanded, diversified, and specialised. At the same time, the research topics have taken them away from traditional theological disciplines in the direction of humanistic religion and culture research.

In 2012, the transfer of the Theology Library to the campus library in Kaisa House strengthened the digitisation of theological sciences with numerous electronic materials and new services. However, the library has to find its role when it no longer manages and manages the electronic materials it rents out expensively, except in a limited sense. The library is trying to promote open publishing, but far away is the day when the scientific community would all at once notice how effective it would be and how much it would save taxpayers' ever-dwindling money. At the same time, the library has to compete with agile, easy-to-use and popular commercial parallel publishers like academia.edu.

The position of theological research in the broad field of society, the church and the university has changed very clearly, but its identity as theological research has remained a question that is looking for an answer.

Acknowledgements and Concluding Observations

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