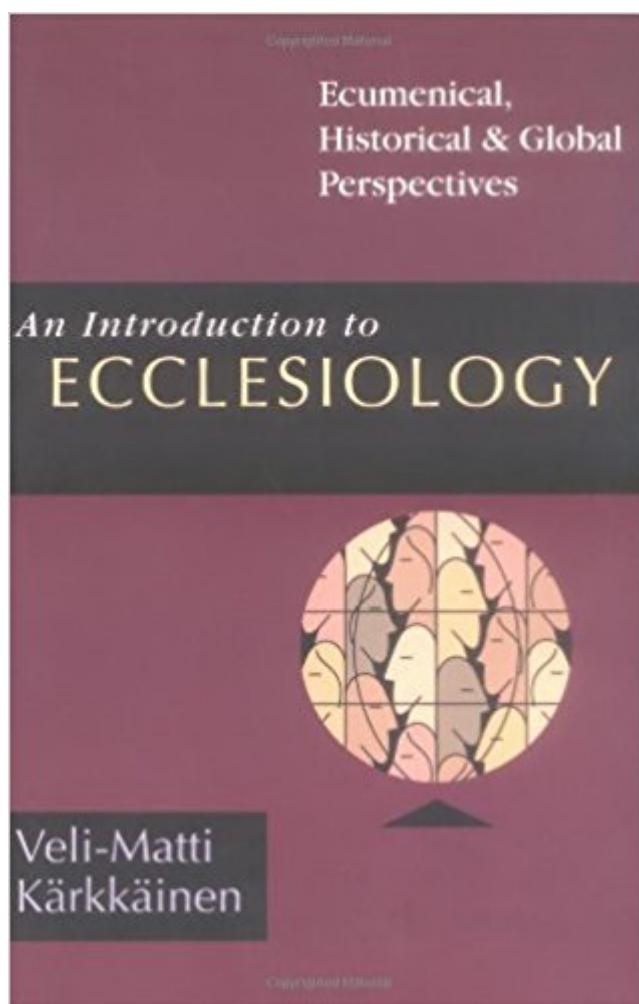


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# An Introduction To Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives



## Synopsis

What is the church? What makes the church church? In this volume, theologian Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen provides an up-to-date survey and analysis of the major ecclesiological traditions, the most important theologians, and a number of contextual approaches that attempt to answer these essential questions. Drawing on his international experience, global research and ecumenical awareness, Kärkkäinen presents an overview of both traditional and contemporary expressions of the Christian church. An Introduction to Ecclesiology will richly reward the student, pastor or layperson who is looking for a comprehensive and insightful overview of the unity and diversity of understandings and practices within the one church of Jesus Christ.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Kärkkäinen's critical survey of Christian views of the church comes at a time when interest in ecclesiology is rising. It provides a helpful map through the terrain of diverse interpretations of the nature of the church for those interested in an introduction and a refresher course in doctrines of the church for those who studied it long ago but have forgotten much of what they learned. Above all it contributes to our ecumenical understanding of different Christian traditions. It is a gift to the body of Christ to be enjoyed by Christians who want to understand that body's unity in diversity." (Roger E. Olson, professor of theology, George W. Truett Theological Seminary, Baylor University)

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen is professor of systematic theology at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. He has published numerous articles in international journals of theology. His

books include Pneumatology (Baker), Christology (Baker), Toward a Pneumatological Theology (UPA), An Introduction to Ecclesiology (InterVarsity Press), Trinity and Religious Pluralism (Ashgate), The Doctrine of God (Baker) and One with God (Liturgical Press).

**INTRODUCTION:** If you are interested in why there are so many different denominations in Christianity and why so many types of church "models" (to use term of Jesuit theologian Avery Dulles) this is an excellent and resourceful introduction. This was the only book that I could find on the topic of comparative ecclesiology and was glad that the author approached this field from a very broad perspective.

**AUTHOR:** Veli-Matti Karkkainen, is a Finish theologian that teaches at Fuller Theological Seminary and is of the Pentecostal persuasion. His evangelical association does not show through this theological comparative work. His sense of condensing ideas, analysis, and conclusions are very objective, erudite, and extremely fair. He also covers a lot of territory and a broad perspective that many evangelicals would not feel comfortable with. Truly a great work of a scholarly theologian.

**CONTENT:** The sub-title "Ecumenical, Historical, and Global Perspectives" represents the organization of this study. The first section discusses in six chapters standard "Ecclesiological Traditions": Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Free Church, Pentecostal/Charismatic and one extra chapter discussing the Church as One and contemporary ecumenical work between the various traditions. The second section, "Leading Contemporary Ecclesiologists" discusses the works of the best theologians representing the six traditions discussed in the first section. John Zizioulas representing Eastern Orthodoxy speaks of the Church as "instituted" by Christ and "constituted" by the Spirit. Hans Kung sees the Church (from his earlier Roman Catholic perspective) as "the people of God," the whole ecclesia, and the whole fellowship of the faithful. Wolfhart Pannenberg, uses his Lutheran background to come to an ecumenical understanding. Thus Pannenberg sees "the church as pointing beyond itself to the final purposes of God" - "the unity of all people of God under one God." Jurgen Moltmann's (Reformed) relational ecclesiology emphasizes "that the church never exists for itself but is always in relation to God and the world" because "the mission of the church is not to spread the church but to spread the kingdom." Croatian Miroslav Volf (Yale professor) "seeks to suggest a viable understanding of the church in which both person and community are given their proper due." James McClendon Jr. (Baptist) characterizes "the church gathering is God's gathering" and "Christ's presence is to be expected among his gathered people wherever that may take place." Lesslie Newbigin (Anglican) approaches ecclesiology with three catchwords: missionary, ecumenical, and dynamic, and his key motto is "no church without mission, and no mission without the church." The third section,

"Contextual Ecclesiologies" looks at contemporary ecclesiologies that have a cultural or geographical origin and do not fit into a particular traditional mold. Thus the non-church movement in Asia (especially Japan), the base ecclesial communities (CCBs) of Latin America, the African Independent Churches, Shepherding Movement, feminist church, world church, and Barry Harvey's post-Christian church as "Another City" receive their individual place in this study with insightful analysis. CONCLUSION: While Veli-Matti Karkkainen states that this introduction is by no means comprehensive, I benefited greatly by understanding many traditions' and other contemporary views of what makes church church. Now I am aware of more theologians and writings on the topic of ecclesiology. The common thread running through all these views is that the church is "a community with purpose and hope for the future", and "a fellowship of men and women, a fellowship of the Spirit, a koinonia."

This book is a bit of a slog, but useful for its topic. It looks at seven different church traditions and what they each believe about who the church is. Then it investigates seven prominent writers who have addressed the issue of church. Finally it concludes by looking at seven types of churches in their geographical or intellectual context, for example "The Feminist Church," and the "African Independent Churches."

Veli-Matti Karkkainen, professor of systematic theology at Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, CA, has written an excellent overview of ecclesiology. Karkkainen's book is divided into three sections: Part I-Ecclesiological Traditions; Part II-Leading Contemporary Ecclesiologists; and, Part III-Contextual Ecclesiologies. In other words, where the church has been, who's shaping it now, and where it's morphing into new forms. This IVP book does what IVP is famous for -- presents the subject with great accessibility, covering the material well, and introducing the latest in thinking. A new book by a new theologian who is making his mark on the systematic theology discussion.

Concise, clear, comprehensive

An excellent resource I used for my doctoral dissertation research on Spiritual Giftedness and how it has to do with ecclesiology and soteriology. Quite helpful. Thank you.

Good

Awesome!!

I have enjoyed a number of this author's books. This one begins a bit oddly - I felt like I was joining an ongoing conversation, rather than being introduced to the conversation. Nevertheless, it is a good text.

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