

# Personal background to research about "diakonia"

## My way to *diakonia*

It was Bengt Ingmar Kilström who asked me to cooperate in his book about the Christian charitable work in the Nordic countries (B.I.Kilström: *Kyrka och diakoni* I-II, 1987). After that book I was asked to make a research about the views of Christian charitable work by priests, deaconal workers and some lay people in the ev.luth. church in Finland (Ryökäs: *Diakonianäkemysemme*, 1990). The result was that there exists three or four ways to understand the meaning of that work of the parish, which in German has the name "Diakonie".

After some years I noticed, that Anders Bäckström had got almost identical results (with four classes) in Sweden (A.Bäckström et al.: *För att tjäna*, 1994). This raised the question: why? I had the possibility to look deeper into the education of deaconesses and deacons in Finland (E.Ryökäs: *Oppiiko diakonian?*, 2000). But it was not the education which could give the answer why it is so. In contrary, the students had difficulties to understand the content of "Diakonie", too.

I tried to go deeper and made an analysis about the dogmatic elements, which we have to think when we are discussing this topic (E.Ryökäs: *Kokonaisdiakonia*, 2006). The result was about 20 dogmatic *topics*, but none of them explained why we have so many different views.

Sven-Erik Brodd gave me the idea to look into John N. Collins' book "*Diakonia. Re-interpreting ancient sources*" (1990). It has helped me to ask other questions. I suddenly found an important text of Theodor Fliedner. He describes the origin of "diakonie" in the old texts, and I checked the cited texts. Only very few of them were correct (E.Ryökäs: *Zur Begründung der Diakonie bei Theodor Fliedner, Diakonische Einblicke*, DWI, 2011). Now I have got the idea, why we have so many different views of *diakonia*.

I have tested my hypothesis with an analysis of some other sources, too. It seems to be a common fact that the writers believe to see his or her own view of *diakonia* in the old texts. I have made an analysis about Paul Philippi (*Diaconia - A Make-Believe Which Continues? Diaconia. Journal for the Study of Christian Social Practice.*) and many Finnish writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (forthcoming, I hope). The modern text tells us that the ancient writers have a view of deacons, but the old text tells us another story.

What we need is to go "*ad fontes*". Therefore, we need the [project](#) about *diaconia* which I pointed out [here](#).