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SUNBONANI SCHOLAR

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When I was asked to present the paper during the Tutu-Jonker Colloquium at the University of the Free State in 2014, one of the guest speakers, Prof. Nico Koopman from Stellenbosch University, challenged me to expand the understanding of communion ecclesiology within the South African context. Thereafter, Prof. Rian Venter stretched this challenge, and I embarked on this work. I'd like to sincerely appreciate these two men for opening this opportunity for me.

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I dedicate this book to my family – my wife Tabby and three children, Mamosa, Koketso and Duduetsang. They are my pillars of support in all that I do.

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Foreword

Some of the legacies of the twentieth century – the renewed interest in the church and the human propensity for violence – have continued unabated to this day. The strange vicissitudes of the church in her global growth and the simultaneous decline in the West remain an intriguing focus for theological reflection.

Many attempts have been made to construe ecclesiologies which might 'fit' these changing conditions. The dark face of mankind has found surprising expressions in the new century, especially in aggressive fundamentalism. The dream for greater tolerance and acceptance of the 'other' has proven to be an elusive ideal. Both of these features of the twenty-first century are addressed by this timely book *Communion Ecclesiology in Racially Polarised South Africa* in a uniquely contextual manner.

I became acquainted with the author, Dr Kelebogile Thomas Resane, at the Faculty of Theology at the University of the Free State. I soon realised that his abilities as a teaching and learning specialist in higher education are matched by his interest in and mastery of Systematic Theology. In a short time, he has become an esteemed colleague who combines his work as teaching and learning manager with research and publication in Dogmatics.

This book gives a clear glimpse into the theological mind of Dr Resane. The chapters on a biblical, historical, contemporary, African, South African and pastoral approach to a communion ecclesiology, evidence a specific way of doing theology, which is most striking and commendable. Rarely do we encounter theological reflection as comprehensive and inclusive. Communion ecclesiology has become one of the major trends in scholarly reflection on the church, especially since Vatican II. Sadly, it has never received thorough reception in a country deeply scarred and alienated by the apartheid ideology.

This work by Dr Resane is long overdue. Not only does it convey important developments in the state of scholarship on ecclesiology but it also exemplifies much needed contextual engagement. The theological intuitions embodied in this book should remain a challenge to all involved in theology in South Africa.

The focus on communion signals a crucial shift in intellectual work during the last hundred years. Scholars have realised that a new category of thinking is emerging that replaces the long grip of the substance philosophy – relationality. But more is at stake than a mere category replacement; relationality also conveys something inherent to the very nature of being as such. A deep connectedness – an interwovenness of life – is a fundamental ontic structure.

On even more profound level, theologians have started to realise that the Divine should be re-imagined in ways congruent with these insights: God is in God's very identity relational; this is the meaning and implication of the trinitarian confession.

If relationality is the key to understanding the human cognitive structure and the nature of being, and the identity of the Divine, then the consequences are immense. Theologians will have to think differently about anthropology and about ecclesiology. Life is relational; the new humanity – the church – is the new community.

The ramifications for a country like South Africa are obvious and at the same time disturbing. Apartheid was inherently a violation of this ontological and theological insight. Sadly, separate churches along racial lines institutionalised this aberration. The history of the church in South Africa is the tragic history of failure to be the icon of the very life of the triune God – life in loving communion.

Many healing changes have been taking place in South Africa. Disturbingly, churches lag behind in coming to terms with a new constitutional dispensation. The work by Dr Resane is a most important wake-up call to rethink the continued divisions and alienations that still mar the face of the church in South Africa. May this vision – persuasively argued from various perspectives

– become a motivation for greater communion and make us more human, and a more obedient image of the Triune God.

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Introduction

The church is no more visualised as a parochial or structured operation with problematic legal restrictions, marked by numerous cul-de-sac signposts. In our postmodern era, the church is closely associated with conceptual metaphors of 'community', 'communion', 'fellowship', 'togetherness', '*koinonia*', 'the one another' and many other related terms, such as 'partnership', 'connectedness', 'participation', 'relationship' and 'cooperation'.

Humanity has always been the center of the narrative of creation whereby God and humanity coexist in some form of symbiosis – the relationship in which members value the reality and the contribution of others. From the Old Testament era, God has always communed with his people. In their nomadic lifestyle or geographically settled pattern, he has always been there in their midst. The nation of Israel never saw itself as an independent dynasty without Yahweh as a full member and participant of the community. God's people camped with God. The members come together at the point or center of the Word. It is the Word that makes this symbiosis inseparable. I associate myself with Willem VanGemeren when he affirms that

> the Bible is the book of God and man. God speaks through the mouths of men, and men and women hear the voice of God. Though the men God spoke through lived millennia ago, the church still listens. (1988:17)

God has used the metaphors to express his presence among his people. The community under his Word gathered around some altars built by the patriarchs, around the tabernacle and later around the temple. Sacrifices and the priestly services were the means to commune with God. The Old Testament communion was a complementary relationship, whereby Yahweh's concern was establishing a world in which humanity could experience God's

presence as they commune with him. Individuality or individualism was never a part of God's grand plan. VanGemeren asserts that 'the community worships, but individuals feed their own soul. The polarization of community and the individual is regrettable and can lead only to an impoverishment of the Christian community (1988:35).

The New Testament communion is characterised by togetherness. The early church of the Book of Acts was strong and exigent on two major concepts: *homothymadon* and *koinonia* (togetherness and fellowship). The concepts were inseparable as they marked their unity with each other and with Christ. Immediately after Christ's ascension, his followers gathered together in unity for mutual emotional support. They saw themselves as one body and found that this coherence to each other was their strength. The strength derived from unity was the mark of their communality. Unity does not bear on homogeneity but on heterogeneity. Unity is made out of diversities. The Word (apostles' doctrine) was the rallying center for *koinonia*. It was a unity around the Word.

Their unity was a community bound by the Spirit in fellowship. The Greek word for fellowship is *koinonia*, which means that which is in common. According to the *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary* (Tenney 1977), 'fellowship' can be:

1. Partnership or union with others in the bonds of a business partnership, or social or fraternal organisation, or just propinquity. Christians are told not to be unequally joked together with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14-18)1 because such a union, either in marriage, business, or society, is incompatible with that fellowship with Christians and with God.
2. Membership in a local Christian church or in the church. From the very beginning of the church at Pentecost, 'they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread, and in prayers' (Acts 2:42).
3. Partnership in the support of the Gospel and in the charitable work of the church (2 Cor. 8:4).

1 Scriptural quotations throughout the book follow the *New International Version.*

4. That heavenly love which fills (or should fill) the hearts of believers one for another and for God. For this love and fellowship, the Scriptures employ a word, 'agape', which scarcely appears in classical Greek. This fellowship is deeper and more satisfying than any mere human love whether social, parental, conjugal or other.

Speaking of *communion ecclesiology*, one of the common Greek words in Christian vocabulary is '*koinonia*'. The modern New Testament scholarship usually translates it as fellowship, partnership, sharing or even stewardship. It significantly carries the meaning of God's relationship with his people. In this sense, it means Christians are literarily partners with God. They are bonded together with God for a common purpose. Nothing is withheld in a true partnership. The resources of each one are shared with the other. It is beautifully expressed by Paul in Philipians 1:3-7 where the Philippian Christians are directly involved with sharing in Paul's suffering, poverty, message, and their own lives with him as partners in the gospel.

Sharing implies the release of everything one has with one who is in partnership with. God has given the communion everything needed for life and godliness. Communion members now share in his divine nature. This means that members receive that which is divine into their lives.

Koinonia as stewardship is when members are entrusted with a relationship to God, and are, therefore, expected to be good stewards of all that God provides. This refers to the resources of God and letting them flow through *communion* to the rest of the creation of God. As stewards, members receive not what is theirs, but what is someone else's. God has the purpose for what he has given us (1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 6:1.)

Koinonia is fellowship with God. He desires fellowship with his people. The church has the smooth interaction with God. She is called to love him since he first loved her. The *communion* is called to have *koinonia* with God and with one another in order to experience the fullness of life. The important aspect of fellowship is communication. The New Testament's use of communication gives the sense of sharing (John 11; Rom. 15:27, 1 Tim. 5:22, Heb. 2:14,

1 Pet. 4:13, 2). It is principally the idea of *sharing together*, as it is depicted by Acts passages, such as in 2:44, 4:32 and 36.

The believers of the apostolic church had fellowship in what some English Bibles call 'one accord' or 'together in one place' or habitual meeting together'. For instance, 'They all *joined together* constantly in prayer' (Acts 1:14), 'When the day of Pentecost came, they were *all together* in one place' (2:1), 'All the believers were *together* and had everything in *common*' (2:44), 'Every day they continued to meet *together* in the temple courts ... and ate *together* with glad and sincere hearts' (2:46), 'All the believers were *one in heart and mind* ' (4:32), 'And all the believers used to *meet together* in Solomon's Colonnade' (5:12) [emphasis added].

The Greek word for this togetherness is *homothymadon*. It occurs eleven times in the Book of Acts. Apart from the texts cited above, others that convey this *togetherness or one accord* are 4:24, 7:57, 8:6, 12:20, 15:25, 18:12 and 19:29. Romans 15:6 can be added to these. One can observe that *homothymadon* was either for positive or negative intentions. The fundamental principle behind *homothymadon* is 'Unity is Strength'. In every instance, when Christians were of the same spirit and mind, God did something extraordinary – a miracle, conversions or guidance. Theologian and Bible teacher, Peter Wagner comments on this fellowship:

> While they were growing in their vertical relationship to God, the new believers were also growing in their horizontal relationship to each other in Christian fellowship. This relationship is heavily stressed here, mentioned in four of the six verses in the passage. One of the key factors of church health is to design ways and means for fellowship o be an integral part of church life week in and week out. If it is absent, the church will tend to plateau or decline. New members must be absorbed ferity rapidly. This is one of the reasons the cell church movement is having an increasing impact, not only in Korea where it is most highly developed, but also in many other parts of the world. (1994: 104)

This was the secret behind their growth. One of the key factors of church health is to design ways and means for fellowship to be the integral life of the church at all times. If this does not happen, the church starts to plateau or decline.

Fellowship is one of the marks of the Spirit-filled community. Living in fellowship with one another is one of the effects of Pentecost. When people are baptised and filled with the Holy Spirit, they start to enter the new era of cordial relationships. The early church took relationships seriously. In submission, they were eager to receive the apostle's teachings. In love, they were related to each other and as a result became a loving, caring and sharing Spirit-filled community. In worship, they were related to God by worshipping him in the temple and in the home, in the Lord's Supper and in prayers, with joy and with reverence. As a communion of love, they were related to the world through outreach. They were engaged in continuous evangelism. For them, no self-centred, self-contained church that was absorbed in its parochial affairs could claim to be filled with the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a missionary Spirit. So a Spirit-filled church is a missionary church.

Koinonia is having something in common. *Koinonia* is strengthened by *homothymadon*, which means one accord or same in mind or spirit. It means brothers living together in unity (Psalm 133). *Koinonia* engrosses a common salvation through a common faith in God and in his Son, Christ Jesus. 'We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ' (1 John 1:3).

The basic idea behind enhancing communion ecclesiology is that Christians should strengthen and stimulate one another. Christian assemblies are intended to have a positive and helpful outcome, which is encouraging one another. Communion ecclesiology is a fellowship in that which is common. It means a partnership with others. It is, principally, the idea of sharing together. It is the communion of the faithful with God in Christ through the Spirit, and hence the common participation in Christian goods. Each member is in communion with God, and all are also in communion with one another. It

is the communion that we enter by the act of faith. Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) captures it correctly: 'The act of faith incorporates human beings into the community, on the other; it is simultaneously sustained by that community' (2008:128).

However, living together in community or communion does not mean perfection. Fundamentally, the church is a communion of saints, a gathering of believers. It is called together by the Holy Spirit. It is where the Word is proclaimed and the holy sacraments are administered. The church is both a hidden community and a visible fellowship. It is hidden because faith is the conviction of the things not seen (Heb. 11:1) and visible because of the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments.

In line with the concept of the community, the inner life of the church is the priesthood of Christians for each other. This priesthood flows from the priesthood of Christ. Sharing in Christ's priesthood gives the right to come before God in prayer and teaching for others. The priesthood for all believers means the right to preach the word and administer discipline. The whole church is authorised to proclaim the forgiveness of sins, which is the task that gives the community some assertiveness as representative of Christ here on earth.

The communion, as a caring community, plays a major role of teaching, cherishing and carrying humanity in the womb and lap and arms. It continues to shape and perfect humanity according to the form of Christ until its human members grow to become perfect people. The church as the community insists on the right and gifting of each believer for ministry as equal partners. The community has the access to God – both individually or corporately. The members are, therefore, not the spectators but the participants in ministry for the sake of other believers.

Just as the community lives by consensus and experience, the church experiences God mystically as supernatural. The church is not just an institution, but the fellowship experienced in everyday life. The church is the community of all who believe in Christ and exists for the purpose of extending the mission of

Christ here on earth. The mission includes social justice such as reconciliation, poverty alleviation and education, and interventions during natural disasters ,such as floods, civil uprisings and earthquakes. The prophetic role of the communion is to denounce evil in society, especially if the prevailing regimes apply unjust methods that undermine human worth and dignity. In South Africa, communion ecclesiology cannot be experienced when the church is silent to evils of colonialism, apartheid, corruption, etc.

The members of the *communion* are not all perfect. There are the paraplegic, the deaf, the mute and the blind, among others, in membership. The church is the same. The common thread for the church is the relationship with Christ and the experience of God, regardless of socio-economic status.

We live in the post-modern era where there is a strong proclivity towards privacy and individualism. Communion cannot thrive with these leniencies, as it is designed to work in unity.

The New Testament lends no support to the idea of lone Christians. Close and regular fellowship with other believers is not just some euphoria but an absolute necessity for the encouragement of Christian values. The church is the fellowship of eternal community. It is a community where one gets values and beliefs and training in the Christian life. It is the community where one establishes the deepest and most enduring relationships in life. It is where one derives the name as a Christian and obtains identity as God's child. It is the community where one finds a sense of purpose in life. It is a vehicle that God uses to create a platform to serve him. The church is the family of God that is entered by faith in Christ.

Communion ecclesiology speaks of the unity in the faith whereby all members receive empowerment to live and carry out God's purpose for life. As one reads Ephesians 4:13: 'Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ', one realises that the Apostle, Paul, explains how the various offices in the ministry and the work of the ministry lead to the edifying, the building up, of the body of Christ. The former executive secretary for theology and

the interfaith desk of the All Africa Conference of Churches, the Rev. Arnold C. Temple defines 'communion ecclesiology' as

> the act of communing; spiritual intercourse or contact; fellowship; the interchange of transactions; union of a number of people in a religious service; the body of people uniting in such a service (2001:74).

The unity in the faith is not the union of nature, but the union of plan, of counsel, of purpose – seeking the same objects, and manifesting attachment to the same things – and the desire to promote the same ends. The unity of the faith further speaks of being in God and in Christ. It is a union among all Christians founded on and resulting from the union with the same God and Saviour. It is the union that eschatologically leads to the state of complete unity and to entire perfection. The ongoing endeavours of this unity are that, eschatologically, all members of the communion hold to the same truths and have the same confidence in the Son of God.

The final truth of the unity of faith is faith in the Son of God. This is when all confessing Christians come to the unity of the faith concerning the person, works and teachings of the Son of God. This is the journey of arriving at the maturity or perfection. This perfection or maturity is not an esoteric or a mystical experience. The way to attain it is to, first and foremost, grasp this unity of the faith concerning the Son of God. The faith is the beginning, the first step, which is absolutely essential. It is the first step, which leads to the final stage in which our faith will be perfect, with nothing lacking in it and nothing missing from it. When we attain this perfection of faith, we shall all be saying the same things and believing the same things, for then we shall know Him and see Him as he is. It will then be a perfected faith.

This faith in the Son of God is far-reaching and comprehensive. It clears the uncertainties concerning Christ's person – he is the Son of God, but he is also man. The unity of the faith embodies both. He was both Son of God and Son of Man. All Christian confessions strive, towards that perfection.

In thinking about all this, one is left with wonder and marvel of the incarnation and all that led to it. It is a part of the faith of the Son of God to know that God, before time, purposed all this and appointed his Son heir of all things and gave him the church to be his people. And so the Son came, accepting the plan and his part in it voluntarily. The way to attain that final perfection is to look into these things, to grasp them, to understand them and to meditate upon them. We must believe in God's plan of redemption, his scheme of salvation, as prophets foretold it. It is all the part of this faith of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The more we know about God's purpose for this unity of faith, the more we shall grow and mature.

The unity of the Spirit and the unity of the faith are ongoing processes. Christ is still busy working in us to bring us to this unity. We need to avail ourselves for the Holy Spirit to work in our lives so that we may come to this perfection.

The unity of the Spirit is a demonstration or a characteristic of *koinonia*. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). The central object of salvation is to reunite, to bring together again, to restore the unity that existed between God and humanity before the fall. The new life found in Christ is the unity in Christ between the Jews and the Gentiles. It is the mystery that has now been revealed. The desire of God is that humanity, especially the communion of the saints, should preserve this unity since it is God's grand design. It is what displays God's glory above everything else.

The unity of the Spirit speaks of a united spirit or oneness of spirit. This does not refer to the fact that there is one Holy Spirit but it refers to the unity of affection, of confidence, of love. It means that Christians should be united in mind and affection, and not be split into factions and parties. It may be implied here, as is undoubtedly true, that such a unity would be produced only by the Holy Spirit and that as there was but one Spirit that had acted on their hearts to renew them, they ought to evince the same feelings and views. There was occasion among the Ephesians for this exhortation, for they were composed of Jews and Gentiles and there could have been a danger of divisions and strifes as there had been in other churches. There is *always* occasion for

such an exhortation, for a unity of feeling is eminently desirable to honour the gospel and there is always the danger of discord where people are brought together in one society. Because people have different tastes and habits, a variety of intellects and feelings, diverse modes of education and different temperaments, there is a constant danger of division. Hence, the Scriptures dwell so often on the subject, and hence there is so much need of caution and of care in the churches.

Through the bond of peace, there should be the cultivation of that peaceful temper which binds all together. The Native Americans usually spoke of peace as a 'chain of friendship', which was to be kept bright. The meaning here is that we should be bound or united together in the sentiments and affections of peace. It is not a mere *external* unity; it is not a mere unity of creed; it is not a mere unity in the forms of public worship; it is such as the Holy Spirit produces in the hearts of Christians when he fills them all with the same love, joy and peace in believing.

The unity the apostle is concerned about in Ephesians 4:3 is a living and a vital unity. It is not a mechanical unity. It is the unity of the Spirit that starts from within and works outwardly. It is something essentially organic and vital, therefore, not artificially produced. It is something that is inevitable because of its very nature. It is not just external but also an internal unity. It is the unity that can only be understood as the work of the Holy Spirit. Those who fail to understand the doctrine of the Holy Spirit will fail to understand this unity. If one thinks of the Holy Spirit as a neuter, a forceful power or just a soul, and does not realise that he is the Third Person of the blessed Holy Trinity, one will not understand this unity, and it will be non-existent. This unity cannot be sensed or experienced or put into practice unless the Holy Spirit graciously reveals it. The communion is called to keep, to guard, to hold fast and to preserve the unity of the Spirit. We are not asked to make or to create it but to preserve it. It exists because we are Christians, and we are to guard it.

The apostolic and the post-apostolic church went through ideological and theological turbulences aimed at destroying the communion, however, each

emerging force was met with challenges that left the church's communion unchallenged. The New Testament church was invaded by ideologies such as Platonism, Gnosticism, Epicureanism and Stoicism, as well as those propagated by the likes of Marcion, and Valentinus, however, these could not annihilate the church. During the patristic period up to the Reformation era, the church was marred by philosophies that, to some degree, caused schisms, yet the communion of the saints remained unmoved. The attacks were from both the throne and the pulpit, yet the church remained steadfast.

The first two chapters in this monograph establish the biblical and historical basis of communion. Chapter 3 considers traditional and contemporary views of communion ecclesiology and deals extensively with the Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant and African Initiated churches' views on communion ecclesiology. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 focus on the South African situation – the history and theological milestones of communion ecclesiology with special appeal to the metaphors such as '*ubuntu*' (communion ecclesiology from African perspective), the '*laager*' (communion ecclesiology from Afrikaans Reformed tradition) and '*matlo go ša mabapi*' (communion ecclesiology from the English churches, evangelical movement and the African Independent churches' perspectives). Chapter 7 continues where the three previous chapters left off by including the South African forgotten population groups of Coloureds and Indians. The extended family among the Coloured population, especially of those in the Cape, where Christians and Muslims interact harmoniously, is used as a metaphor for communion ecclesiology. On the other hand, the traditional Indian *kutum* is metaphorically used to express communion ecclesiology as presented in the New Testament to explain the households' conversions. Chapter 8 is the climax of the book and refers to the pastoral application of communion ecclesiology where the six functions (identity, dialogue, integration, policy, management, and reconciliation) are highlighted. The final chapter is missiological in content and provides practical missional steps to be taken to make communion ecclesiology an experienced and effective cultural synthesis. It concludes by giving various citations on communion ecclesiology by different church traditions.

Chapter 1

The biblical understanding of communion

The Word of God must be channelled from past history into ongoing history. Those who have received the Word of God are called upon to pass it on. This process passes through human hearts, human minds and human patterns of behaviour. It involves communities and institutions. It is a never-ending task, which we call biblical hermeneutics. Hermeneutics retrieves the meaning of the Word of God from these ancient documents and interprets it in such a way that it speaks authoritatively and redemptively to our contemporaries in their own situations (Nürnberger 2004:7).

1.1 The Old Testament communion

The Old Testament scholars over the years, are in agreement that the God of the Old Testament is the God who always sought communion with His people. Not only that, He is the God who is communion himself. This is demonstrated by the involvement of the Trinity in the creation story. The motif: 'Let us' in the Genesis (1:26, 11:7) record is a unifying communal notion of the communion of the Trinity. The God seeking communion with his creation was compelled by the *imago Dei* that human beings carry. The persons of the Trinity always consorted and consulted for mutual decisions and actions. It is not surprising to hear the theological debates on the diverse roles of each of the persons of the Trinity in creation.

From the Old Testament, the children of Israel worshipped God in a unique way. God was never seen as a remote being controlling the events of the universe.

> Hence, the Old Testament refers to God in anthropomorphic descriptions such as loving parent, considerable friend, and powerful king but still the stress is none frequently on the distance between God and man, perhaps because Old Testament writers were reacting to the cultic religion of Israel's neighbours (Alancheril 2014, par. 1.1).

God and the worshippers saw themselves as the intertwined corporate personality. In other words, wherever His people were, there you find their God. The patriarchal period particularly surfaces God as the nomadic God – moving with His people wherever they went. The people responded to this nomadic God by building the altar for Him wherever they settled. These altars were the visible presence and significance of God dwelling with His people – the communion that was not just acknowledged and realised but also experienced and appropriated.

From the patriarchal period to the time of wilderness wanderings, God has always been in communion with His people. The nation of Israel always sought unity with God in their worship, regardless of diversities that were notable among them. Their worship manifested the need to enter into communion

with God. Thus God saw himself as the genuine member of the community with His people. He anthropomorphically described himself to his people. They did likewise by describing him as a loving parent, friend, and king over their lives. This, however, did not bring them closer to him as they frequently expressed the distance between God and humans. This made their faith unique – not to be confused with the religions of their foreign neighbours. The Old Testament discusses the notion of communion by stressing the mutual sharing among God's chosen people, who co-exist as corporate entity.

The patriarchal period reflects some form of restlessness and nomadic lifestyle of the people of God. In fact, from the time of Noah (Gen. 8:20) to the time of Jacob at El-Bethel (Gen. 35:7), building the altar was the acknowledgement of the presence of God in their midst. In reference to Abraham's settling in Shechem and the Negev, Eugene Merril (1994:77) points out that 'at each of these places he built an altar, a symbol of his new faith and of the awareness of the presence of his God wherever he went (Gen. 12:4-9)'.

These symbols, in some instances, were given names as a memorial of God's communion with His people. This can be captured by the altars known as *El Elohe* (Mighty is the God of Israel) by Jacob in Shechem (Gen. 33:20); and the other one in Bethel, called *El Bethel* (God of Bethel). Wherever they settled, they acknowledged God's communion with them through these symbols.

The altars as the symbols of God communing with and among His people continued through the Mosaic era. In fact, Moses himself built an altar (Exod. 17:15) and called it *Jehovah Nissi* (The Lord is my Banner). This was a reminder to the nation of Israel that their God dwelt among them, despite the surrounding hosts of enemies. God is with His people even if they are in the seas of masses of other people. As a communing God with His people, He is with them wherever they go. When God appeared to Moses in a theophany on Mount Horeb in a burning bush, for the first time after four hundred years, God revealed himself in an audible voice by identifying himself as the I AM (Exod. 3:14, 6:3). Merril explains:

> This name, simply the first person singular of the Hebrew verb hāyāh ('to be'), would indicate to Israel that God was the one who eternally exists and that he would be more than sufficient to protect, accompany, and bless them every step of the way (1994:111).

During the Egyptian exile (a period of about 400 years), God seems to have taken absence of communion with His people. The exiled nation was in a foreign land without religious and political leadership. There was no cultic centre, and no canon to guide them. By taking them out of Egypt, God's intention was to resume communion with His people. The rationale behind their departure from Egyptian political leadership was clear: *Let my people go … so that they may have communion with me.* This has been expressed differently as sacrificing to the Lord, serving the Lord, having the festival with the Lord. It was difficult for people under oppression to enjoy communion with the Lord, hence, the Lord had to take them out in order for them to enjoy this communion.

From Sinai when the Law was given to the time of King Solomon, God chose to dwell among His people as a visible object known as a tabernacle. God commanded Moses that the tabernacle should be built so that 'I will dwell among them' (Exod. 25:8) and then I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God (29:45). Stephen F. Olford agrees that 'God's word to His people was not only that he wanted to dwell among them, but also to meet with them' (1978:31).

The tabernacle was the symbol of God's presence among his people. God's people camped with God through the wilderness wanderings. The tabernacle was the symbol of His communion with His people. The metaphoric design of the tabernacle distinguished God's people from the Gentiles. According to Pentecostal educator and theologian, Kenneth Archer:

> The outer hangings of the court (hāsēr) enclosed a perimeter measuring fifty by one hundred cubits. This court was designed to separate Israel as a holy possession of God and keep it distinct from the Gentiles. The same principle was rigorously observed in the later temples, both that

> of Solomon and that of Herod (in which was found a Greek inscription threatening the death penalty to any Gentile who should venture beyond the barrier into the inner court) (1985:243).

Further inside the tabernacle (later the temple) was *the qōdesh qodāshîm* (Holy of Holies). One of the items in this chamber was the *aron habberit* (the Ark of the Covenant). It 'represented the presence of God in the midst of His people' (1985:244). It can be observed that the structure and the construction of this tabernacle, together with its centrality among the tribes, occupy a large space in the Law. Wood highlights that 'there was need for it to be central, for, being God's own sanctuary, it represented His presence among the people' (1970:151).

Exodus 40:34 informs us that, at the conclusion of the construction of the tabernacle, God's glory filled it. In other words, God's presence once on Sinai has now come over the tabernacle. Victor Hamilton (1999:235) enlightens us that at this time

> the tabernacle completes Mount Sinai. Sinai is a marriage, the start of a new relationship. Now the partners must start to live together. It is from here when God declares that 'I will dwell among the people of Israel, and will be their God' (cf. Ex 29:43-46).

Hamilton continues:

> [T]he tabernacle is holy only because it is the dwelling place of a holy God. If he leaves, all sanctity leaves too … The tabernacle is the place where God and man can be closest to each other. Here God meets with His people (1999:235).

The altars occupy the primal place in the Mosaic Law, though the shift in symbolism and significance is observed. The altar became an integral part of the tabernacle. It became a divisive factor after settling in the land when misunderstanding arose when the two-and-half tribes of the trans-Jordan erected it. The conflict was solved amicably after negotiations and explanations ensued. The Reubenites and the Gadites built another altar (Josh. 22:34) as

a memorabilia for this synergy and amicability. It was called *Ed* (A Witness Between Us that the Lord is God). However, the habit of building the altars continued after the Mosaic Law was completed. For instance, Joshua built an altar in Mount Ebal (Josh. 8:30), and Gideon built an altar (Judg. 6:24) and called it *Jehovah Shalom* (The Lord is Peace).

The Judges and the monarchical eras of the history of the nation was dominated by tensions between God and His people. People opted for secession from the communion, while God, through His servants (judges and prophets), opted for restoration of his worshippers back into the communion. There has always been some stress on the harmony of God and His people dwelling together to stabilise the socio-economic and political chaos. The *shalom* of God in the Old Testament has always been a triangular relationship between God, humanity, and creation.

When theocracy was taken over by monarchy, the first two kings of the new dispensations, Saul and David, built the altars. Consequent to the nation settling in the Promised Land, the institutions were created to reflect the true idea of theocracy. Apart from the political, ecclesiastical, and festival structures, the central sanctuary at Shiloh was established to 'represent God's presence among His people' (Wood 1970:193). It became the central place where Yahweh, his priests and his people converged to foster their mutual communion – mostly through sacrificial worship. In other words, the twelve tribes found their one bond of unity in a central cultic centre, where their communion with their God would be deepened and take shape.

The Shiloh pilgrimages culminated in the Jerusalem pilgrimages to the temple that was built by King Solomon. The architectural features of the tabernacle featured conspicuously in those of the temple, though the temple was twice the size. The role and the place of the *aron habberit* reflect the same sentiment. Leon Wood, who was professor of Old Testament Studies and Dean of the Grand Rapids Baptist Seminary agrees with this and comments:

> [S]ince it was the same Ark constructed earlier at Mt Sinai in the time of Moses, it had represented God's presence in the Tabernacle

> and would continue to do so in the Temple. Significantly, when it was placed in its assigned location, the 'cloud' of God's glory filled the building (1 Kings 8:1-11; II Chron 6:1-11), even as it had the Tabernacle (1970:296).

The temple became the symbol of Yahweh's presence among His people (1 Kings 9; 2 Chron. 7). It became a cultic centre where the nation could come and commune with their God. It represented God as a co-dweller with his people. The temple was central to the nation's worship to their God. Indeed, 'it had come to be the point of reference for all of life' (Brueggemann 1984:67). It had become integrally woven with the national theology of the time. Any worship rendered outside of it was regarded as competition with Yahweh. Brueggemann continues to enlighten us that 'its destruction thus meant the loss of a center, and a profound public disorientation, in which public meanings and values are nullified or at least severely placed in jeopardy' (1984:67).

After the division of the kingdom, the northern kingdom insisted on seceding from the temple worship, hence the construction of the altars (cultic centres) on the borders in Bethel and Dan to stop people from going to God's temple in Jerusalem (1 Kings 12:26-33). The southern kingdom persisted in the temple worship despite the erratic allegiance to Yahweh on their sides. For them, the temple was the representation of God's place in heaven. They held firmly to the Davidic covenant that the temple is the presence of God amongst them; hence, no affliction will befall them – internally or externally. 'Like an invisible monarch, God dwells amid his people in the temple' (Van der Meer 1966:25).

Through the history of Israel in the Old Testament, faith in God's presence among His people took a central stage of the civil life. his presence and communion were threatened by people's departure from his commandments. However, through His agents such as the judges, priests, some kings and prophets He always called people back to communion with Him. The ministry of the judges had always been the Holy Spirit empowering them to return to the Lord as a condition for deliverance from their oppressing enemies. The monarchy instituted from the time of King Saul was to symbolise God's

presence to guide them to a better life. The conditions had always been to insist on harmonious fellowship with Yahweh. The prophets constantly called people back to God in order to enjoy the best life laid out for their future. While the prophets were bringing people back to God, the priests brought God to the people. So, the temple played a major mediatorial role where God, through the priestly functions, joined His people to commune with them. As the omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent God, these functions and rituals were to conscientise people of these attributes. They were not designed to revoke God's attributes, as He was and is still immanent and transcendent.

The prophetic literature of the Old Testament announces the universality and continuity of God's community in their eschatological journey. This universality is when Jews and Gentiles worship the Lord together. This is the

> vision of the universal worship of God, similar to what Jesus said to the woman of Samaria, 'The true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks' (John 4:21, 23) (Van Gemeren 1990:177-178).

The continuity speaks of the unbroken covenant between God and his people where grace and promise are administered to cultivate God's kingdom (VanGemeren 1990:316). The prophetic message had always been the assurance of God's protection and blessing. The community marred by sin was always assured of God's restorational intentions. The God of justice was also the God of love. God's communion with His people had always been an archetype of their success.

1.2 The New Testament communion

The New Testament opens with old and mostly new features or community centres that drew people into the communion. The only institution that seems to have transduced is the temple. It was the Herodian temple that was built by Herod the Great during the inter-testamental period, and the Lord Jesus Christ ministered in it. This temple was totally and finally destroyed in 70 AD when Jerusalem fell to the Roman Empire and was never rebuilt. However, its role

and significance had changed dramatically during this era. It was physically beheld with some apocalyptic nuances. It was a cultic centre where the priests under the supervision of the captain of the temple carried out a censing and intoning of some psalms; performed *ordinarium* - a burnt offering on behalf of the community; presided during the annual festivals; and to perform private communion sacrifices such as *shalom* offerings (Reicke 1985:166-167).

In the New Testament, where there is an advent or the renewal of *ekklesia*, the textual evidence, especially in the Lukan Acts narrative, is clear that *ekklesia* was a communion of different individual churches. The Christian community in different locales is simply called *ekklesia*. The apostle Paul uses the term *ekklesia* to refer to different *ecclesial* communities. One constantly reads of Pauline references to churches of Asia (1 Cor. 16:19), the Church of God, which is at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1), and the church of Thessalonica (1 Thes 1:1; 2 Thes 1:1). One can deduce from this that 'one Church of God is present in the places mentioned; the Church, in its full qualitative reality, is present in every local church' (Vellanickal 2009:111).

The New Testament churches, with their cultural diversities, enjoyed communion under the headship of Christ, under the leadership of His apostles or bishops. Although these churches were culturally different, they enjoyed fellowship with each other – visibly or invisibly. Their presence in these cultures brought some dynamics to be reckoned with. Their basic unity was derived from the same apostolic tradition common to all of them tracing back to the originating event of Christ's life, death, and the resurrection. However, these churches seriously believed that

> there is no genuine community without active communion, without the active and mutual sharing of life, love, and truth … Communion always produces a community of love, but community does not always produce communion (Lawler & Shanahan 1995:9).

The apostolic *paradosis* makes it clear that the temple is the figure of Christ's Church. Sporadically, the New Testament refers to the human physical body as the temple of God (1 Cor. 6:15-20). Its significance and role slowly took some

dramatic turns. As Tenney (1971:92) highlights: 'Only with the development of the Gentile church did its connection with Christianity ceased'.

Important is that the Jews and the proselytes of the New Testament era converged at the temple for the purpose of worship. The temple became the connection and convergence point where God's people could meet each other and their God.

The epitome of God's communion with his people in the New Testament is the *eucharist*. The term *sacramentum,* from which is derived the term *sacrament*; became a sort of *musterion* in which Christ and His followers enter into communion. American-Dutch Reformed theologian, Louis Berkhof, in agreement with the Reformed view, maintains that it is legitimate to regard a sacrament as

> a holy ordinance instituted by Christ, in which by sensible signs the grace of God in Christ, and the benefits of the covenant of grace, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers, and these, in turn, give expression to their faith and allegiance to God (1941:617).

The communion is better captured by the Lukan narrative of the Acts of the Apostles, though some views are supported from other writings in the New Testament.

The early church of the Book of Acts was strong and exigent on two major concepts. These concepts are *homothymadon* and *koinonia* (togetherness and fellowship). The concepts were inseparable as they marked their unity with each other and with Christ. Immediately after Christ's ascension, His followers gathered together in unity for mutual emotional support. They saw themselves as one body and found that this coherence to each other was their strength.

The Book of Acts does not only tell us about the origin or the history of the church. It teaches us the strategy for missions, and shows us the principles of church planting and church growth. Above all, it teaches the behavioural and ethical consonants of *ecclesiastical* community. In its early chapters, it highlights and captures the *ecclesiological* concept of the communion.

The believers of the apostolic church had fellowship in what some English Bibles call 'one accord' or 'together in one place' or 'habitual meeting together'. For instance:

'They all joined together constantly in prayer' (Acts 1:14).

'When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place' (2:1).

'All the believers were together and had everything in common' (2:44).

'Everyday they continued to meet together in the temple courts... and ate together with glad and sincere hearts' (2:46).

'All the believers were one in heart and mind' (4:32).

'And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade' (5:12), etc.

The Greek word for this togetherness is *homothymadon*. It occurs eleven times in the Book of Acts. One can observe that *homothymadon* was either for positive or negative intentions. What we learn here is the principle, 'unity is strength'. In every instance when Christians were of the same spirit and mind, God did something extraordinary – a miracle, conversion or guidance. Communion was experienced because the common interest, not personal feelings undergirded the 'togetherness' of the community.

Generally, the New Testament, *homothymadon* 'stresses inner unanimity in response to teaching (Acts 8:6) or prayer (1:14)' (Kittel & Friedrick 1985:684). Despite the potential or existing conflicts, unanimity is still achieved by worshipping the one Lord of the universe. The ultimate experience of *homothymadon* is the visible or observable action of God in the communion. Jesus impressed this truth that 'where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them' (Matt. 18:20). This was later expressed in the prayer of St John Chrysostom: 'that where three or more are gathered together, there Jesus (the way and the truth) will be' (Roden 2009:83).

This was the secret for their *marture* and growth. *Ecclesia* experiences health in and of communion by *homothymadon*, which is to be the integral life of

the church, week-in, and week-out. If this does not happen, the church starts to plateau or decline. 'There is no genuine community without active communion, without the active and mutual sharing of life, love, and truth' (Lawler & Shanahan 1995:9). I agree with Jürgen Moltmann (1992:118) that 'we give one another life and come alive from one another'.

The common Greek word that enhances *homothymadon* in the Christian vocabulary is *koinonia.* It carries a rich meaning in the New Testament and is therefore not easily translated into English. It is usually translated as fellowship, partnership, sharing or even stewardship. It significantly carries the meaning of God's relationship with His people. In this sense, it means we are literarily partners with God. This implies we are bonded together with God for a common purpose. Nothing is withheld in a true partnership. The resources of each one are shared with the other. It is beautifully expressed by Paul in Philipians 1:3-7. Here we see the Philippian Christians sharing in Paul's suffering, poverty, message, and their own lives with him as partners in the gospel.

Sharing implies the release of everything in you to those with who you are in partnership. God has empowered and equipped humanity with all that is needed for *anastrophe* – conduct and godliness. The members of the communion share in his divine nature. This means that they receive that which is divine into their lives. What they receive is to be passed on to others as a *catechesis*. This was also a Pauline ecclesiastical conviction.

> [He] challenged the Christian community to sow righteousness in doing good, sharing with the needy, walking in the Spirit, and seeking every opportunity to establish God's righteous kingdom in all areas of life (VanGemeren 1990:114).

Koinonia also means stewardship. The communion, in partnership with God, is entrusted with a privilege of becoming special guests under his pavilion *(oikos),* therefore, expected to be good stewards of all that God offers on the table. The communion members accept all the resources of God and let them flow through them to the rest of the creation of God. As stewards, they receive

not what is legitimately theirs, but also what is someone else's (God). God has the purpose for what He has given them (1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 6:1). The members of communion work together for the common good. The God who indwells them to be part of them, trusts them to convey his resources to other members in his creation. God does not see himself as an isolated entity, but as part of the communion with his people for soteriological fulfilments in His creation.

Koinonia enables fellowship with God. He desires to fellowship with His redeemed people. As those in communion with God, interaction with Him is a norm. The communion members are called to love Him, since He first loved them by inviting them into this communion with Him. They are called to have *koinonia* with God and with one another in order to experience the fullness of life (*anastrophe*) that pertains to his character of togetherness unity.

The important aspect of fellowship is communication. The New Testament use of 'communication' gives the sense of sharing. It is principally the idea of sharing together, as it is depicted by Acts passages such as 2:44, 4:32 and 36. Wagner (1994: 104) comments on this fellowship that while they were growing in their vertical relationship to God, the new believers were also growing in their horizontal relationship to each other in Christian fellowship.

The apostolic church of Acts took relationships seriously. This is confirmed by contemporary evangelical scholar, John Stott, who says:

> First, they were related to the apostles (in submission). They were eager to receive the apostle's instruction. A Spirit-filled church is an apostolic church, a New Testament church, anxious to believe and obey what Jesus and his apostles taught. Secondly, they were related to each other (in love) … A Spirit-filled church is a loving, caring, sharing church. Thirdly, they were related to God (in worship). They worshipped him in the temple and in the home, in the Lord's Supper and in the prayers, with joy and with reverence. A Spirit-filled church is a worshipping church. Fourthly, they were related to the world (in outreach). They were engaged in continuous evangelism. No self-centred, self-contained

> church (absorbed in its own parochial affairs) can claim to be filled with the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a missionary Spirit. So a Spirit-filled church is a missionary church (1991:87).

The reason for communion ecclesiology is *koinonia*. This is having something in common. The *koinonia* is strengthened by *homothymadon*, which means one accord or same in mind or spirit. It means siblings living together in unity (Psalm 133). Communion engrosses the fact that humanity has a common salvation through a common faith in God and in Christ Jesus. 'We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ' (1 John 1:3).

The ecclesiastical communion seriously considers the teachings, such as, 'Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-and all the more as you see the Day approaching' (Heb. 10:25). This stresses a need for corporate fellowship – *koinonia* in its expressive form. Indeed, a togetherness in love, *a koinonia*.

The New Testament lends no support to the idea of lone Christians. Close and regular fellowship with other believers is not just nice, but an absolute necessity for the encouragement of Christian values. The church is the fellowship of eternal community. It is a community where one gets values and beliefs and the training in the Christian life. It is the community where one establishes the deepest and most enduring relationships in life. It is where we derive our name as Christians and our identity as children of God. It is the community where one finds a sense of purpose in life. It is a vehicle that God uses to create a platform for us to serve Him. The church is the family of God that is entered by faith in Christ.

The basic idea enhancing communion is that Christians should strengthen and stimulate one another. Christian assemblies are intended to have a positive and helpful outcome, which is encouraging one another. There is no doubt that immeasurable influence for good can come from right-minded people in association with others (Guthrie 1975). Communion is that which is in

common. It means partnership with others. It is principally the idea of sharing together. It is the communion of the faithful with God in Christ through the Spirit, and hence the common participation in life experiences. Each member is in communion with God, and all are also in communion with one another. It is the communion that we enter by the act of faith. Ratzinger (2008:100-131), in referring to Luther and the unity of the church, stresses that the act of faith incorporates human beings into the community and is simultaneously sustained by that community.

However, living together in community or communion does not mean perfection. We have to learn that the church is a communion of saints, a gathering of believers. It is called together by the Holy Spirit. It is where the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered. The church is both a hidden community and a visible fellowship. It is hidden because faith is the conviction of the things not seen (Heb. 11:1); visible because of the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments.

In line with the concept of the community, the inner life of the church is the priesthood of Christians for each other. This priesthood flows from the priesthood of Christ. Sharing in Christ's priesthood gives the right to come before God in prayer and teaching for others. The priesthood for all believers means the right to preach the word and administer discipline. The whole church is authorised to proclaim the forgiveness of sins, which is the task that gives the community some assertiveness as representative of Christ here on earth.

The church is the caring community. It plays a major role in our life by teaching us, cherishing us, and carrying us in the womb and lap and arms. It shapes us and makes us perfect according to the form of Christ until we grow to become more like Him. The church as the community insists on the right and gifting of each believer for ministry as equal partners. The community has the access to God - both as an individual or corporately. The members are therefore not the spectators, but the participants in ministry for the sake of other believers.

In essence, both the Old and the New Testaments were centred in a community. This community has always been vertical and horizontal. It has always been an international community with God in their midst. Curtiss Paul DeYoung captures this very well.

> The Bible includes people representative of the worldwide human family. 'One human family, many cultural expressions' is a biblical truth that needs to be reclaimed and proclaimed in this age of diversity. The Bible is a multicultural document. The Hebrew Bible proclaims God's universal love for humanity from the very beginning. This message of oneness keeps emerging even in the midst of ancient Israel's ethnocentrism. The New Testament declares a faith initiated by Jesus that was truly multicultural in its core (2009:28).

1.3 The community around *Kerygma*

The apostolic church of the Book of Acts was the community around the word. The reader encounters the *kerygmatic* incidences and the gathering around the apostles' doctrine as the apostolic praxis of the time. The Word was proclaimed and it was the central pool wherever the apostles went or gathered. The early church was built around apostles' doctrine, *koinonia*, eucharist, and prayer (Acts 2:42-47). The Word they proclaimed was on repentance, forgiveness of sins, baptism, the resurrection and the return of Christ. However, Guthrie cautions that

> the importance of the book of Acts is in its preservation of the main doctrinal themes presented in apostolic preaching, even if there is no evidence of an attempt to develop a systematized theology (1975:338).

The Word as *kerygma* and *didache* enhanced the communion of the saints. The Word became the unifying factor that kept them in a closely knit web.

The togetherness under the authority of the Word and the guidance of the Holy Spirit was the glue that enhanced the communion of the saints. Stott declares:

> Since the teaching of the apostles has come down to us in its definitive form in the New Testament, contemporary devotion to the apostles' teaching will mean submission to the authority of the New Testament. A Spirit-filled church is a New Testament church, in a sense that it studies and submits to New Testament instruction. The Spirit of God leads the people of God to submit to the Word of God (1991:82).

This justifies the church fathers' motif that the church is where the Word is proclaimed. The Word that held the communion together was both *kerygmatic* and *diaconal* (proclamation and service). In other words, it was both evangelistic and exhortational.

The church found the strength of its communion in *euangelizesthai*. This is popularly translated as announcing the good news. The old English speaks of the glad tidings, which is usually the news that people have not heard or expected. It conveys the meaning of announcing a major event such as the victory, or the beginning of the new dispensation under the new ruler or emperor. The Old Testament prophets used the same idea of telling the good news of God's decisive and saving actions (soteriological endeavours) on behalf of the nation, Israel – delivering them from enemies and their own sins.

The fundamental meaning of *euangelizesthai* is that Jesus is Himself the content of the message. It is to be noted that the word is common in Lukan narratives (Luke's Gospel and Acts) and fairly common in Paul's writings. The parallel words are preaching, teaching, and witnessing. *Euangelizesthai* is not just speaking but proclaiming with power to the accompaniment of signs. Oral and verbal expression is part and parcel of this communion action. As a result, we see that *euangelizesthai* brings healing (Matt. 4:23), joy (Acts 8:8), salvation (1 Cor. 15:1-2) and regeneration (1 Pet. 1:23). As proclamation, it carries with it both the offer and the power of salvation.

Gathering around the Word is like evangelism, as Barclay (1958:102) highlights, it was never something apologetic, nothing diffident, nothing clouded with doubts and misted with uncertainties. It is the proclamation and the study that is never arrogant, blaring or self-righteous spiritual exercise. 'It is simply the

proclamation, humble but with authority, of Christ as Lord' (Crow 1982:47). It calls for a stance of authority that moves from uncertain silence to faith-proclamation. It is not propaganda, but the faith expression of and in Jesus Christ, the risen Lord, as the hope of the world (2 Cor. 4:5). Dedication to the study of the Word enabled the apostles' authority to shine through in both content and lifestyle. This Word is not a voice of human ideology, but a message of hope to those lost in the seas of confusion due to sin-infected nature and environment.

The New Testament gathered around the apostles' doctrine in order to serve (diaconal) God, the church, and the world at large. The Greek word *diakoneō* means to serve or to minister – to render any kind of service. This refers to

> the various forms of ministry and service in which the Christian community, in imitation of Jesus of Nazareth (who was among us as one who serves), puts itself at the service of the whole world (Kritzinger, Meiring & Saayman 1994:37).

The acclaimed South African missiologist, David Bosch in referring to this as the church crossing frontiers in the form of a servant, declares that

> we should find a way beyond every schizophrenic position and minister to people in their total need, that we should involve individual as well as society, soul, and body, present and future in our ministry of salvation (1991:399).

Service is the loving acts that are accompanied by *kerugma*. In the words of Kritzinger and his colleagues: Word and deed are absolutely intertwined as dimensions of the one 'good news activity' (1991:143).

At Amsterdam 2000, the nine-day conference for preaching evangelists convoked by evangelist Billy Graham, Rhoads explained to the workshop audience: 'To couple the work of God with the words of God is a winner. The Gospel needs to be twofold: word and work' (2001:413).

If today's church would like to find itself in a real communion with the Trinitarian God, it would be through service evangelism that embraces the

institutional work such as schools, hospitals, community upliftment projects, skills training, and working with those with special needs. This can also be expressed in community development programmes where people are trained in life skills (hard or soft) to redress menaces such as poverty, diseases, unemployment, etc. Ross (2009:517) aptly states that 'It is through a high level of commitment to community development that ways are found to make known the reality of Jesus Christ'.

It is important, especially in Southern Africa that service evangelism is expressed in processes of peace and justice whereby issues such as peace, reconciliation, mediation and advocacy are addressed to all sectors of the societies that may find themselves as victims or even as perpetrators. This is a holistic mission of *ecclesia* – the church incarnate. It is what Ratz, Tillapaugh & Augsburger allude to when they write: 'Evangelism is everything we do to make faith in Christ an option. It includes sharing the good word and doing the good deed' (1990:17).

The community around the Word justifies and gives people an opportunity to make up their minds to follow Christ. I concur with Moffet's assertion that 'the evangelistic proclamation was never so narrow that it became isolated from the immediate pressing needs of the poor, the imprisoned, the blind and the oppressed' (1994:10-8).

Ecclesia is about salvation and service – a call to be engaged in proclamation and social action. It is the holistic approach that does not take side with narrowness limited to verbal expression or diaconal appearance. A group of social analysts in South America concurs and concludes:

> [T]he holistic witness of incarnational living had once again proven that God's message to the whole person is attractive and compelling, and many will respond when given the chance to see it lived out in their midst. (Yamamori, Myers, Padilla & Rake 1997:76).

In the real sense of diaconal incarnation, the New Testament church shows the love of Jesus by worshipping God, and by serving people, and each other. It is

the manifestation of Christ's love by serving his people so that these people can become his followers by experiencing and observing his love in action in and through his people.

Communion bears some Christian impulse, and it is one of the central motifs of the Bible. It is when God's estranged people respond in faith and return to communion with God. Communion ecclesiology, as further elaborated in this book, is when people come into communion with the Triune God, and consequently with one another.

> God is a community in relationship and communication – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The life and activity of the Trinity is a perfect communion of love. God created human beings to participate in community and communicate with each other (Temple 2001:75).

Chapter 2

The historical roots of communion ecclesiology

Systematic theology explicates the content of Christian belief, often by expanding the trinitarian structure found in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds. This content is normally termed doctrine. The doctrinal content sits in the center, usually preceded by a section of methodology and followed by a discussion of ethics. The section on methodology consists of a prolegomenon that is occasionally called 'foundations' or 'fundamental theology.' The discussion of ethics, which sometimes appears in a work separate from the systematic theology itself, attempts to discern what conduct should flow from doctrinal belief (Peters 2000:5).

2.1 Historical and factual overview

In this monograph, the concern is about the ecclesiological understanding of South African Christianity. Since South Africa is a multicultural and pluralistic society, it is theologically possible and valid to speak of the *ecclesial* pluralism. The theological pluralism is the necessary result of *ecclesial* pluralism. *Ecclesial* diversity has its root in the mission of the Church. The diversity of the Christ-experience of the preaching and the cultural background of the people who received the gospel message account for different churches and different modes of the celebration of faith and consequently different modes of the interpretation of faith (Maniyattu 2007:93).

In the history of the church, there were attempts to negate the *ecclesial* diversity and theological differences. There were controversies due to theological diversity. The controversies in the name of *filioque* and *christotokos* are examples for the resentment to recognise a different theology in another church. But we cannot ignore the steps taken to appreciate the theological plurality in the church from the ancient times onwards. For example, when Pope Victor was prepared to excommunicate the churches of Asia which celebrated Easter and broke fast on 14 Nisan, whether or not it was a Sunday, St. Irenaeus wrote to the Pope to dissuade him from the plan of excommunication:

> Such a diversity of observance has not just arisen now, in our times, but dates from long ago, from our forefathers … they all nevertheless kept the peace, as do we, with one another; the difference in the confirms the agreement in faith (Arangassery 1999:30).

Observation is made in history that both agreement and reluctance are seen with regard to the issue of *ecclesial* pluralism in the Catholic Church. The Latin domination in many of the areas of *ecclesial* life is still evident even today. The cry for the jurisdiction is all over the world. In theory, Protestants emphasise the right to have same rights and obligations, especially with regard to the preaching of the gospel to the whole world. Consequent to Reformation era, there arose some reluctance for communion lifestyle due to the fear that

the parallel presence of many *sui juris* churches would lead to unhealthy competition and to confusion among Christians.

On the contrary, due to the influence of Vatican II, the scene has changed a lot. Today the dialogues with Reformation traditions are approved and affirmed with and among the communion of Catholic Church. Cardinal Walter Kasper has been instrumental in echoing the spirit of communion ecclesiology from the Vatican *ecclesial* context.

2.2 The early church was a communion

Some reflections on the apostolic church are that it was *ekklesia* in communion under the leadership authority of the apostles. Its hierarchy was not tight or dictatorial. It was not a top-down commanding regime, but a *pneumatic* communion gathered for apostolic *didache and dogma*. The leadership was not given for red-tape purposes but for the strengthening of the communion within the community. This is enhanced by the apostolic exclamation to the Ephesian community (Eph. 4:1-16).

The latter part of the Book of Acts and the Epistles era presents us with the church that had unity in diversity. The local congregations had their own local challenges doctrinally or philosophically. However, these did not pose any serious threat to their communion with Christ, the Head and the Founder of the Church. It should, however, be noted that the possession of all things in common, commendable as it may be, did not abolish all tensions between various groups (Gonzalez 2010:25).

The Judeo-Gentile conflicts started to surface in Acts 6. From this period, the Jewish church started to wane and the predominantly Gentile church emerged. Jerusalem continued to be an apostolic seat leading Jewish Christians in the majority, while beyond the frontiers, the Gentiles converted in large numbers. The mission centre grew out of the city of Antioch – the Gentile centre to reflect God's purpose about the new community. The church in Antioch was a remarkable multi-ethnic community that embodied the gospel of the

Kingdom of God. Its leadership team was multinational, and multicultural in its composition.

In the post-apostolic era, i.e. after the Book of Acts, the established churches were inaugurated and now had to be taught the community lifestyle. The epistles are generally addressed to the settled communities who had to insightfully know their expectations from the Head of the Church, the Messiah himself. Through the instrumentality of the apostles and the church fathers, the goal was to ordering the communities into a community lifestyle. According to Kelebogile Resane:

> [T]his is when explanations, principles, or laws are reduced to the absolute minimum. This structure requires simplicity and growth that is characterised by fruits *(Karpos)* or production of good character. The spontaneous church is marked by constantly improving the capacity of organising itself to achieve a particular goal (2008:94).

The post-apostolic church went through the scathing persecution and found itself in diaspora. From the time of Nero around 60-70 AD to the time of Domitian, Jews and Christians suffered enormously, as they resisted the state instituted emperor worship. The second century is known by historians as a century of martyrs or martyrdom. The notable leading martyrs of the era include Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp and Justin. Horrendous persecution of the era was directed to Christians because

> the authorities saw in Christianity a movement with subversive overtones, and therefore sought to suppress it, not because they were corrupt or ill-informed, but rather as a matter of policy in defence of the integrity of the state (Gonzalez 2010:58).

It is clear that what threatened the status quo was the unity of Christians regardless of persecutions hurled over them. This unity amazed the *realpolitik* of the time as it encapsulated and embraced people of different nationalities, races, and ethnics. The poor and the elite found each other around *the apostolic paradosis* and *ecclesiastical catechesis.* The kerygma and the sacraments were their rallying call. These two defined their identity, ethics, and dogma in

general. The belief in the unseen God caused conflict with the pagan Greek culture of the time – the culture that was philosophically religious, but emphatic on the visible deities. This was the opposite of the Judeo-Christian God who is invisible, transcendent and immanent. The followers of this God seemed to live in the unit possessing some internal and irresistible power. The 'one another' or 'together' principle characterised this unit of the followers of Jesus that the pervading culture struggled to understand.

2.3 Secular philosophies and schisms marred the communion

However, the bliss of communion did not last long, as anticipated. The experience of the redeemed that found itself in communion around the word and the *eucharis* was invaded by doctrinal and the philosophical errors that emerged both within and outside of the community of the believers. Although this was a reality of the latter part of the apostolic age, it now became actual, real, observable, and determinable. The oldest apostle, who survived long, John, had to deal with some of these heretics, especially the Gnostics. These were the philosophical ideologies that in their outlook marred not only the Person of Christ but also His works and teachings such as the communion of the saints (*ecclesia*). The Gospel of John and the three of his epistles were purposefully scribed to refute the teachings of these philosophies. Attempt is made to analyse them and examine how they threatened the Christian unity in its *eschatological* journey towards ecclesiastical realisation and fulfillment.

Once a religion degenerates into meaningless liturgy or into the mystics that cannot be attested thoughtfully, it is abandoned and opens the option for something that may be meaningful and emotionally and rationally satisfying. The old adage that there is a void within a human being that always needs to be filled is a reality to reckon with. It is true that ' the mysteries of the universe call for explanation unless one is content to be such a dolt that he never is disturbed by them' (Tenney 1978:72).

When *Parousia* delayed, coldness of faith and *mataiologia* (idle talks of those who abandon sincere faith) crept into the communal faith of the early church.

The secular philosophies discovered the fertile soil to germinate, transfigure, and flourish into the succulent metamorphosis of dividing the body of Christ.

2.3.1 Platonism

Platonism is an ancient Greek school of philosophy founded by Plato, who studied under the great Athenian philosopher, Socrates. Apart from Plato's concept of thinking in abstract concepts, he championed the ideals that

> reflection, meditation, and even asceticism will open the way to deliverance. Knowledge is salvation, sin is ignorance. By seeking the Higher Good, the End, the Supreme Idea, man may liberate himself from the enslaving material world and may rise to a comprehension of the real world (Tenney 1978:74).

This is undoubtedly coloured with dualism that threatened not just Christology, but soteriological acts of Christ, such as redemption and calling people into communion with God and with each other. This philosophy has no reference to the personal relationship with Christ, instead it captures soteriology that is anthropologic – humanity can save itself and find the meaning of life in itself. It is the philosophy of 'me-ism', whereby a human being can find meaning of life through personal efforts. It is the cult that is against *koinonia* and homothymadon.

2.3.2 Gnosticism

Gnosticism is a philosphy that emphasises *gnosis* – knowledge through which a person can attain personal salvation. Tenney summarises this thesis as follows:

> [F]rom the supreme Deity had proceeded a series of successive emanations, each one a little inferior to the one from which it sprang, until finally the last of those emanations, or 'aeons' as they were called, created the world (1978:74).

The cosmos is so evil and corrupt that the holy God could not have created it. Matter, including the human body, is evil. It must be managed under some

severe and strict control. Hence, the practice of asceticism as a means of gaining superior spirituality. It is biblically agreed by scholars that this philosophy threatened the communion of the saints from Colossi; and the Apostle Paul was referring to them in Colossians 2, especially verses 8-21.

> Gnosticism was a serious threat to Christianity throughout the second century. The main leaders of the church tenaciously opposed it, for they saw in it a denial of several crucial Christian doctrines, such as creation, incarnation, the death of Jesus through crucifixion, and resurrection. For that reason, the church at large devised methods to combat it (Gonzalez 2010:73).

This philosophy threatened the joy of the communion of the church with the Head, Christ. It promoted or enhanced the legalistic demands on the freedom found in Christ. The joy of communion was limited by an observance of these legalistic rudiments and, therefore, disarrayed the community into a chaotic lifestyle. Communion does not follow the path of ascetic practices but is a union in joy with each other and God in our midst. Any extra legalistic demand usurps this joy and leaves faith with ritualism that does not offer any meaning of life.

2.3.3 Epicureanism

Epicureanism was rife during the apostolic era. Paul was confronted by them in Acts 17:18, 32, together with the stoics. It is named after its founder, Epicurus from Athens. He founded his own academy in 306 BC. The scholars of this philosophy were based on the cosmology that the world 'began in a shower of atoms, some of which, by pure chance, moved a trifle obliquely and collided with others' (Tenney 1987:76).

Everything visible is here by chance, therefore, no purpose or design to be concerned about. Their basic dogma was that there is no final or absolute good. The ultimate good in life is pleasure, which is the absence of pain. Indulgence is good as long as it brings a long-lasting satisfaction. Abstinence is good as long as it brings ultimate satisfaction. The gods are in a blissful state and enjoy

themselves with no interference with cosmological affairs. Since the chief goal is pleasure, the consequents of life are not realistic and cannot be admired to attain. It is for this reason, they found Paul's sermon in Athens on the resurrection a bête noire – a formal curse accompanied by excommunication.

One of the tenets of the Christian faith is hope, which is engrossed and fulfilled in the doctrine of the resurrection. The communion of the saints is held together by this hope – the hope of the new and better life. The removal of resurrection is the removal of this new life of hope. The Epicureans, by the denial of the resurrection, shook the foundation of the Christian dogma. For those in communion with Christ and his redeemed multitudes, resurrection is not just glue that sticks them together, but a goal they all strive for. Union with Christ is not merely pleasure in life, it is the Christian destiny and ultimate purpose.

2.3.4 Stoicism

As can be seen in Acts 17, the Stoics were the philosophers that threatened the communion of the saints. The Stoics were founded by a certain Cypriot, known as Zeno (340-265 BC). His dogma was that there is no personal God, however,

> the universe is controlled by an Absolute Reason, or divine will immanent in it and pervading it thoroughly. The world process is thus governed not by chance but by a progressive purpose … Since God is immaterial, impersonal, and not immanent, he has no involvement or rational solution to human problems. The highest good is conformity to reason. The goal of life is perfect self-control, unmoved by sentimental considerations (Tenney 1978b:77).

The danger this philosophy poses to communion ecclesiology is egoism. Communion ecclesiology is doing and experiencing lifef together. The human being is not an independent *ion* in the sea of life moving aimlessly without purpose. The communion gathers around the Word and practices the sacraments to find themselves in communion with God, therefore, God is directly involved with His people as He dwells together with them all the time.

This is the tug-of-war pulling into the opposite direction by championing independence versus interdependence. Autonomy and independence were never tantamount to the communion ecclesiology as the Pauline Christology and ecclesiology revolves on the axis of 'in Christ.' *Ecclesia* finds its life, meaning and future in Christ. God, the Emmanuel dwells among his people, not as a spectator, but as a participant in their affairs of life.

2.4 Internal philosophical and religious threats to Christian communion

The secular philosophies mentioned were the external threats to the Christian communion of the time. There also emerged some internal threats. These threats were not just philosophical but were religious. They emanated from the house – Christianity itself. We discuss two of the notable historical characters, namely, Marcion and Valentinus.

2.4.1 Marcion (c.85 - 160 CE)

Marcion was a son of the bishop of Sinope on the southern coast of the Black Sea. He was born and bred in the Christian faith. As he grew up, he started to embrace the anti-Jewish and anti-material religion. On a pilgrimage to Rome around 144 AD, he established himself and rallied around a huge following. His teachings went against the orthodox principles and dogmatics of the Christian faith.

His doctrinal tenets were:

1. **The Canon**. He rejected the Old Testament's authority. His argument was that the Old Testament is too Jewish and that its God was a merciless and unloving God. For him, the ideal canon should be the one free from Jewish influences. Tenney summarises Marcion's canon as follows:

> He selected Luke for his gospel, though he rejected the first two chapters containing the account of the virgin birth, and used ten epistles of Paul, excluding the Pastorals and Hebrews. His

> list began with Galatians and was followed by II Corinthians, Romans, and II Thessalonians, Ephesians (which he called Laodiceans), Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon (1978b:409).

It is a noteworthy reflection that Marcion did not enter the faith fray as an apologist. He entered the religious contest, 'not by defending the legitimacy of Christian claims, but by rejecting the entire Hebrew Bible' (Chidester 2000:48).

2. **Theology**. Marcion believed in dualism. There are two Gods active in the universal affairs. One is the creator of the universe (God of the flesh); one is the redeemer of humanity.

3. **Christology**. Christ was the image or likeness, not of the creator God, but of a superior God who promised salvation for humanity. Jesus' appearance on earth was the revelation of the supreme God.

4. **Soteriology**. Humanity can achieve salvation through the ascetic practices plus adhering to the incarnated Christ. Worldly pleasures, including sex, even within marriage, are a way of detaching oneself from the inferior God. The superior God is necessary for salvation.

The text is the premise on which the faith is based. The Old and the New Testaments cannot be separated as they form the symbiosis of Christian dogma. Marcion abdicated the Old Testament and excised some books of the New Testament. As McGrath states: '[The orthodox] Christian theology has, on the one hand, emphasized the continuity between the two testaments, while, on the other, noting the distinction between them' (2011:126).

The Christian canon is the road map of a dogma. Scripture is not just a point of reference, but a *Magna Charta* of the Christian faith. The text is where the theology is cushioned, shaped, and re-dressed. The Bible plays a central role to Christian dogma, ethics, and apologetics. The community of the saints, including the community of God in the Old Testament, converged around the Word – spoken, revealed or written. The communion ecclesiology cannot

be without the centrality of Christ, who ushers in the acts of salvation for the depraved humanity.

Marcion threatened these fundamental tenets of the Christian faith. The community of faith gathers around the Word to reflect on their theology, Christology, and how they relate or appropriate God and his Word in their own lives. There is no ecclesiology without textual reflections and insights that focus on Christ and his soteriological initiatives.

2.4.2 Valentinus (c.100 - c.175)

Academically, Valentinus was a graduate from Alexandria in Egypt. His majors were Rhetoric and Philosophy. Out of this philosophical seat of Platonism, Valentinus imbibed a Gnostic Christianity through which he proclaimed 'a supreme God, invisible, ineffable and ultimately inconceivable, who existed before the beginning, in peace and stillness, as the "Primal Ground" of being' (Chidester 2000:54).

The tenets of Valentinus' dogma were:

1. **Canon**: Unlike Marcion, who abdicated some texts, and concluded the contents and composition of his canon, Valentinus and his followers opened the canon of relevant sacred literature by producing new gospels, histories and revelations that all claimed authoritative status because they were based on direct spiritual insight (Chidester 2000:57).

   The two notable examples are The Secret Gospel of John and The Gospel of Truth.

2. **Revelation**: Religious authority is derived from spiritual insight, not from the historical lineage of the apostolic characters. Valentinus' followers esteemed Paul's student, Theudas, highly as a source of their learning.

3. **Sacraments**: The Valentinus' followers undermined rituals that were common amongst the Christian community of the time. They communed for textual studies, philosophical debates and knowledge for

spiritual reality. Rituals, if any, were just for affirming sacred knowledge, not affirming faith.

The close scrutiny of Valentinus' theology had much to say about the community. They gathered separately under no ecclesiastical authority. This was due to their strong belief in the equality of all people regardless of gender. Women were considered equal to men; hence female preachers, prophets, teachers, evangelists, and so forth were a normal phenomenon. This practice was contrary to the Christian community of the time regarding the role and the place of women in the church. The members took turns in administering the sacraments and preaching. Like Christians of the time, they joined the job markets, married and raised families. However, these pursuits were regarded as less important than *gnosis*, which was to be achieved individually. They strongly believed that: 'The one who has knowledge is a free person. But the free person does not sin, for the one who sins is a slave of sin' (Gospel of Philip 77:15-18).

Their belief system was oriented towards the individual more than towards the community. The soteriological acts of Christ, including *ecclesia*, were not seen as being universal. Individualism took the supreme post as opposed to communion togetherness.

The pseudo-praxis appearance of Valentinianism was deceitful to even the ecclesiastical structures, as they were more or less orthodox in their theology. Christianity of that era was a complex network of individual societies, groups, sects or denominations. For this reason, Valentinianism posed some threat to the proto-orthodox community.

2.5 The panoramic view of communion ecclesiology during the patristic period (100 - 700 AD)

In church history studies, one observes that the patristic period had three major centres of theological debate. These centres became the centres of academic debates that had some epic impact on the communion of the saints.

Two centres were Greek-speaking while one was Latin-speaking. The first was Alexandria in Egypt, which emerged as a centre of Christian theological debate. The city followed the Platonic tradition and centred its debate on Christology. Christ, especially his person and nature were the focus of scholarly debates. The *ecclesia* of the time rallied itself around the 'who' of their following.

The second was Antioch and the surrounding region of Cappadocia in Turkey, which became a leading centre of Christian thought. Christology and biblical interpretation became the focus of the debate. The Cappadocian fathers contributed enormously towards the theological debate, in the fourth century, especially in relation to the doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity has become one of the foundational bases of communion ecclesiology. This will be seen later as the study and the reflection on the subject of communion ecclesiology unfolds. So, the hermeneutical principles, together with the traditions were employed and applied to arrive at the conclusions regarding the belief systems.

Finally, there was the region of western North Africa in Algeria. Carthage became a political rival city to Rome and produced prominent writers such as Tertullian (160-225), Cyprian of Carthage (died 258) and Augustine of Hippo (354-430). It is historically noted that the Christian religion at the beginning of the third century must have had numerous adherents in all ranks of Carthaginian society.

The theological agenda of the patristic period was always the clarification on the relationship between Christianity and Judaism. This was addressed by the letters of Paul in the New Testament, for example, circumcision for the non-Jewish believers, Jewish dietary laws for Gentile believers and correct interpretation of the New Testament. The agenda also focused the subject of apologetics. This is the reasoned defence and justification of the Christian faith against its critics. Scholars of the time include the likes of Justin Martyr (100-165 AD), Irenaeus of Lyons (130-200 AD) and Origen (185-254 AD).

Communion ecclesiology of the time was defended and promulgated by the key theologians such as Justin Martyr (100-165 AD) – the greatest of the

Apologists of the time. He was born in Palestine but settled in Rome. His doctrine of *logos spermatikos* (seed-bearing word) allowed him to affirm that God had prepared the way for his final revelation in Christ through hints of its truth in classical philosophy (McGrath 2011:10).

For him, philosophy and theology worked together towards the truth. Another theologian was Irenaeus of Lyons (130-200 AD) who was born in Smyrna, Turkey but settled in Rome. Irenaeus played a major role in defending the Christian orthodoxy against the Gnostics. His well-known writing, *Adversus haereses* (Against heresies), defended the doctrine of salvation and promoted the role of tradition's faithfulness to the apostolic witness in the face of non-Christian interpretations. Then there was Tertullian (160-225 AD) who was born in Carthage, in northern Africa. He became famous as the father of Latin theology. He defended the unity of the Old Testament and the New Testament against Marcion's theology of dualism and laid the foundations for the doctrine of the Trinity. He refuted the defence of Christianity based on extra-biblical sources and promoted the sufficiency of the Scripture, denouncing an appeal to philosophies as a quest for the true knowledge of God.

Origen (185-254 AD) from Alexandria provided the important foundation for the development of eastern Christian thought. His theology was centred on three majors. These were first, the biblical interpretation. His well-known hermeneutics was the allegorical interpretation. Secondly, his Christology was that of full divinity of the Father and less divinity of the Son. This gave birth to the later Arianism. Thirdly, Origen dwelt on *apocatastasis.* By this he meant that every creature including humanity and Satan will finally be saved. Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258) was a prominent lawyer and rhetorician of considerable skill. He converted to Christianity around 246 AD and became a bishop of Carthage in 248. He was martyred during the Decian persecution of 258. He was ecclesiological in scholarly thoughts.

> His major essay On the Unity of the Catholic Church stresses the importance of visible, concrete unity among Christians, and the role of the bishops in guaranteeing that unity. It is widely regarded as a

> landmark in the development of Christian understandings of the nature of the church (McGrath 2011:11).

It is worth mentioning the other theologians who enhanced the reality of communion through some scholarly work. Athanasius (293-373 AD) was inclined to Christological issues. He wrote *On the Incarnation of the Word,* which was the defence of the idea of the incarnation, meaning that God assumed human nature in the person of Jesus Christ. Then there were the Cappadocian fathers who were the three major theologians – two brothers and their close friend – of the Greek-speaking church in Cappadocia, Turkey. These were Basil the Great (330-379 AD), the bishop of Caesarea and the older brother of Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nyssa (330-395 AD), famously known as the Bishop of Nyssa. Their friend was Gregory of Nazianzus (329-389 AD), who was the Bishop of Sasima and later of Constantinople. These three contributed immensely to the development of the doctrine of the Trinity. They emphasised the idea of *hypostasis* (substance), meaning that the Godhead consists of one substance and three persons.

The last theologian to consider is Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD). His real name was Aurelius Augustinus. He is well-known as the greatest and the most influential thinker of the Christian faith for a long history. He converted under, and mentored by Bishop Ambrose of Milan. He became the Bishop of Hippo, Algeria in 395. His major contribution was the development of theology as an academic discipline. His famous book is *The City of God.* His major ecclesiological contribution was in the church and the sacraments. This arose from the Donatist controversy. His second contribution was on the doctrine of grace; which arose from the Pelagian controversy. And finally, like many of his contemporaries, he contributed hugely on the doctrine of the Trinity.

2.6 Communion ecclesiology in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (700 - 1500 AD)

The Middle Ages and the Renaissance were the periods of transition between the intellectual glories of antiquity and those of the modern period. It is important

to note that the relations between the Eastern church (Constantinople) and the Western church (Rome) became increasingly strained during the ninth and the tenth centuries. For the first time since the apostolic age, communion ecclesiology experienced shaking and schism that bore the church into modern history with pain. The major schism was caused by the disagreement, known as *filioque controversy.* The glories of the unshakable patristic era regarding the communion of the saints disappear. There were various reasons for this. For instance, the political rivalry between Latin-speaking Rome and Greek-speaking Constantinople exacerbated to the point of the final split between the two centres of power in 1054 .The Eastern church believed that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father, while the Western church held that the Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son. This resulted in a little theological interaction between the West and the East. However, the twelfth century saw some change as the Western church started to deem the importance of the orthodox church of the East.

Theologically, the Western church developed 'medieval theology' while the Eastern church developed 'Byzantine theology.' After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the centre of Christian theology gradually moved northward towards France and Germany, with Rome as a centre of Christian power.

> With the foundation of the medieval universities, theology rapidly established itself as a central area of academic study. A typical medieval university possessed four faculties: the lower faculty of arts and the three higher faculties of theology, medicine, and law (McGrath 2011:24-25).

The church grew, regardless of the pains of schism. Communion ecclesiology took a different turn. New initiatives and innovations came to the fore. The unity of the church in two centres grew symbiotically.

2.6.1 Theological landmarks in Western Europe

The medieval theological landmarks in Western Europe included the emergence of some notable phenomena.

- **The Carolingian renaissance**
  The first to notice is the Carolingian renaissance. The leading figure was Alcuin (735-804 AD). The era is marked by the recognition of the importance of monasteries and cathedrals as seats of learning.

- **The rise of cathedral and monastic schools of theology**
  Secondly, there was the rise of the cathedral and monastic schools of theology. This led to the need for a deep reflection of the role of women in theological debates and contributions.

- **The emergence of the religious orders and their schools of theology**
  Then there was the emergence of the religious orders and their schools of theology. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) is a noted Cistercian leader, whose influence led to the establishment of 600 Cistercian monasteries by the dawn of the fourteenth century.

- **The appearance of three distinctive styles of academic theology**
  It is also important to notice, as the fourth landmark, the appearance of three distinctive styles of academic theology developed during the time. These are still very prominent in the Catholic Church. One is the Dominicans, influenced by Albert the Great (1200-1280), Thomas Aquinas and Peter of Tarentaise (1102-1174). Two, is the Franciscans, with the leading theologians such as Bonaventure (1221-1274), Duns Scotus (1266-1308) and William of Ockham (1285-1347). Finally, the Augustinians, with their theology developed by Giles of Rome (1244-1316) and Thomas of Strasbourg (1275-1357).

- **The founding of the universities**
  The fifth landmark of the era was the founding of the universities. Political stability in France led to the re-emergence of the University of Paris as an intellectual centre. Numerous theological schools were built on the Left Bank of the Seine and on the Ile de la Cite' closer to the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris.

- **The work of Peter Lombard**
  Peter Lombard's *Four Books of the Sentences* made some indelible marks in the life of the church. Lombard's work draws heavily on the authority of Augustine and has been dubbed one of the most familiar theological genres of the Middle Ages.

- **The rise of scholasticism**
  The seventh landmark is the rise of scholasticism. This was the school from which theology and philosophy were debated. It was an attempt to create a bold and brilliant synthesis of Christian ideas applicable to all spheres of life.

> Scholasticism is best regarded as the medieval movement, flourishing in the period 1200-1500, which placed emphasis upon the rational justification of religious belief and the systematic presentation of those beliefs. (McGrath 2011:29)

It is not a specific system of beliefs, but a particular way of doing and organising theology. McGrath continues to enlighten us that it was 'a highly developed method of presenting material, making fine distinctions, and attempting to achieve a comprehensive view of theology' (2011:29).

- **The Italian Renaissance**
  The eighth landmark was the Italian Renaissance. There are three reasons why Italy became the cradle of the brilliant new movement in the history of ideas. Firstly, the scholastic theology had less influence in Italy, hence a creation of an intellectual vacuum, which needed to be filled. Also, Italy was saturated with visible and tangible reminders of the greatness of antiquity. Finally, as Byzantium began to crumble and Constantinople fell in 1453, there was an exodus of Greek-speaking intellectuals westward.

- **The rise of humanism**
  The final landmark, which was the hallmark of the threat of communion ecclesiology, was the rise of humanism. This was a call of 'back to the

sources'. There was an increased questioning of the reliability of the Vulgate text, which was the foundation and the basis of their faith.

2.6.2 Theological landmarks in Eastern Europe

Just as there were some theological landmarks in Western Europe, there were also some theological landmarks in Eastern Europe.

- **The rise of Byzantine theology**
  Byzantium was named Constantinople by Constantine in 330 AD. The era of Justinian (527-556 AD) ushered in the Byzantine theology as an intellectual force. Foremost on the list of landmarks is the Byzantine theology, which held that Christian theology is something 'given' – not to be formulated or systematised. The notion was influenced by John of Damascus' work *Orthodox Faith*, which promoted the exposition of faith in place of speculative or original thoughts. This theology remained faithful to the writing of Athanasius of Alexandria. His early treatise, *On the Incarnation,* affirmed that theology was the expression of the mind of the saints. This theology is strongly orientated towards *paradosis* (tradition), especially of the writing of the Greek fathers.

- **The iconoclastic controversy**
  Another notable landmark was the iconoclastic controversy, which was divided into two lines of thought. First, was the *iconoclastic* (breaking of the images) under Emperor Leo III (717-742 AD) who ordered to destroy icons, as they prevent the conversion of the Jews and the Muslims? Then there was *hesychastic* controversy (silence). This promoted the idea of the meditation through physical exercises for believers to see 'divine' light physically. 'Inner Quietness' is the way of achieving a direct inner vision of God.

- **The fall of Constantinople**
  It can also be noted that the fall of Constantinople in 1453 was an impactful landmark to reckon with. The Muslims took over the city through *jihad*

(holy war) against Christians in the region. With this fall, the centre of orthodoxy fell to Russia. The Christian 'togetherness' and homothymadon were shaken.

2.7 Communion ecclesiology in the age of the Reformation (1500-1750)

The Reformation era led to the formation of a cluster of Protestant churches in Europe, the renewal and the reformation of the Catholic Church, and the inter-church conflicts (Catholic versus Protestants – and Protestants fighting among themselves).

The church of the sixteenth and eighteenth century lost its self-expression as a communion that was bound together by the Spirit and gathered around the Word and the sacraments. The world had entered the church, and amassing wealth by the clergy through corrupt political engagement was the order of the day. The church consisted of unholy people in holy orders. The Laodicean church of Revelation 3 came into being, where Christ was outside the church, knocking to enter strictly to those who will open for him. It was a wealthy church, but full of poverty and sickness.

This practice of the issue of indulgences (pardon certificates) invited severe criticism and was described as 'sale of licenses to commit sin'. The middle classes protested against the dominance of the old church because it was largely controlled by the upper classes and administered largely for their benefit.

The new spirit of learning and enquiry set in motion by the Renaissance ('Early Birth') during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, also greatly contributed to the Reformation. People began to assert themselves against blind faith and useless religious rituals and began to feel that they could reach God without the intermediary of a priest. Their reason also made them highly critical of the prevailing practices of the sale of indulgences, non-enforcement of the code of morality among the clergy and undue interference of the Papacy in the secular affairs.

The schism in the church in the fifteenth century greatly lowered papal prestige. Instead of one Pope, two Popes were elected; one by the French Cardinals and the other by the Italian Cardinals. This undermined the papal prestige and primacy, and people lost faith and reverence for the holy institution. The things were further complicated in 1409 when the cardinals at a joint sitting elected the third Pope. This is known as the Great Western Schism. No doubt this schism was bridged when the Council of Constance (1414-1418), recognised by the Roman Catholic Church, deposed both the Popes and elected a new Pope. But these developments certainly undermined the ecclesiastical powers and prestige.

The resultant was that the Reformation Age devastated the apostolic *koinonia* and patristic *paradosis* due to ineffective *catechesis* within and by the community of the saints. The *homothymadon* that was observable and visible for the outsiders disappeared *as kyrugma* and *euangelizesthai* mandate took a back seat. The communion ecclesiology's *raison d'êtr*e weakened and almost annihilated to the level that the need for the new era was non-negotiable, and was a necessity. However, the crux is that communion ecclesiology is the ultimate human purpose when coming to the unity, togetherness, and 'one mind' of the church. In his doctoral thesis, Wynand Vladimir de Beer of the University of South Africa (Unisa) maintains the stance.

> In the Greek Patristic understanding the ultimate goal of human life is deification (theosis), which is effected by divine-human cooperation (synergia). The Biblical notion of personal union between God and humans was given its most explicit statement by the apostle Peter when he wrote that through the promises of Christ we may become 'partakers of the divine nature (theias koinonoi physeos, 2 Peter 1:4) (2014:81).

Communion ecclesiology is presently recovered as God reaching out to his people and his people joining him in fellowship, to enjoy each other as a testimony to the world that truly, in Christ, we are one. It is all about a loving union between God and humanity made possible through Christ as mediator.

2.8 Communion ecclesiology in the modern era (1750 to the present)

There are currently three main branches of Christianity. These are Orthodox, Catholicism, and Protestantism. The first two are easy to discuss since there is some synergy and some form of symbiosis when approaching matters regarding dogma. Of course one cannot overlook the disagreements and minor ecclesiastical *afscheidings* among them. The Reformation era that gave birth to the Protestant faith took three branches made up of Lutheranism, Calvinism and Anglicanism.

The Orthodox faith shifted from being Greek Orthodox to Russian Orthodox after the fall of Constantinople. It has developed slowly under the scholarship and authorship of John Zizioulas. Zizioulas has become vocal and scholarly regarding communion ecclesiology of the Orthodox faith. On the other hand, the Catholic faith has grown *en masse with* audible and visible influence in the world.

The modern Protestant movement is diversified, varied, and disjointed in some measures. From the time of Reformation, the movement fell into categories and sub-groups such as evangelicalism, Pentecostalism, and many other dogmatic ideologies such as liberalism, black theology, African theology, post-liberalism, feminist theology, and lately, charismatic theology. This diversity locates communion ecclesiology at risk. Those outside the faith continue to ask questions regarding the invisible unity within the Protestant faith. In fact, one of the expected outcomes of Vatican II was the return of the wayward brethren; referring to the Protestants. However, in the recent scholarship, this has been seen as the impossibility when referring to structural Christianity.

From the apostolic era to the present, the ecclesiastical community has always been marred by schisms, secessions, and *dichostasia*. The notion of communion ecclesiology in the Protestant faith seems to be an idea in some bottomless pit for a scholar to think about.

2.9 Rediscovery: Vatican II

Communion ecclesiology has its roots in the second Vatican Council held in the Vatican in Rome between 1962 and 1965. This was the first ecumenical council – an assembly of Roman Catholic religious leaders meant to settle doctrinal issues – in almost 100 years.

Documents of relevance emanating from the Council include those that deal with the Church as the People of God, the Pilgrim Church and the Church as a Servant (the Dogmatic Constitution Documents). As Vatican II was elaborated, explained, and applied, there emerged some realisation of the communion ecclesiology.

Foremost among the proponents of communion ecclesiology is Dennis M. Doyle who has written a great deal on the subject. Others include the likes of Yves Congar, Henri de Lubac, Karl Rahner, Joseph Ratzinger, Walter Kasper and Johann Möhler. All these scholars are in agreement that:

> The Trinitarian vision of the Church is the basis of Communion Ecclesiology. Ecclesial being is essentially connected with the being of God. Being of God is communion. God is a community of persons. That is the reason why the Church is also a communion (Alancheril 2014, par. 1.2.2).

By the middle of the twentieth century, the Catholic Church ecclesiology was focused 'upon the visible, hierarchical structure of the church to the neglect of the church's graced, invisible, and supernatural reality' (Flanagan 2011:3). The graced reality of the church was unknown, forgotten, ignored or neglected.

As mentioned above, communion ecclesiology has its roots in the Vatican Council II, especially from the Dogmatic Constitution Documents mentioned previously. These documents are collectively known *as Lumen Gentium*. It prefaces by reflecting upon the church with the awareness that the inner nature of the church is presented in various images. These images 'could conceivably be made the leitmotif of a complementary ecclesiology' (Flanagan 2011:4). As

Lumen Gentium was elaborated, explained, and applied, there emerged some realisation of the communion ecclesiology.

Apart from the captures of *Lumen Gentium,* proclivity towards communion ecclesiology was instigated by the confession of the unity of the church – the church that is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. The *ecumenical* emphasis that was like breaths of the Council, was perceived as inadequate, since the wayward brethren were not coming closer, but were moving further towards the periphery of the Church. The reality and the fact of individual churches have become an *ecclesial* reality to be reckoned with. The communion of churches and the plurality of human cultures had become an inevitable phenomenon. 'The Churches are expressions of the Gospel becoming incarnated in the culture of the people' (Alancheril 2014, par. 1.2). The proponents of communion ecclesiology vehemently rejected the notion of equating it with connective and/or associational congregationalism.

> The core of communion ecclesiology according to Vatican II, is the trinitarian God living in harmony with his creation. God loves his people – they carry imago Dei, his image or likeness … Human beings are made in the image and likeness of the Triune God, a God characterized by perfect communion. So also human beings are created for loving communion with God, with one another, and with the whole Creation (Jones 1995:114).

Humanity was never created for isolation. Togetherness or communion is a hallmark of communion ecclesiology. It is within this communion that humanity rediscovers itself. The genuineness of human life is fulfilled through God-given capacity for loving communion, which is to live as part of the pattern of God's creation.

Chapter 3

Traditional and contemporary definitions of communion ecclesiology

Doctrine entails a sense of commitment to a community, and a sense of obligation to speak on its behalf, where the corporate mind of the community exercises a restraint over the individual's perception of truth. Doctrine is an activity, a process of transmission of the collective wisdom of a community, rather than a passive set of deliverances (McGrath 1990:11).

3.1 The Catholic views and definitions

Most Protestant readers probably keep asking themselves about the definition of 'communion ecclesiology'. Since this has been philosophically and theologically surfaced by the Vatican II's *Lumen Gentium,* the attempts given here are mostly, if not all from Catholic scholars and thinkers. This does not imply that communion ecclesiology as a recognised symbiosis of ecclesiology in general was born out of Vatican II. From as early as the nineteenth century, the Roman Catholic theology already reflected ecclesiology as the visible structure and the object of faith in its own right. The Jesuits theologians, together with or out of Tubingen University accelerated the importance of ecclesiology as a theological reflection needing some special attention. It is important to capture the definition here by citing Doyle lengthily.

> Communion ecclesiology is an approach to understanding the Church. It represents an attempt to move beyond the merely juridical and institutional understandings by emphasizing the mystical, sacramental, and historical dimensions of the Church. It focuses on relationships, whether among the persons of the Trinity, among human beings and God, among the members of the Communion of Saints, among members of a parish, or among the bishops dispersed throughout the world. It emphasizes the dynamic interplay between the Church universal and the local churches. Communion ecclesiology stresses that the Church is not simply the receiver of revelation, but as the Mystical Body of Christ is bound up with revelation itself (2000:12).

When one examines the definition, a critical reader is confronted with the fact that communion ecclesiology is the church beyond tradition, liturgy, or any legal borders that may limit inter-connectedness or synergy. The church is a symbiotic relationship of God in three Persons with his creation, especially the humanity. 'The Church considered as a communion includes relation with the Triune God' (Doyle 2000:18-19). This is what Joseph Ratzinger tries to stress that as part of the communion, there must be a new analogous thought from 'I' to 'we'. This German ecclesiologist who used to be the Pope (Benedict XVII) strove to revive a clearer connection between the theology of communion

and personal responsibility called God's people to embrace the reality that 'God's 'we' must be the model for the action of the church as a 'we' (Ratzinger 1987:38) – the notion that falls in line with the *homothymadon*: one mind and togetherness of the New Testament.

From both the Old and the New Testament, one can conclude that the presence of the worshippers of God, in their different locations and cultures, is the expression of the incarnated Gospel. The presence of God with his people in the *kosmos* brings harmony or reconciliation to the diverse cultures. **The Trinity is the basis of communion ecclesiology**.

> The Trinitarian vision of the Church is the basis of Communion Ecclesiology. Ecclesial being is essentially connected with the being of God. Being of God is communion. God is a community of persons. That is the reason why the Church is also a communion. (Alancheril 2014, par. 1.2.2).

Doyle (2000:16) elaborates that communion ecclesiology is a web of interwoven relationships; and one of those relationships is the one of the Trinity. Chapter 2 of *Lumen Gentium* emphasises that communion is primarily with the triune God: the Creator who created men and women for participation in the divine communion. The church is seen as the corrective image of reductive distortion. In the Trinity, the community is at the centre of all things. Within the one God there exists also a relation among three persons. The three persons (Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit) are mutually relational and interdependent. Like the Trinity, the church exists as a community and as a group of distinct persons mutually connected to each other. This notion is further expressed by Flanagan who proposes that 'communion' refers to 'a particular kind of relationship that exists between Christian believers who share a relationship to God in Christ' (2011:45).

The Trinity is the foundation on which communion ecclesiology derives its meaning. It is a mystery that shows the depth of its connectedness that calls for revelation for one to understand it. It is the communion that is interwoven and interconnected with the Trinity. It is impossible to write about this subject

without referring to J-M. R. Tillard, who wrote extensively on ecclesiology of communion. He declares that 'the relationship to communion with the Father, Son and Spirit shows its deep-rootedness even in the eternal reality of the mystery of God' (1992:29).

Communion ecclesiology is, therefore, a vertical and horizontal relationship of humanity with God; and humans with each other. This is elaborated by popular communion ecclesiologists, Walter Kasper. In his call to unity, he reminds us that 'the "vertical" communion with God is the foundation and support for the "horizontal" communion among Christians in churches and congregations' (2004:58).

Communion ecclesiology is strong on relationships that are invisible but can be experienced or sensed. It throws away the feelings of loneliness and isolation. Lawler and Shanahan spur our faith that

> the fundamental Christian meaning of communion designates the communion of the faithful with God in Christ through the Spirit, and hence their common participation in Christian goods. In that each is in communion with God, all are also in communion with one another (1995:8).

With enormous influence from *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*,[2] where the image of the church is a leaven in the world; it is here assumed that Matthew 13:33 speaks of the influence that the church (herein referred to as the kingdom of God) has, and the role it can play in bringing order out of this chaos of social injustice that disturbs the balance and peace which the God – human relationship is to enjoy. The church as a leaven in *a world* is an image that expresses a vision of the world, with all its ambiguities and negativities, as an arena in which lives are lived out. The church as a leaven in the world

2 Of all Vatican II's decrees, *Gaudium et Spes* – the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World – address the situation in the world most directly. Its subtitle, *The Church in the World of Today*, states this intention clearly. The decree also makes a sustained attempt both to dialogue with the 'world' and to open up further opportunities for such dialogue in the future.

gives the picture of social interactions intertwined with ecological questions regarding human – cosmos relationships. The church is a social body with a commitment to social justice and to global relationality. This statement is often misunderstood, as is also pointed out by Doyle (2000:16), that the church that is as a leaven in the world of human events can also be construed as a leaven in the larger cosmos. It is, therefore, hermeneutically correct to refer to the 'leaven' of Matthew 13:33 as the power and the influence of *ekklesia* in cosmic events.

3.1.1 Six characteristic themes found in most communion ecclesiologies

To fully capture the definition of communion ecclesiology, I would like to present, with an added commentary, Flanagan's six common themes found in most communion ecclesiologies (2011:44-48).

THEME 1 Concern for unity and diversity

The unity, not diversity of the church should be the hallmark of ecclesiology – the unity must supersede or transcend the diversity. The old adage carries the weight that unity is the heart of Christ, while diversity is the heart of humanity. Christ in his famous high-priestly prayer (John 17), pleaded for the unity of believers with God and with each other (17:21). This unity is invisible, yet recognisable since it can be sensed and observed. Kasper highlights this unity when he writes:

> [E]ach local church is wholly church, but no local church is the whole Church, because each local church is the Church of Jesus Christ; and because there is only one Christ and one Church of Jesus Christ, each local church is in it innermost essence in communio with all other local churches (2004:79).

This language is consonant with Article 23 of *Lumen Gentium (*LG 23), that one universal Church exists symbiotically with local churches. The modern communion ecclesiologists are accordant with this notion that 'the spiritual communion precedes what will emerge as necessary institutional elements' (Doyle 2000:99). There is no doubt that the real and full communion is

based on a relationship between church organisations that mutually share the fundamental doctrines. This, however, does not discard the foundational connection of these groups or organisations with Christ: to give them the title of 'Church'. This is regardless of the historical fact of the large communities separating from full communion during the Reformation era.

THEME 2 The ecclesiality of the local church

How *ecclesial* is the local church? This is a daunting question, not only for the the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, but for the Protestant communions as well.

The Roman Catholic ecclesiology categorically perceives local churches as Eucharist communities. This notion enhances the ecclesiality and the authority of the local leadership of the local churches. They do not see their churches as regional or national organisations, but as part in synergy with the universal Church. In a letter from His Eminence, Julian Cardinal Herranz, President of the Pontifical Council on Legislative Texts, ordered by Pope Benedict XVI on April 5 2006, to all bishops, it is stated that 'full communion involves completeness of those bonds of communion –faith, sacraments and pastoral governance – that permit the Faithful to receive the life of grace within the Church.'[3]

The well-known communion ecclesiologist, Henry de Lubac (1896-1991), captures the multi-dimensionality of the church. Doyle (2000:56) argues for de Lubac that 'more than any other theologian [Lubac] offered a synthesis or, perhaps better, a many layeredness.' Argumentation on the ecclesiality of the local church is premised on the figure of the church as a mystery. The African Catholic theologian, Gabriel Mendy argues that

3 This notification was approved by the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI, who directed that it be transmitted to all Presidents of Episcopal Conferences. Cardinal Herranz addresses the question of what elements are necessary for an act of defection from the faith to qualify as a specifically formal act of defection, or an actus formalis defectionis ab Ecclesia Catholica as mentioned in the Code of Canon Law (c.1086 and 1).

> the image of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ is preferable because this image captures the form of communion the Spirit creates among the different members of the Church and between the universal and local Churches (2013:200).

In fact, Mendy's cited work here is primarily the pneumatological-ecclesiological entwinement of communion. The pneumatological function in the church goes beyond the structural devices of the church. The crux of Mendy's argument is

> that the nature, mission, unity, and diversity of both the universal Church and local churches can adequately be realized, sustained, and renewed in the Spirit functioning as the unifying and animating principle of communion (2013:199).

This is the thesis that strengthens the legality and authenticity of the local church as part of the universal Church.

> The local church is… a manifestation or actualization of the universal Church in a particular area that a bear the latter's essential elements and marks (2013:207).

This is the basis for the conclusion that the local church is an integral part of the universal church. There is no space for exclusion. This has been highlighted by Hans von Balthasar (1983:28) that in Catholicism 'it is precisely the power of inclusion that becomes the chief criterion of truth.'

Cardinal Walter Kasper heads the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. His primary mandate is to foster relations between the Catholic Church and the other *ecclesial* communities. I believe that he speaks from concrete experience that 'each local church is wholly church, but no local church is the whole Church; because each local church is the Church of Jesus Christ' (2004:79).

THEME 3 The connection of the institutional and theological realities of the church

The twentieth century Catholic ecclesiology was tinged with this attempt

> to avoid the visible/invisible church dualism by joining the invisible, spiritual reality of Christian communion with the visible, institutional realities in which that communion comes to expression (Flanagan 2011:47).

This is an enormous thought to be realised in this journey. Tillard wrestles with this idea by asserting that communion is and will always be fragile; and will forever be put to the test. He points out:

> It is remarkable that the major documents in Scripture concerning ecclesial *koinonia* (in the global sense of the word) are in the way or another conditioned by tense situations, perhaps even by conflicts which are able to lead to splits or divisions. The clay vessels which contain the treasure are not only individuals but also communities (1992:33).

The church as an eschatological community is on a journey of being reformed. The journey is characterised by descents and ascents; curves and detours; conflicts and tensions; and numerous theological debates that affect communion to some large degrees. However, these are to be accepted as the pains of growth, not the reasons for secessions.

THEME 4 The vertical communion of Christians with God in Christ and the horizontal communion of Christians with each other

The focus here is relationships. These relationships are trinitarian in nature. Christians relate to God vertically. They relate to each other horizontally; and conversely, God relates to them. These relationships exist *a bras ouverts* (with open arms) and *a deux mains* (with both hands); and of course *a fortiori* (with stronger reason). In a simpler language, communion is the relationship of God with his people; and his people with each other, whether they like it or not. They are connected invisibly and are members of communion with God and with each other. Lawler and Shanahan emphasise that

> new life is communion, not only communion with one another in the Church, but also and especially communion in the life of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in whose name baptism is celebrated (1995:124).

THEME 5 The connection of communion with Eucharistic and other sacramental language

The Eucharistic liturgy as a confession by believers encircles them into the communion with God and Christ; and with each other. The confession is a verbal unison from the heart to declare our stance and/or relationship in regard to God and other believers. The declaration that *I believe in one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church* is declaration enough of the unswerving truth that the biblical ideal of Christian unity is that when we are in Christ we are united. The apostolic teachings lead us to the fact that we must

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all (Eph. 4:3-6).

This is in consonant with Ratzinger's assertion of all the time that 'there is one faith of the Church, in which and by which the faithful recognize themselves as members of the Church' (1987:128).

THEME 6 An identification or connection of ecclesial communion with trinitarian communion

This is the foundational subject of communion ecclesiology. The Catholic ecclesiology is very intertwined with the Trinity and each Person playing a special role in making communion the reality to be reckoned with. Miroslav Volf, in expounding the ecclesiality of the Church, dwells on the concept of *perichoresis* which 'refers to the reciprocal interiority of the trinitarian persons' (Volf 1998:209). In his article, *Individual Churches: Theological Exposition on Communion Ecclesiology*, Fr Jobins Antony Alancheril opens by declaring that

'the Trinitarian vision of the Church is the basis of Communion Ecclesiology' (2014, opening statement).

The Trinitarian God and his people commune together – *koinonia* that is inseparable. The trinitarian communion reinforces one of the names of God in the Old Testament: Immanuel (Isa. 7:14), which means God dwelling among his people. The apostle John, writing his gospel should have had this in mind when he penned: 'The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us' (John 1:14). The logos tabernacled or tented among us. In the Apocalypse, it resonates clearly: 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God himself will be with them and be their God' (21:3). The communion and the Trinity are symbiotically and synergistically related to each other.

3.1.2 Notable communion ecclesiologists

Before concluding the discussion on communion ecclesiology within the Roman Catholic theology, it will be ideal to highlight few of the commonly-known and notable communion ecclesiologists:

- **Johann Adam Möhler (1796-1838)**
  Möhler 'is recognized as a seminal figure in the development of communion ecclesiology' (Doyle 2000:23). His well-known work of 1825, *Unity in the Church* upholds a romantic view of the Catholic Church. In it, Möhler describes the church as the organic development of the life-giving Holy Spirit. He uses the church Fathers' writings to oppose the Protestants that the scriptures emerged within the church. One reads of 'early' Möhler (1825) (*Unity in the Church*) and 'later' Möhler (*Symbolik*). The former work views the church from the pneumatological origin; while the latter views it from Christological origin.

- **Yves Congar (1905-1995)**
  The communion ecclesiology of Cardinal Congar was interpreted from the progressivist anthropocentrism. In an article 'Theology must be turned toward man and not toward God' Congar wrtites:

  > God did not intend to reveal Himself to man so that man could know, love, and serve Him, but rather to help man to know, love and resolve the human problems he was facing in this or that historic situation.

- **Henri de Lubac (1896-1991)**
  De Lubac's resourcement theology embraced communion ecclesiology that is governed by the hermeneutical principles of the Bible, and not just the church traditions?

- **Karl Rahner (1904-1984)**
  The ecumenical theology of Rahner was entrenched in the unity of the churches.

- **Hans Küng (1928-)**
  In his world-renowned work *The Church,* Küng depicts the church as 'a charismatic movement of followers of Jesus' (Doyle 2000:120) and explicitly as the eschatological community of salvation.

- **Jean-Marie R. Tillard (1927- 2000)**
  Tillard argues in his *Church of Churches: The Ecclesiology of Communion* that from the Day of Pentecost, the church is revealed as communion; and that diversity does not disregard the fact that one belongs to the community of salvation, coming from God, joined to the Promise, born of faith, entrusted with faithfully protecting the contents of the Good News (Tillard 1992:1).

- **Joseph Ratzinger (1927-)**
  Ratzinger's *Communio Journal* promoted ecumenical dialogue with other religions.

- **Walter Kasper (1933-)**
  Kaspaer saw communion as inclusive even to the debased members such as the divorcees. His work, *That They May Be One* (2004) is outstanding as it is enhanced by his role or task as the head of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. With strong Christological leanings, I think due to his earlier work, *Jesus the Christ* (1985) perceives the confession of Jesus Christ as Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit as the basis of unity.

3.2 The Orthodox views

Not much is known about communion ecclesiology in the Eastern Orthodox Church tradition**.** However, the subject is not ignored, which is apparent when one interacts with the work of John Zizioulas. Before examining his communion ecclesiology, it is worthwhile to consider the other Orthodox communion ecclesiologist, Fr. Dumitru Stãniloae.

3.2.1 Communion ecclesiology of Fr. Dumitru Stãniloae (1903 - 1993)

Fr. Dumitru Stãniloae was a Romanian theologian, not well-known enough outside Romania. His tenure as a theologian was under the communist regime that tried to isolate Christian practices of the territory from the rest of the world. He was imprisoned most of the time, which restricted his writings from being translated into the Western languages. It also isolated him from the theological thoughts of the time. To really grasp his philosophy, one should become aquainted with his work, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (1977), especially Part 4 of its second volume. His other seminal work, *Theology and the Church* (1996), specifically emphasises communion ecclesiology. These two works were translated into English in 1996 and 1980 respectively. Fr. Radu Bordeianu enlightens us that Fr. Stãniloae's work is a great resource for most of the aspects to which communion ecclesiology refers, especially the intra-trinitarian relations, the mystical communion between humans and God and the sacramental dimension of the Church (Bordeianu n.d). He sees Christ as

the supreme Teacher, who, through the Holy Spirit, enlightens the members of the church to teach each other. There is a continuous dialogue between the church and its head (Stãniloae 1996:152). This reflects communion ecclesiology par excellence, since the entire church, clergy and faithful alike are continuing Christ's priesthood and collaborate with him.

Stãniloae attaches importance to the communion between the humans and the Triune God. In *Theology and the Church*, he dedicates two chapters on this subject: 'Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church', and 'The Holy Trinity: Structure of Supreme Love'. Out of these one can deduce that communion ecclesiology places emphasis on relationships. In analysing the communion ecclesiology of Stãniloae, Fr. Radu Bordeianu continues to point out that

> the believers are in community with their own priest and bishop, but also with the faithful and clergy from other dioceses, since their bishop is in communion with the other bishops.

This communion is an everyday life experience, which implies spirituality. Stãniloae carries this argument further by asserting that the Orthodox theology will also be a theology of the church.

> For the Church is the communion of the faithful realized in Christ and sustained by the Holy Spirit. It is communion and profound spirituality at one and the same time. And because of this it is life. It is communion in the Holy Spirit. The very existence of the Church is an effect, continually renewed, of action of the Holy Spirit in creating communion (1996:217-218).

This notion is expounded in the chapter on 'The Orthodox Doctrine of Salvation and its Implications for Christian Diakonia in the World'.

In retrospection, Stãniloae's communion ecclesiology is the communion among all human beings (1996:17). Orthodox theology is generally not a narrow ecumenical theology, but a theology concerned with the aspirations and problems facing humanity at large. Stãniloae uses the *charismatic* gifts

outlined in 1 Corinthians 12 as for the purpose of serving one Church of Christ. These gifts are the particularities, which, if valued correctly for the unity that we aspire to, will ensure that the church remains spiritually healthy.

> True spirituality is seen in the efforts of all men (and women) to achieve a common unity, but a unity which respects the specific contribution which each individual can bring to this growth of understanding and to the content of mankind's common experiences and values (1996:218).

This is the glue that unites the communion – where each exists to serve the other. It is accomplished when *homothymadon* is experienced. The perfect harmony becomes an inevitable mark of communion. This contribution of Stãniloae is an epic to be reckoned with in the Orthodox theology of communion. It has to be captured as a full communion ecclesiology in the Orthodox theology as summarised by Fr. Radu Bordeianu:

> There is communion at all the levels: the Trinitarian persons among themselves, denominations among themselves, Christ with his Church, bishops among themselves, priests with bishops, faithful with clergy, and faithful with other believers.

3.2.2 Communion ecclesiology of John Zizioulas (1931-)

In the modern context, the leading figure regarding communion ecclesiology in the Orthodox theology is John Zizioulas. He is the Eastern Orthodox titular Metropolitan of Pergamon and currently chairs the Academy of Athens. He is undoubtedly one of the most influential Orthodox Christian theologians of today. His theological research and focus are ecclesiology and ontology. Reading through his works, one recognises the influence of Russian émigré theologians such as Nikolai Afanassieff, Vladimir Lossky and Georges Florovsky. The latter is his teacher. One also picks up the significant influence of ascetical theology in his works, especially that of Archimandtrite Sophrony, who is the founder of the Stavropegic Monastery of St John the Baptist in Essex, England.

Zizioulas' ecclesiology is critically developed from the Eucharistic ecclesiology of Nikolai Afanassieff, of which the main principle was that wherever there is the Eucharist, there is the church. However, Zizioulas criticised Afanassief's ecclesiology as too congregational with an insufficient episcopal emphasis. Zizioulas therefore, advocates an episcocentric understanding of church structure, with the bishop as primarily the president of the Divine Liturgy and the Eucharistic community. In brief, for Zizioulas, the 'Church and Eucharist are interdependent, they coincide, and are even in some sense identical' (Resources for Christian Theology 2006).

3.2.3 Synergy of Orthodox thought

It is interesting to see how Doyle compares and contrasts the ecclesiology of Tillard and Zizioulas (2000:156-160). The two worked together closely on the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC and on the International Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church (Flanagan 2011:91).

The continuing dialogue between the two forged a closer understanding and a synergy of their methods. These methods were premised on the church fathers to conclusions on the matters of ecclesiology, soteriology and anthropology. The same trend is observed in the work of Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (1998); where the works of Ratzinger and Zizioulas are coupled for the same reasons. Throughout the works of Zizioulas there is an evident emphasis on relationality. Since the Christian God is the relational God, it is not an anomaly to see this relation with and among his people. Doyle captures the essence of Zizioulas' ecclesiology in his work when he propounds: 'Relationality is at the heart of existence' (2000:159). This can clearly be found in his 1985 work, known as *Being as Communion,* where he considers that the local church as 'catholic' in the literal sense, and the need to understand the universal church not as a superstructure but as the communion of all churches, provides the programme for the ecclesiology of the future. For Zizioulas, ecclesiology is not simply one aspect of theology. It assumes a fundamental importance not only for all of theology, but also for

our understanding of humanity as such. He writes: The church is a 'way of being' which is 'deeply bound to the being of man, to the being of the world and to the very being of God' (1985:15).

The individuals of a local church must be united in and through the ministry of one bishop representing Christ, just as the many local churches must be united into one for their Eucharist to be proper ecclesiologically. The crux then is that *ecclesial* unity on a universal level is essential for the Eucharist. This theological construct is influenced by his proclivity to ontology. Volf correctly subscribes to Zizioulas as a theologian who

> has also tried to place this Eucharistic ecclesiology within a comprehensive theological framework and to work out its theological and anthropological presuppositions in the form of an ontology of person (1998:74-75).

To understand Zizioulas' communion ecclesiology, it is important to realise that his ontological method seeks to understand *ecclesial* being. This ecclesiology is based on ontology of person acquired from a consideration of the nature of the triune God (Volf 1998:75). This ontology of person is expansively elaborated as trinitarian and human personhood. In fact, Zizioulas' *Communion* work is wealthy of the notion of Eucharistic community as *ecclesial* community that is sacramentally bound together.

The Eucharistic view of the communion is very strong in Tillard's *Church of Churches* (1987) and it has been adopted by some Catholic theologians such as Henri de Lubac and Yves Congar. This is, to some degree, confirmed in the first document of the Joint International Theological Commission between the Orthodox churches and the Roman Catholic Church in Munich, 1982 (Kasper 2004:60-64). Zizioulas remains the main source and pillar of today's Orthodox ecclesiology.

3.3 The Protestant views: Mainstream and evangelicals

Protestantism originated in the Reformation era of the sixteenth century and is a third branch of the Christian faith. The movement has always been

defensive against threatening forces such as the Enlightenment and Islam. The challenge for any theologian trying to study the Protestant *dogmatics* is the proliferation and the diversity found within the Reformation churches. Since this book is not concerned with church history *per se*, it is academically legitimate to highlight the formation of this movement – this basically from the South African perspective.

Panoramically, the movement is divided into two major streams: the mainstream and the evangelical movements.

3.3.1 The mainstream Protestant faith

Although the mainstream Protestant faith is still significant and speaks as a voice for Reformation ideals, there is an ongoing eschatological process. In some instances, one hears of mainline denominations or Christianity, orthodox churches, traditional churches or organised churches. This refers to Reformed churches that have colonial roots and were brought to the colonies by missionaries from the colonial powers.

3.3.2 The evangelical movement

The second major stream is the evangelical movement with its roots in the pietistic Puritan and Anabaptist movements. At present, it is dogmatically correct to describe that evangelicalism holds to four assumptions:

1. The authority and sufficiency of Scripture.
2. The uniqueness of redemption through the death of Christ upon the cross.
3. The need for personal conversion.
4. The necessity, propriety, and urgency of evangelism. (McGrath 2011:80):

Prominent scholars of the evangelical movement are Carl F.H. Henry (1913-2003) who is noted for his six-volume *God, Revelation and Authority* (1976-1983), Donald G. Bloesch (1928-2010) who wote *Essentials of Evangelical Theology* (1978-1979), and J.I. Packer (1926-) and his *Knowing God* (1973).

Evangelicals had always seen themselves as a wing of the church. In some instances, especially in the Anglican Church, they were a church within a church. It was as late as October 1966 at the meeting of Evangelical Alliance in London that Martin Lloyd-Jones caused some sensation by asking: 'Are we content, as evangelicals, to go on being nothing but an evangelical wing of a church?' There was a strong call for evangelicals to leave their denominations and form a national Evangelical Church (Steer 1999:224).

In his chapter in the 2003 Stackhouse book, *Evangelical ecclesiology: Reality or illusion?* Bruce Hindmarsh gives the outcomes of this question by asserting: 'Underlying this debate was the question of whether evangelicalism constitutes the true church and, if so, whether this should be more fully realized in visible, organizational unity (2003:17)?

Bear in mind that evangelicalism promotes itself by *kerygmatic* activities more than by scholarship. One finds the expression of evangelical faith through preachers such as Billy Graham, J.I Parker, John Stott, and other pentecostal/charismatic evangelists or teachers such as Derek Prince, Jack Hayford and Reinhard Bonnke. Their consultative initiatives are diverse but are evident in the Lausanne congresses of 1974 and 2010, Amsterdam 86 and Amsterdam 2000. There are many of these evangelists regionally, continentally and globally where they normally reassert themselves and formulate strategies of *kerygma* in the context of the time. The evangelicals have institutions (as with the mainstream Christianity) in the form of colleges, seminaries, schools, hospitals, care centres, community projects, etc.

- **The Holiness movement**
  Evangelicalism has many branches. Foremost among these is the Holiness movement, which refers to a set of beliefs and practices emerging from the nineteenth-century Methodism and some evangelical denominations, parachurch organisations and movements that emphasised those beliefs as a central doctrine. According to the World Council of Churches (WCC), there are an estimated 12 million adherents in Holiness movement churches (WCC n.d). The Holiness movement is made up of denominations such

as the Church of the Nazarene, Wesleyan Church, Free Methodist Church and Salvation Army. The list is not exhaustive.

Holiness adherents believe that the 'second work of grace' (or 'second blessing') refers to a personal experience subsequent to regeneration, in which the believer is cleansed of the tendency to commit sin. This experience of 'entire sanctification' enables the believer to live a holy life, and ideally, to live entirely without willful sin, though it is generally accepted that a sanctified individual is still capable of committing sin.

Holiness groups believe the moral aspects of the law of God are pertinent for today, and so expect their adherents to obey behavioral rules—for example; many groups have statements prohibiting the consumption of alcohol, participation in any form of gambling, and entertainments such as dancing and movie-going. This position does attract opposition from some evangelicals, who charge that such an attitude refutes or slights Reformation (particularly Calvinist) teachings, that the effects of original sin remain even in the most faithful of souls.

- **The Pentecostal movement**

  At the turn of the twentieth century, the Pentecostal movement and its consequent sibling, the charismatic movements were born out of the Holiness movement, with endeavours of bringing back the role of *charisms* (gifts) and the operations of the Holy Spirit into the church.

  The Christian Assemblies International website describes the Pentecostal movement as follows:

  > The Pentecostal movement is by far the largest and most important religious movement of the twentieth century. Beginning in 1901 with only a handful of students in a Bible School in Topeka, Kansas, the number of Pentecostals steadily increased throughout the world during the twentieth century until by 1993 they had become the largest family of Protestants in the world. In 2000, there were an estimated 560 million Pentecostals in the world.

According to the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life Global Research, December 2011, Pentecostals comprise of over 700 denominations and a large number of independent churches, there is no central authority governing Pentecostalism; however, many denominations are affiliated with the Pentecostal World Fellowship. There are over 279 million Pentecostals worldwide and the movement is growing in many parts of the world, especially the global South.

Since the 1960s, Pentecostalism has increasingly gained acceptance from other Christian traditions. Pentecostal beliefs concerning Spirit baptism and spiritual gifts have been embraced by non-Pentecostal Christians in Protestant and Catholic churches through the charismatic movement. In other words, charismatics were or are Pentecostals in the established churches. This definition or description is, however, not wholly accurate as some charismatics have now become some formalised groups or networks outside of the traditional denominations. Together, Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity numbers over 500 million adherents.

3.3.3 Communion ecclesiology in the Free churches tradition

So, Protestants are very diverse and to study their communion ecclesiology is an academic nightmare. For the purpose of the subject matter of this book, let us return to communion ecclesiology in the Free churches tradition, as propounded by Miroslav Volf (1998). The reference will commence with communion ecclesiology in the Anglican Church, since they are the ones that deliberately took initiatives to actualise communion as the Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox theologians had attempted.

3.3.3.1 Communion ecclesiology in the Anglican Church

The reader has to study the ARCIC (Anglican Roman-Catholic International Commission) and its reports in order to see how the dialogues had progressed since its creation in 1969. Its original aim was to seek ecumenical progress between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion.

Ecumenical relations have become strained, owing to the ordination of women within the Anglican Communion and, in more recent years, the Anglican Communion has internally become increasingly more divided over issues concerning human sexuality. The Catholic-Anglican dialogues, however, still continue. ARCIC made some indelible marks when it released its final report, which agreed that 'the Church as *koinonia* requires visible expression because it is intended to be the sacrament of God's saving work' (1982:4).

Anglican scholars agree that Anglicanism exists as a distinctively theological ethos, which is a method. These scholars specify the method but not the outcome of theological investigation, and can only disagree on the grounds of fidelity to method. The good news about this method is that it facilitates some dynamic approach to tradition. Historically one can attest to the fact that Anglicanism has always applied the comprehensive model of doing theology of the church that is rooted in a desire to maintain communion. This fact is accurately captured by Colin Podmore, who asserts:

> [T]he very existence of the Anglican Communion as a family of churches that share a common or related origins, albeit with divergent theological perspectives, gives rise to a challenge to the notion that Anglicanism possesses no special doctrines of its own (2005:40).

Ecclesiology is at the centre of Anglican dogma. The Anglican traditions, sacraments and confessions all revolve around ecclesiology. The following extracts from an article by Eimhin Walsh entitled *Communion, Church and Crisis: Communion Ecclesiology in an Anglican Context* (2002) will help to drive this point home:

In the article, Walsh takes from G.R. Evans:

> Foundational to each of the local churches that comprise the Anglican Communion is the diocese, overseen by a bishop. Each local worshipping community gathers to celebrate the Eucharist, which is an anticipation of the Universal Church (2002).

Walsh also cites John Henry Newman as follows:

> [E]ach diocese is a perfect independent Church, sufficient for itself; and the communion of Christians one with another, and the unity of them all together lie … in what they are and what they have in common (2002).

Walsh also writes: 'While the mystical oneness of multiple local Eucharistic communities is essentially complete, it is not independent of other like communities' (2002).

Walsh again takes from Evans and says:

> Although higher instruments of a synodical nature have proved undesirable for the Anglican Communion, local bonds of culture, language, economy and of relationship with secular government have facilitated associations between local Eucharistic communities, gathered together into provinces (2002).

Walsh goes on and cites Martin Foord as follows:

> Thus, relationships between local communities, national churches and global communion are one of mutual interdependence. The local is always bound to the universal as both are supremely complementary; both are mutually dependent manifestations of the body of Christ (2002).

The Anglican Communion sees itself as a provisional manifestation, therefore not a universal church. There can be no exclusive claims for its ecclesiology. The true ecclesiality is found on the union with Christ.

Finally, Walsh taking from Avis makes it clear that:

> Anglican ecclesiology sees itself, and all churches, as provisional in light of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. This self-understanding gives Anglican ecclesiology its distinctive character, and it is for this reason that Anglicanism does not need much specific doctrine, since it is comfortable drawing upon the common inheritance of Christian tradition, supplemented with contemporary experience (2002).

The Anglican Church understands itself concerning communion ecclesiology, though it maintains the eschatological formation of the idea of what the communion is all about. Despite the differences, disagreements and difficulties, an ecclesiology of communion requires mutual striving towards the highest possible degrees of communion with God and with one another. Bradshaw (1992:84-85) catches the ARCIC spirit that 'union with God in Christ Jesus through the Spirit is the heart of Christian *koinonia* … *Koinonia* with one another is entailed by our *koinonia* with God in Christ.

So far the communion ecclesiology in the Anglican tradition! In fact, if one wants to have some deeper understanding of Anglican Communion ecclesiology, the work of Bradshaw (1992), *The Olive Branch*, is one of the highly recommended monographs. It outlines the evangelical Anglican Doctrine of the Church, including aspects of sacraments and syntheses in matters of faith and communion.

3.3.3.2 Miroslav Volf's communion ecclesiology

Before turning to Volf's communion ecclesiology, it will be ideal to know a little bit of who he is. Miroslav Volf was born on 25 September, 1956 in Osijek, Croatia. He is a Croatian Protestant theologian. Rowan Williams, in the Foreword of Volf's book says he is 'recognized as one of the most celebrated theologians of our day' (2005:9). Having taught at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in his native Osijek, Croatia (1979-80, 1983-90), and Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California (1990-1998), Volf currently serves as the Henry B. Wright Professor of Theology at Yale Divinity School and Director of the Yale Center for Faith and Culture.

Turning towards Volf (1998) who presents communion ecclesiology from the Free Church perspective, one observes how he dialogues comparatively with Joseph Ratzinger and John Zizioulas. Like Zizioulas, Volf applies ontology in emphasising the relationality and personhood. Volf comes out clearly and strongly on the trinitarian communion of what the church should be. So, trinitarian theology is utilised deeper to drive facts home. For him, God is

a communion; and the church is eschatological and anticipatory, therefore, also a communion. This is reflected by strong commentary of perichoretic personhood, wherein the mutual giving and receiving, the Trinitarian persons are not only interdependent, but also mutually internal (1998:208).

Volf seeks to both show that a 'free church' ecclesiology is a theologically legitimate form of ecclesiology and to give that typically individualistic ecclesiology focused on the Lordship of Christ a more robustly communal character by tying it to the communal nature of God. Volf proposes a non-hierarchical account of church as a community rooted in an egalitarian understanding of the Trinity (since hierarchy is, in his judgment, unthinkable with regard to three equally divine persons). Each member of the church has 'charisms' for the common good of all in the church, without the strict need for the 'one' to symbolise and guarantee unity (though the 'one' might be needed for pragmatic rather than dogmatic reasons). Volf's position is not, however, that hierarchical forms of ecclesiology are illegitimate. Though not ultimately ideal, in certain cultural settings hierarchical forms of the church may even be the best possible and therefore preferable ways of reflecting in the church the trinitarian communion of the one God.

Perichoresis describes the relationship between each person of the triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). In Christian theology, the term was originally used by the Church Fathers. The contemporary theologians who use it widely include Jürgen Moltmann, John Zizioulas, C Baxter Kruger, and the one under scrutiny here, Miroslav Volf. The term is used to explain the *imago Dei* of which humans are carriers.

A Wikipedia internet article describing the term '*perichoresis*' elaborates as follows:

> Since humans are made in the image of God, a Christian understanding of an adequate anthropology of humans' social relations is informed by the divine attributes, what can be known of God's activity and God's presence in human affairs. Theologians of the Communio school such as Hans Urs von Balthasar, Henri de Lubac and Josph Ratzinger locate

> the reciprocal dynamism between God and God's creatures in the liturgical action of sacrament, hermeneutic of continuity and apostolic unity, in a hermeneutic of continuity and apostolic unity.

The communion ecclesiology based on *perichoresis* ruminates the Trinity as a base or premise of communion. Volf's communion is explicitly trinitarian.

> Human beings can be in the triune God only insofar as the Son is in them (John 17:23; 14:20); and if the Son is in them, then so also is the love with which the Father loves the Son (John 17:26). Because the Son indwells human beings through the Spirit, however, the unity of the church is grounded in the interiority of the Spirit – and with the Spirit also in the interiority of the other divine persons- in Christians (1998:213).

There is no doubt that Volf sees communion as the church dwelling in one particular place with the members of the Trinity among them; living all together symbiotically and in unison to reflect the desire of Christ in his John 17 high priestly prayer.

3.3.4 Communion ecclesiology in the mainstream evangelical world of thoughts

We now consider communion ecclesiology in the mainstream evangelical world of thoughts. As noted above, the proliferation and divergences in this tradition is difficult to synchronise. According to Danfulani Kore , apart from the evangelical branch that was historically intertwined with the Anglican Church, the evangelical churches are:

> Denominations and churches that accept the Bible as the infallible and inspired word of God and authoritative in all matters of faith and practice … Evangelical type denominations have their theological roots in the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century which held strongly to the principle of sola scriptura (1998:266).

In this commentary, I explore the whole movement's communion perspectives regardless of the fundamentalist, Holiness, Pentecostal, or charismatic outlooks.

In the corridors of theological or religion faculties of institutions, one major question concerns the distinctiveness of evangelical theology or ecclesiology. In 2003, Stackhouse edited some informative articles by different authors on evangelical ecclesiology (Stackhouse 2003). This work brings together some fresh theological reflections and provocations on the subject of evangelical ecclesiology. It endeavors to address the character of evangelicalism as a loose coalition as perceived by theological scholarship in a broader context. The concern is the consonance of the ethos found in certain evangelical circles – the area covering even the parachurch's role in shaping and promoting the evangelical church structure. The contributors, though confronted by the plethora of directions, attempt to position evangelical ecclesiology into the contemporary world where it fulfills its *missio Dei.*

The English theologian, Colin E. Gunton warns of the danger of erroneous interpretation of the church from the Western worldview:

> Prominent in western history are two dangerous tendencies: to see the church as an expression of national life and consequently to narrow its universal calling and responsibility; and to see it as a given institution into which individuals come, rather than as a society whose distinctive reality is shaped – in its horizontal dimension – by the particular people within it (2002:121).

The broad evangelical communion ecclesiology believes that the authentic church goes beyond the national, racial, tribal, ethnic, economic and/or disability status. The community of believers is seen as a narrative community continually under the shaping or re-construction of and by the Triune God. Bruce Hindmarsh points out that the ideal of the narrative community (radical congregationalism), the small church within the 'mixed church' (Pietism), and the interconfessional and international brotherhood (Moravianism) would be taken up into the modern evangelical movement (Hindmarsh 2003:25). The diversities prevalent within evangelicalism will normally be lenient to one of the three assumptions proposed by Hindmarsh. The underlying factor is that evangelical communion ecclesiology is where there is a communion with God and with one another.

There is no doubt that the evangelical movement still remains fundamental to the orthodox belief and confession of one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. If one surveys the Statements of Faith of any evangelical group – church or parachurch; this confession is *ad rem* (to the point) and *ad summum* (to the highest point) as a hallmark of their identity with the mainstream Christianity. In the recent past, evangelical Christianity has become lukewarm and questioned itself as to what and who do they stand for. Hence one often hears statements such as 'I like Jesus, but not the church.', 'There is nothing wrong with Jesus, but everything wrong with the church.' etc. In response to this tepidness, at the Philadelphia Conference on Reformation Theology, the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals at their thirtieth anniversary meeting in April 2003, had their theme 'Christ and His Church.' The themes 'one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church', were presented by Richard D. Phillips, Philip G. Ryken and Mark E. Dever. The classic description of the Christian church was examined as rendered by the Nicene Creed as an attempt to recover the church's identity whose future destiny is in union with exalted Christ. The passages such as Matthew 16:13-25; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 3:26-29; and Ephesians 1:20-23, 2:19-22, 4:1-6 were used as foundational exegesis to enhance the biblical and theological authenticity of these themes. This is the typical evangelical theological argument – text as a premise for the debate. What is important for evangelical ecclesiology is the text that 'And in him you too are *being built together* to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit' (Eph. 2:22).

> The verb for building (synoikodomeisthe) is a present participle. It describes something that is happening right now, on an ongoing basis. God is building us together. We are being built into a holy temple, a dwelling place for God. The church is not a static building, but a living, growing community that is still under construction (Ryken 2004:111).

The Triune God who dwells together with the redeemed is busy conforming the community into his desire. The South African Catholic systematic theologian, Brian Gaybba, reinforces this as follows:

> Our unity with each other, our sharing in Christ's unity with the Father, is Christ's gift to us. It is the Spirit of love dwelling in our hearts, enabling us to reach out in love to Christ, the Father, and each other (1987:183).

Christ's presence in the church gives her some form of glorious respectability. This communion of the saints has not yet reached perfection though it is regarded as glorious. This is captured clearer by Kuiper (1998:13), who writes that 'today the glory of the church is thickly veiled. It is no exaggeration that in the main it presents a picture of advanced decadence and extreme feebleness.'

There is nowhere in the scripture where we encounter perfection or *ne plus ultra* (reaching the final mark). To be justified, sanctified, and regenerated is a continuing act of God to those who are members of the community of the saints. The members of communion live *sancta simplicitas* (holy simplicity) with high and potential mishaps *per tot discrimina rerum* (through so many crises of fortune). This is captured also by Stott, when he acclaims that

> to be an evangelical Christian, however, is not just to subscribe to a formula, however orthodox in its trinitarianism. The evangelical faith reaches beyond belief to behaviour; it brings with it a multifaceted challenge to live accordingly (1999:111).

Just as Stackhouse and his colleagues mentioned earlier were concerned about evangelical ecclesiology, there is also another extensive work on the theme edited by Husbands and Treier, *The Community of the Word: Toward an Evangelical Ecclesiology* (2005). The hypothetical question here is 'Do the evangelicals have a clear and strong doctrine of the church?' In the work, thirteen scholars and teachers explore the history of evangelical ecclesiology and the continuing discussion regarding the nature of the church, the question of sacraments, the relation of church to society, its moral character and missional witness. These evangelical thinkers, most of the time appealing to the textual exegesis, are of one conclusion: the church is the community that gathers around the word. In a contribution to the Husbands and Treier book, William A. Dyrness writes:

> [W]e interpret Scripture by our corporate life together, the social space that is formed by the Holy Spirit; we construe the text in ways that reflect the historical place that we find ourselves in (or that we have chosen) (2005:271).

3.3.5 Evangelical ecclesia as the social space of the church

This last part of this chapter is thought-stimulating as it directs evangelical *ecclesia* as the social space of the church. Dyrness elaborates on this aspect:

> Though the church, theologically, is the eschatological community which is the sign and instance of God's new creation in Christ, formed by the Holy Spirit, it is at the same time people from a particular region who come together at particular times, and, using one language or another, do things together (2005:255).

A community constituted by the Holy Spirit dispensing charismata on it is characterised by its togetherness where social barriers are not respected. This togetherness is not a loose network, but shares a common purpose, which is to evangelise the world. 'The church is a missional, purpose driven, or world oriented community' (Dyrness 2005:252). Chester and Timmis (2008) also stress that the community is central to Christian identity and mission. This togetherness of community is for evangelism, social involvement, church planting, world missions, discipleship and training, pastoral care, etc. The typical evangelical ecclesiology spends more time in affirming through the textual studies, the biblical mandate for missions in the world. The missional church is regarded as biblically authentic by re-positioning itself as the 'gatherers' and the 'gathered.' (Clowney 1995:159-164). The common audible among the evangelicals is 'we gather in order to scatter'. Gathering together is for instruction, exhortation, training, inspiration and encouragement (discipleship); while scattering is for outreach, caring, calling others to Christ, etc. (evangelism).

The Pentecostal or charismatic ecclesiology does not differ much from that of the mainstream evangelical one. The notable Catholic, Hans Küng and

Reformed Jürgen Moltmann, with the support of Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, give Pentecostal ecclesiology some injection by labelling the church as a charismatic fellowship. In his famous work, *The Church* (1967), Küng depicts the church in the early Christian centuries as a charismatic movement of followers of Jesus (Doyle 2000:120). For him, the church is a dynamic and eschatological community of salvation, guided by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Moltmann underscores the fact that 'pneumatological Christology leads to a new charismatic ecclesiology' (Moltmann 1989:36); and that 'fellowship with Christ in the Spirit is the fellowship of Christ's sufferings and the fellowship of his death' (Moltmann 1989:59). He points away from the pastoral church, which looks after the people, to peoples' own communal church among the people – the mission that can be undertaken under the power of the Holy Spirit.

On the other hand, Kärkkäinen consorts with Peter Kuzmic and Miroslav to share the Pentecostal ecclesiology based on *koinonia* to usher in the church as a charismatic fellowship (2000:116-119). He continues to appeal to these two teachers to bring to attention that the Pentecostal ecclesiology is always striving towards a participatory ecclesiology (2000:119-122).

Panoramically, the Pentecostal ecclesiology is scanty and poriferous. The late Rev. Michael Harper of the Church of England (later a priest oin the Orthodox Church) observed that: 'Pentecostal ecclesiology is of an ad hoc nature which leaves much room for improvisation' (1976:3223). It is indeed, as Lee (1994:15) said that it 'is not so much a thematised theology as a lived reality'. In another work*, An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumemical, Historical and Global Perspectives*, Kärkkäinen, in reference to Pentecostal ecclesiology, affirms that 'the dynamic of the fellowship is concretely lived out through the charismata' (2002:75). It is not a matter of the body of dogma to believe, but the experience to attain. Although they accept and support the local churches, the Pentecostals regard themselves as the members of the universal church. Keith Warrington attests to this when he writes:

> The Pentecostal church is of significant importance to Pentecostals and although many local churches are part of large denominations, they are

> granted significant autonomy, including the freedom to appoint their own leaders, develop ministries, initiate mission activities and often invest in projects and buildings (2008:133).

One of the latest writings on Pentecostal ecclesiology, *Toward a Pentecostal Ecclesiology: The Church and the Fivefold Gospel,* edited by John Christopher Thomas is a monograph based upon the presentations given at a conference on Pentecostal Ecclesiology that convened on 28-29 June 2010 at Bangor University in North Wales, UK. The articles at the conference present the Pentecostal Church as Redeemed Community, Sanctified Community, Empowered Community, Healing Community and Eschatological Community. This monograph, compiled from contributors representing six continents and a diversity of gender, race, nationality, denominational affiliation and academic disciplines, is destined to shape future dialogues on Pentecostal ecclesiology as well as the broader field of Pentecostal theology. Throughout the book, the reader comes across the passion towards a growing momentum towards a more trinitarian-based Pentecostal ecclesiology (2010).

This is also highlighted by Monte Lee Rice in his paper 'Renewing the Pentecostal Vision and Witness of the Justified People of God' presented at the 41st Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies with the theme 'Pentecostalisms, Peacemaking, and Social Justice/Righteousness' (2012).

In the final chapter of Kenneth J. Archer's 2009 book, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic: Spirit, Scripture and Community*, there is a section dedicated, though briefly, to 'The Spirit's Voice Heard and through the Pentecostal Community'. It is mentioned here that:

> [T]he community provides the context in which the Spirit's manifestation takes place … The purpose of these manifestations and community activities is to empower, guide, and transform, the individuals in community so that the Pentecostal community can faithfully follow the Lord Jesus Christ (2009:248-249).

There is a further expectation of the role of the Spirit in the gathered community. Yong elaborates on this in his 2014 book, *Renewing Christian Theology:*

Systematics for a Global Christianity (2014:182) in the section, 'Into All the World! The Church as *Mission Spiritus*'. Here it is explained that the church must be understood christologically, pneumatologically, eschatologically and missiologically (2014:183-184).

One cannot move from the Pentecostal ecclesiology without touching briefly on its sibling, charismatic ecclesiology. It does not differ much from what has been said regarding the Pentecostal one. However, Kärkkäinen tells us that that charismatic Christians usually focus more on community than do their Pentecostal counterparts. He says: 'They have a greater sense of community life and the relationship between *koinonia* and the work of the Spirit. This is especially true for charismatics in more sacramental denominations' (2002:94-95).

The charismatics, which I have termed the 'emerging apostolic movement',[4] or 'New Apostolic Churches' as called by Peter Wagner, have their ecclesiology on a settled type of charismatic mould. Each church is independent and autonomous and charismatics have a strong image of the church as a family. They do, however, in various places and ways, organise themselves into what they call 'apostolic networks.'

3.4 The African Initiated churches

In examining the African Initiated churches, this section considers only the South African situation. Before exploring their ecclesiology, it is beneficial to note what the African evangelical theologian, the late Byang H. Kato said:

> A further reason why Africa provides such a fertile ground for universalism is the gregarious nature of the African. The African likes

4 The key factor in the emerging apostolic churches is the networks based on and around the relationships. These are the main source of organisational strength. For these churches, the body of Christ had become an authentic and dynamic network. The focal point of relationships is fellowship – a cherished priority for the New Apostolic churches. Fellowship refines and produces the glow of purity in the church life (Resane 2008:71).

> to congregate with others. He likes to be heard, hence the loud noise. He likes large numbers, hence the large family, including polygamy. His nature, therefore, provides fertile ground for ecumenism which easily promotes universalism. That everyone is on his way to heaven would be palatable teaching regardless of what the Scriptures say (1975:15).

The African Initiated Churches make up a huge stream of Christianity in South Africa. As Kore helps us to understand that these churches are those 'who base their religious authority on direct revelation, either through an inspired prophet or through members of the congregation in general' (1998:266).

The literature sometimes refers to them as African Independent Churches, African Instituted Churches, or African Indigenous Churches. All these names remain with abbreviation 'AIC'. Generally speaking, An African Initiated Church is a Christian church independently started in Africa by Africans and not by missionaries from another continent. These churches emphasise their originality and leadership by Africans. All AICs place emphasis on the biblical warrant to include African cultural norms into their modes of worship, theology and practice, though to varying degrees. In other words, they are syncretistic in that they combine indigenous African religion with Christian beliefs, but the degree to which this occurs varies. The AICs do not follow the pattern of the old European mainline denominations. Doctrine and statements of faith, including confessions, creeds, etc. are not their strong point.

The gregarious nature of the African mentioned by Kato enhances communion ecclesiology in these churches. For instance, Martin West, in an introduction to a photographic exhibition 'African Independent Churches in Soweto 1969-1971' makes the following observation:

> But they were also open to outsiders particularly through their healing services. Once inside the barrier, and accepted, the newcomer finds a supportive community, a refuge from the trials and tribulations of the outside world, and – largely through healing – a means of coping. The poor and people of little formal education feel comfortable here, and have opportunities to exercise leadership and other skills as well as receiving support. They are a place to feel at home.

The above statement shows that their communions are always in small numbers with kinship relationships of some sort. Because of these conglomerates, the AICs are staunch adherents of mutual pastoral care. For them, the church is where two or three meet together, with the Lord in their midst. Their conspicuousness around South Africa on Sundays, sometimes Thursdays, is not just colourful uniforms, but gatherings under the trees, along the freeways, in all types of houses in the informal settlements, townships, suburban areas, or even in what is known as back-rooms or garden flats (servants quarters). Intimate fellowship and mutual care is a hallmark characteristic of their communion.

A pastor, priest, or bishop is not measured by the size of his or her church, but by the divine appointment. A bishop can have his or her church meeting in the lounge with a handful of the faithful followers. Theological training is not an issue as unction by the Holy Spirit, in some cases by ancestors; a leader is appointed and anointed.

Their ecclesiology, especially the polity is difficult to assess for documentation. Cornelius Olowola highlights the fact that 'these churches have little church organization. They often face serious problems when the founder dies … they do not seriously consider any form of church government' (Olowola 1998:302).

A typical South African example of this lack of 'organisation is the current court battle in the Shembe Church. This battle, which has been dragging for years, revolves around the legitimate leadership after the death of its founder. One can also recall the split and the court battle between Mrs Christina Nku of St Johns Apostolic Faith Mission and her rival, Bishop Petrus Masango, which only ended when both of them passed away. Recently, after the death of Rev Frederick Modise, the founder of International Pentecostal Church, a court interdict had to be applied to assess the legitimate heir to the throne.

Regardless of this vulnerable polity, this communion ecclesiology is concordant with the Apostolic Church of the New Testament, where churches met in houses in different communes in a particular geographical area.

3.5 Conclusion

In retrospection, Vatican II opened the doors of dialogues with the broader Christian communion, including the Orthodox and the all the branches of Protestant communion such as the Anglican, Evangelical and Pentecostal branches. Acknowledgement of some weaknesses found in Vatican II does not overshadow the Council's potentials. Chirila correctly reflects the sentiment that,

> [T]he ecclesiology of the Second Vatican, although it speaks of the true fellowship of the bishops and of the people of God, proves to be profoundly juridical and monarchical, while Orthodox ecclesiology has a charismatic, synodal and sobornistic character (2009:409).

In analysis of this Council, Volf, and Zizioulas, one can conclude to agree with Chirila. The discourses between the Catholic Church and those of other faiths had been necessitated by this Council. It is important to note that communion ecclesiology suffered enormously in racially polarised South Africa. Catholics and Protestants of all confessions were subjected to the socio-political status quo. Ministers, pastors, bishops, evangelists and clergymen and women at large had their ministerial credentials withdrawn or suspended due to their responses to the ills of socio-political injustices. Some were banned from the pulpits, while some were forced into exile. Of course, some died mysteriously in the hands of security forces. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission that former South African president Nelson Mandela, initiated revealed some horrific deeds to the populace including those confessing their faith in God. The cry over this injustice is echoed by Desmond van der Water, who believes that the system robbed people of the opportunity to,

> enjoy communion with God and to serve God … The eucharist, which is thus the supreme symbol and action of unity within the Church, cannot be celebrated with integrity by churches and Christians who are not united in their denunciation of; and collaboration against the systemic evils and structural injustices of Apartheid. The crucial question that emerges here is that of church discipline (1991:94).

Chapter 4

African *ubuntu* and communion ecclesiology

A central task of community is to create a place that is safe enough for the walls to be torn down, safe enough for each of us to own and reveal our brokenness. Only then can the power of connecting do its job. Only then can community be used of God to restore our souls (Crabb 1999:11).

The church is a community of people on a journey to God. Wherever there is supernatural togetherness and Spirit-directed movement, there is the church – a spiritual community (Crabb 1999:21).

4.1 The conceptual understanding of *ubuntu*.

Social and developmental studies in South Africa, lately, make references to the concept of *ubuntu* or *botho*. This concept is applied in organisational, business and corporate structures. It is used as a measuring stick for ethics in social interactions and interfaces. There have been various platforms such as conferences, symposia, workshops and inaugural lectures on this philosophy of *ubuntu* that has come to be equated with 'human-ness,' or 'humanity toward others.' Former president Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu popularised this ideology. In the words of Sampson:

> Mandela was brought up with the African notion of human brotherhood, or '*ubuntu*,' which described a quality of mutual responsibility and compassion. He often quoted the proverb 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu', which he would translate as 'A person is a person because of other people,' or 'You can do nothing if you don't get the support of other people (1999:10).

Meiring writes of *ubuntu* as follows:

> The notion of *ubuntu* gained prominence within theology, through the influential voice of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, also in his capacity as the Chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). In Tutu's *ubuntu* theology the focus is on reconciliation, on the joining of apparent opposites and the restoration of the humanity and dignity of the victims of violence, but also that of the perpetrators of violence. This is expressed in the words of Desmond Tutu … who wrote that 'our humanity was intertwined (2015:1).

Archbishop Desmond Tutu constantly defines *ubuntu* as a philosophy that,

> refers to gentleness, to compassion, to hospitality, to openness to others, to vulnerability, to be available to others and to know that you are bound up with them in the bundle of life (Allen 1994:122).

One of the political leaders in South Africa, Mangosuthu G. Buthelezi as early as 1990 associated *ubuntu* with dignity. He elaborates:

> Dignity, in African terminology, has very special connotations and I use this word frequently because it means so much to us. Dignity in this sense is best encapsulated in the ideal of *Ubuntu*-Botho. It is humanism in its all-embracing sense (Buthelezi 1990:8).

The literature on the subject is extensive both in secular and religious initiatives or activities. As mentioned above, *ubuntu/botho* has been applied more on managerial and relational levels than in any other domain. Hankela refers to *ubuntu* in the context of the Central Methodist Mission in Johannesburg, that 'in the post-apartheid context, representatives of various groups from politicians to business people refer to *ubuntu* as a trademark (or as a goal) of the 'new' South Africa' (Hankela 2013:79).

Religiously, it is scanty to pick much writing on it but has been a theme for religious conferences and activities. I think it is right to start with the definition of the concept, and then follow the theological application of it in communion ecclesiology. Eliastam (2015:2) from the University of Pretoria, in his doctoral thesis captures *ubuntu* from the different understandings that *ubuntu* has been harnessed in many ways:

- as a constitutional value that can be operationalised in law (Bekker 2006; Mokgoro 1998);
- as a philosophical basis for constitutional democracy (De Gruchy 2011);
- as foundation for moral theory (Metz 2007; Shutte 1993);
- as the basis for public policy (Nkondo 2007);
- as a guiding principle for citizenship education (Letseka 2012);
- as a normative value for education (Higgs 2003; Venter 2004);
- as the basis for business ethics (Lutz 2009; West 2014);
- as a model for management (Mbigi 1992; Van den Heuwel, Mangaliso & Van den Bunt 2007);

- as the basis for an African approach to conflict resolution and peace building (Murithi 2006);
- as a theological motif (Tutu 1999); and
- as the framework for a theology of relational ontology (Forster 2010).

Ubuntu is conceptualised in some African idioms and proverbs such as:
– *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu (isiZulu)*
– *Motho ke motho ka batho (SeSotho)*
– *Munhu munhu pamusana pevanhu (siShona)*
– *Umundu nimudu niunde wa andu (Kikuyu)*

All these proverbs mean one and the same thing: A person is a person by the people. A person's identity is found in other people. In the words of O'Donovan:

> Africans tend to find their identity and meaning in life through being part of their extended family, clan and tribe. There is a strong feeling of common participation in life, a common history, and a common destiny. The reality in Africa may be described with the statement: 'I am because the community is'. The feeling may be stronger in some groups than in others but it is very important throughout Africa (1996:4).

One of my favorite authors on this subject is Lovemore Mbigi. He gives the literal meaning of u*buntu* as 'I am because we are – I can only be a person through others' (2000:6). The same notion is carried by Archbishop Tutu (1994:28-30) when speaking of Jesus as the man for others; that we believe that a person is a person through other persons, that my humanity is caught up, bound up inextricably in yours. This locates human dignity at the center of morality and rationality. According to Makhudu (1993:40-41), this is because *ubuntu* emphasises the value of empathy, congruence and open communication. Inward, selfish egoism has no place in the community as one's interests are independent yet interdependent. This philosophy puts people, not programmes, first. Former Eskom chairperson, Dr Reuel Khoza (1972-2002) suggests that for corporates to be successful, they must adopt *ubuntu* way of adopting a people-centered approach where people must come

first; they come before products, profits and productivity. When people are attended to, all else will follow (cited in Broodryk 2005:17).

Mike Boon explores the diverse paradigms of business and life by interpreting *ubuntu* as a philosophy that encapsulates

> morality, humanness, compassion, care, understanding and empathy. It is one of sharing and hospitality, of honesty and humility. Simply put, it is the ethic and interaction that occurs in the extended family (1998:31).

In a paper presented at a HSRC conference in 1990 held in Pretoria, E.N Chikanda proposed that *ubuntu* involves 'alms-giving, sympathy, care sensitivity to the needs of others, respect, consideration, patience, and kindness' (1990).

Dr Johann Broodryk, the first person to obtain a doctoral degree on the topic of *ubuntu* from Unisa, defines '*ubuntu'* as:

> a comprehensive ancient African world view based on the values of intense humanness, caring, sharing, respect, compassion and associated values, ensuring a happy and qualitative human community life in a spirit of family (2002:13-14).

In a later work, he explains that 'the basic quality of *ubuntu* is the inner value and dignity of the human personality, which is none other than "humanness" instilled in man' (Broodryk 2005:9).

One can deduce that *ubuntu* is all about humanism. Lessem and Nussbaum (1996:72) agree with this when they aver: '*Ubuntu* is about how you relate to people and is an essential ingredient in the character of a person.' In other words, *ubuntu* shapes one's conceptualisations including character and ethics. Prinsloo discards the idea of dualism, since 'both rationality and morality are acquired from community life and do not follow from so-called universal categories or fixed ideologies' (2000:43).

Mbigi and Maree (1995) emphasise the communal and collective networking of group solidarity where conformity, compassion, respect and dignity are fostered and enhanced. All this demonstrates that African *ubuntu* is not synergistic with hierarchical structures, including the issues of leadership and management. Broodryk (2005:14) says it is the philosophy that is lived by Africans on a daily basis. *Ubuntu* is not a programme, structure, template, or a mental framework. It is a lifestyle. It explains and shapes community lifestyle intrinsically. This agrees with Khanyile (1995:1) that it is 'common spiritual ideal by which all Africans south of the Sahara give meaning to life and reality.' It is indeed a spiritual foundation of life. It manifests itself in the way one thinks, talks and acts (2005:15). Ruel Khoza (1994a), equates *ubuntu* with the universal brotherhood that expresses itself in people's behaviour, expressions, and spiritual self-fulfillment.

One of the core concepts of *ubuntu* is that individualism is self-fatalism. The submissive mental attitude resulting from acceptance of the doctrine that everything that happens is predetermined and inevitable finds no space in *ubuntu* lifestyle. Everything that happens to the individual is to be felt by the community. Shutte concurs that

> It is by belonging to the community that we become ourselves. The community is not opposed to the individual, nor does it simply swallow the individual up, it enables each individual to become a unique centre of shared life (2001:9).

The individual responsibility or irresponsibility impacts the community. As the late Byang Kato wrote (and quoted in the previous chapter), Africans are gregarious in nature. One African evangelical leader, Elie Buconyori compares *ubuntu* with the Kiswahili *wa kwetu* (home boy). He mentions that

> to the extent that *wa kwetu* is taken as a social bonding that give communities social identity, economic security, religious guidance, and a sense of belonging, it is to be affirmed. After all, to be human is to belong (1977:18).

Africans tend to form groups with others of the same kind. In this case, 'others' refer to other human beings. In social psychology, this is known as socio-metric grouping. This tendency instinctively and, sometimes, temperamentally seeks and enjoys the company of others. Africans experience growth when they cluster together. Growth is impossible without others. One's being, identity, meaning and integrity are solely dependent on the contribution of others. The contribution can be in the form of a justice system, rites of passage, physical provision (livelihood such as food, shelter, clothes, etc.) towards the welfare and success of another being. This gregariousness can be observed during the times of celebrations and griefs. For Africans, events such as weddings, funerals and parties are all social events. There is no need to invite people – they will come anyway, invited or uninvited.

Boon expresses this sentiment when he writes:

> Forming part of the philosophy of *ubuntu* is openness, sharing and welcome. This is demonstrated in many ways and particularly through weddings. In traditional African society, there are open weddings. Everyone in the community is aware of the engagement as it is publicly announced by the raising of a white flag. The wedding date is then carefully monitored. On the day, anyone who would like to comes to the wedding. But people do not arrive empty-handed. Besides the gift for the bridal couple, they bring beer and food and they join in the celebration (1998:33).

This reminds one of Boaz in the Old Testament, telling Ruth: 'You can't go back empty-handed to your mother-in-law' (Ruth 3:17, The Message). In the context of African *ubuntu,* it is more like: you cannot go empty-handed to the bridal couple. Boon continues briefly to mention how this is in contrast with the Western wedding where there must be agreements on the number of guests to attend, and all about who is to attend (1998:33).

You can join a funeral procession to express sympathy, even if you do not know the person who has passed on. A man can join other men de-skinning the cow by taking out his knife voluntarily, cutting a piece of meat for himself and

roasting it on the fire like all the others participating in the preparation of the cow meat. Perhaps only later on, during the time of feasting, will others find out who he is. One's *ubuntu* action precedes one's identity. The essence here is: 'I do not help you or show you kindness because of who I am or who you are; but I do it because it is my duty and a calling as a member of the community to help, support, and care for you.' It is not about 'I, me or myself.' It's all about 'we, us, or ourselves'. Before the dawn of the Mandela era, the politicians spoke a lot about 'my government, my people, my country, etc.' Mandela started to conscientise our politicians towards the *ubuntu* abstract of 'our government, our people, our country, etc.'

4.1.1 Ubuntu: Synergy, cooperation, symbiosis and mutuality

Ubuntu emphasises synergy, cooperation, symbiosis and mutualism. 'Synergism' implies working together to produce an effect greater than what an individual could accomplish on his or her own. The Batswana people have an outreach programme known as *letsema* (Coming together with others for others). It is the voluntary action to help improve the lives of other people. There is even a proverb that says *letsema le thata ka mong* (cooperative action is stronger when the one receiving help takes a lead). *Letsema* is when the Batswana (and probably the other African villages) need to come together to empower themselves toward a common goal or objective. It is a traditional practice of working together to reach a common purpose. The community comes together to build a community project such as the school, clinic, or another person's house or cattle's kraal. They cooperate also when cultivating or harvesting the fields of other members of the community. The proverb shows that *letsema* does not encourage a dependency syndrome. A beneficiary must take a lead as a way of encouraging those who had come to help him. This is accurately captured by Steve Biko:

> Farming and agriculture, though on an individual family basis, had many characteristics of joint efforts. Each person could, by a simple request and the holding of a special ceremony, invite neighbours to come and work on his plots. This service was returned in kind and no

> remuneration was ever given. This is the value that takes care of human affairs without discriminating against the destitute (Okonkwo 2010:96).

Ubuntu possesses a high element of *synergy* as *cooperation* as in *letsema*. The *Oxford Dictionary* defines 'synergy' as the interaction or cooperation of two or more organisations, substances, or other agents to produce a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects. It is the cooperation in which there is an act or instance of working or acting together for a common purpose or benefit. It is the joint action. In economics, we hear of the combination of persons for purposes of production, purchase or distribution for their joint benefit. I recently asked a sociology student at the University of the Free State for his definition of 'cooperation', and he proposed that it is an activity shared for mutual benefit. He elaborated that cooperation is the action of working or acting together for a common purpose or benefit. Out of this, I deduced that *ubuntu* is indeed some *synergy* and *cooperation* for co-existing harmonious relations, where people live for each other. This is the theological factor brought to surface by Stott (2009:96) who maintains that '*koinonia* is not a subjective feeling at all, but an objective fact, expressing what we share in together.'

Ubuntu is the glue that keeps the community together. It drives away the fear of another person. *Ubuntu* cements people into a unit and creates a hopeful and better future. Wonke Buqa reinforces this when he writes:

> [A]s one might expect, there has been a great deal of resistance and fear of the unknown during the period of transformation. Transition is not always easy. However, it is the task of South-African people in their diversity to apply *Ubuntu* in a social way of living together for a better future (2015:5).

African gregariousness is also characterised by 'symbiosis'. This is the idea of interdependence, whereby each person gains benefit from the other. This is *ubuntu* at its core. The concepts of independence, autonomy, self-sufficiency or self-reliance find no place in the African community. Without going into the scientific imports, *ubuntu* stresses a relationship between two or more people whereby each person is dependent upon and receives reinforcement. It

is an interdependent or mutually beneficial relationship between two persons, groups or affiliations.

'Symbiosis' may be defined as a relationship between two different kinds of living things that live together and depend on each other; a relationship between two people or groups that work with and depend on each other. A human being, as a member of the community, lives in symbiotic relationships with others. As Meiring maintains:

> Persons are not understood individualistically – a person becomes a person primarily in community with others, the individual's concerns being subordinated to those of the community (1996:11).

A person cannot survive on his or her her own. People derive a livelihood from others. Symbiosis is mutualism. The *Dictionary.com* website defines 'mutualism' as:

> [T]he doctrine that the interdependence of social elements is the primary determinant of individual and social relations, especially the theory that common ownership of property, or collective effort and control governed by sentiments of brotherhood and mutual aid, will be beneficial to both the individual and society.

David Williams (2013:1) agrees and writes:

> A person finds identity not in individual attributes, but in the group. If the stress falls on the community, the relationships between individuals then become extremely significant.

This speaks more of humanness. A human being does not live for himself. He lives with and for others. In Setswana, they always say*: Motho ga a ka ke a iphetsa* (No human being can find fulfilment in him or herself alone). You derive the meaning of life from others. You benefit values of life from them just as much as they do from you. Broodryk is correct when he maintains that:

> man is dependent on the goodwill and acceptance of others. One therefore has to conform to the values of *Ubuntu* which includes showing respect to all and in return receiving respect from all (2002:40).

It is mutuality based on two ways. Speckman (2007:218-241) makes a powerful deduction on human development in Acts 3-4, whereby *ecclesia* and the secular world symbiotically and mutually deals with poverty and sickness towards human development. This expresses 'the value of human solidarity that sees all humanity as descending from a common source' (Okonkwo 2010:96).

4.1.2 Ubuntu: African architectural designs

Ubuntu is also expressed in African architectural designs and geometrical concepts. African architects never had triangles, squares, rectangles, perpendicular or even linear or vertical perception. The worldview has always been in circular conception or moods. The huts, livestock enclosures, and household designs are always in circular or semi-circular patterns. These designs were meant to enhance the closeness of the community. The fireplace had always been designed to force sitting around the fire so that communication and expressions can flow easily. I recently read with a great excitement Wilhelm van Deventer's article about the Venda *muta* (courtyard). He says:

> Discussing Vhuthu in the muta places the emphasis on the local and embodied context. It is within this concrete framework where Vhuthu finds its primary application as a way of life. The praxis of Vhuthu in the muta is therefore one of many examples of the point of departure for practical theology in its effort to autoethnographically try to understand and reflect upon the micro dynamics of life. (2015:7)

The *kgotla* has always been in a semi-circular pattern, hence forcing the seating arrangements to comply with design and shape. A *Kgotla* is a meeting place (usually in a courtyard) for village assemblies, court cases and meetings of village leaders.

All these designs were for feasible community interaction. The so-called English-Gothic architecture was never part of African expression of habitation. *Ubuntu* was never a hidden or mysterious philosophy when coming to social interactions. It has always been part of the lifestyle. These architectural designs also enhanced the idea of equality of all people. The architectural designs convey the message that closure or conclusion should not be expected soon, hence semi-circle patterns. This influences the concept of time, which is never linear but open-ended or anti-cyclonic. Discourses, dialogues and collaborations, are the ongoing engagements of the community sitting at the *kgotla*. I use the term 'anti-cyclonic', borrowing it from meteorology in which air slowly circulates in a clockwise or anticlockwise in a weather system with high pressure at its center. The African concept of 'time' works like this. The discussions do not follow a sequence but once the agenda item is set, discussions go on and on, moving backward and forward, sideways, and up-ways, without considering when the closure of the item will be discussed. O'Donovan (1996:4) says 'an emphasis on the events of life more than an emphasis on schedules and time as found in Europe and North America' is one of the African worldviews. Conclusions may not be formalised today, but can be deduced from what has been elaborated during the discussions. Consensus is reached after community deliberations. This is also heightened by the corporate connectedness that characterises *ubuntu.*

The acclaimed Father of African Theology, John Mbiti, together with some recent scholars, elaborate that in traditional Africa, authentic living is only found in corporate connectedness. This is where or when 'everybody relates with everybody else' (Mbiti 1969:104). This corporate connectedness is expressed in different African languages, such as in Kiswahili (*wa kwetu*), Setswana (*mogaetsho),* and isiZulu (*umfowethu or umkhaya*). In essence, this concept means 'one who is from my home' or 'one from my family, clan, or tribe'. However, Mutunga mentions:

> Today the term is also used for 'those from the same nation, or even continent'. The term could also include other social forms of belonging such as in a subculture. Thus, when the phrase is used

> today in an African setting, it assumes some socially accepted form of connectedness, however tenuous that relationship might be. To be African is to be naturally connected to a given community setting (cited in Buconyori 1977:10).

Generally speaking, communal lifestyle is the African expression of selfhood and ontological relations. It is intercommunity driven by the *ubuntu* philosophy whereby individualism and egoism play no role in life. So far, it has been clearly explained that in African community lifestyle:

> [T]he individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately … The community must therefore make, create, or produce the individual; for the individual depends on the corporate group (Mbiti 1969:108-109).

This *ubuntu* is a driving force behind the gregariousness of African communal lifestyle. This impacts communal ecclesiology extensively and remarkably. Undoubtedly, this communal philosophy is 'common to other rural communities around the world, but Africans would define it more sharply as contrast to the individualism and restlessness of whites' (Sampson 1999:10).

This holistic culture and worldview provide some sense of contentment, security, power, prosperity, peace and happiness, both individually and communally. This is totality where an individual's sense of harmony and welfare discovers its reality and meaning. Crafford Meiring emphasises the point that 'a person does not exist primarily as an individual, but as part of a social community, whose welfare takes priority over that of the individual' (1996:11).

It is valuable to read Okonkwo's reflection in order to help understand this African gregariousness and togetherness:

> Africans are known to believe in and foster communion, within and beyond the shores of Africa. An introspective journey into pre-Christian African societies will very likely meet a highly organised system that guaranteed that the interest of the community was paramount. Rights were exercised individually and collectively. The cultivation of social

> and moral values, and hence enhancement of social cohesion played a conspicuous fundamental role. It enabled society to be held together, great value was placed upon communal fellowship in the traditional society. This fellowship infused African social life with a pervasive humanity and fullness of life (2010:96).

4.2 How *ubuntu* builds the communion

In examining the New Testament communion ecclesiology, one finds a thin line between it and *ubuntu. Ubuntu* is almost similar to 'togetherness' (*homothymadon).* As it has been stated previously, the New Testament *koinonia* implies community, which is the integral meaning of *ubuntu*. *Ecclesia* is all about staying closer together in a unit. The concept 'community' is not philosophical *per se*, but a practical lifestyle. Kaphagawani and Malherbe (2000:169) concur with Belgian missionary Placide Tempels' *Bantu Philosophy* that 'persons or humans are defined and individuated communally.'

Earlier in this chapter, I made some reference to Wilbur O'Donovan. He is a graduate of Columbia International University and was a missionary in West and East Africa for thirty years. Some of the legacies he left for Africans are his two monographs*: Biblical Christianity in African Perspective* (1992 and 2000), and *Biblical Christianity in Modern Africa* (2000). Although these two works are not academic in content, they address practical Christianity from biblical and African perspectives. In the first mentioned monograph, he states:

> Because of the social structure of African life, it is easy to understand God's plan for the local church. In Africa, a person's extended family and tribal community are the most important realities in his or her life. It is God's plan that the local church should become the most important community in the life of a Christian. It is the group of people who belong to each other as spiritual brothers and sisters, regardless of tribal or social connections, because they each belong to Christ as their Lord and Saviour (2000:173).

These words demonstrate that, although Africans are always divided along the tribal or ethnic lines, once they become the members of the communion of saints, these bars or walls of hostility are removed. The new life *en Christos* is the theme of the New Testament, especially the Pauline epistles. The Christian community is based on their community with Christ. This is where Christians derive their identity. The New Testament paints the picture of communal lifestyle with the images of the church praying, worshipping, and living harmonious, shared lives. *Ubuntu* is living for each other in harmony within the community.

The African philosophy of rallying around the royal figure makes *ecclesia* easy to rally around Christ as the King of the universe. It is significant that African Initiated Churches flourish and blossom on African soil because of the episcopal polity they follow and embrace. The community has one chief or one king. Multiple leadership systems, as in Presbyterial or synodical polity, struggle enormously. Africans look to one leader who may be a bishop, archbishop, apostle, pastor or prophet. The sentiment is found in some proverbs or idioms, such as *Ga go poopedi mo sakeng* (There can never be two bulls in one kraal); or *Ga di nke di bopa sope le le lengwe* (There can never be many bulls moowing in one kraal). These are the Setswana proverbs to express that community needs one leader. In the Christian community, Christ is the Head of the Church with one vision. Once there is more than one vision, division is inevitable. One of the reasons for the waning of the mainline denominations is the imposition of the democratic leadership structures on churches. A conspicuous observation is that the Anglican and the Catholic churches, due to their episcopal government seem to be doing better than the Congregationalists and the Presbyterians. A community is built around a charismatic leader, who appears to be a centrifugal force to enhance the cohesion of the community. The following quotation from O'Donovan reinforces this point:

> The Church is an eternal community. As the body of Christ, Christians are spiritually joined to Christ as the head and therefore spiritually joined to each other as parts of his body. Since they are joined to each other in this way, they are the extended family of God both in this life

> and in the life to come. They are members of the kingdom of God, and the King of Kings is their Master. As a believer, a Christian is part of a worldwide family of brothers and sisters from every tribe and nation. God has given to this family an eternal inheritance in heaven (1 Pet. 1:3-5) (2000:154).

4.2.1 Caring is part of *ubuntu*

Caring is part of *ubuntu* because no individual lives for him of herself alone. Caring is an intrinsic sense of obligation where people care regardless of acquaintance or non-acquaintance to the person in need. The New Testament church and the people of God in the Old Testament expressed their faith in God by caring for those in need. The Old Testament, in particular, has numerous admonitions regarding caring for the poor, the widows, the orphans and the foreigners. This caring extended to those appointed by God to lead in cultic rituals, such as the Levites and the priests – even the prophets in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, the preachers of the gospel were to be cared for by the community of believers.

Africans are the caring people. That is why hurting one hurts all. As the proverb says*: mabogo dinku a a thebana* (hands are like sheep, they clasp together for support). Another saying is: *diatla di a tlhatswana* (hands wash each other). These days, the caring spirit is communally expressed in a form of a *stokvel* or some other informal cooperative where members meet to devise some means of supporting each other, especially in times of grief or celebration of some kind. This is in line with the early church that through their contributions: 'All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need' (Acts 2:44-45).

This caring aspect is conspicuous in church communities. African churches, no matter their numerical sizes, come together in times of grief for one of their members. The death of one of the members is an opportunity for huddling into close fellowship to express sympathy and emotional support. From the first day of someone's passing to a few weeks after the burial, the bereaved

family is not left alone. Church or clan members stay with the family to help them deal with their grief. Healing accompanies the presence of these people. This phenomenon is also seen in the celebrations. As in any celebration, the African churches conglomerate in a celebratory mood to express the joy of achievement. This can be at a birthday party, wedding, graduation party or whatever. Okonkwo highlights the Nigerian perspective of celebration:

> The number of people of a different calibre that normally assemble during naming ceremonies, traditional and sacramental marriage ceremonies, priestly ordinations, religious professions, new house openings/warming ceremonies and even funeral ceremonies can also be used to illustrate this African sense of communalism (2010:100).

Meiring reinforces this when he writes:

> [T]he social aspect of church life is strongly emphasized, whereby the church creates new communities in which people find support, protection and security, explaining the rapid expansion of house-churches in the violence-ridden urban townships (1996:23).

African communion ecclesiology incarnates the power of the theology of presence. Those who attend (presence themselves) share and believe that their true wealth lies not in what they own, but in what they give to others. Their presence and their gifts count enormously to enhance the *ubuntu* experience and reality. This conglomeration is vital and plays an important role. An article on '*Koinonia*' on the Wikipedia website describes 'community' as follows:

> The idea of community denotes a 'common unity' of purpose and interests. By engaging in this united relationship a new level of consciousness and conscience emerges that spurs the group to higher order thinking and action, thus empowering and encouraging its members to exist in a mutually beneficial relationship. Thus community and family become closely intertwined, because aiming at a common unity strives to overcome brokenness, divisiveness, and, ultimately gaining wholeness with each of the members, with their environment, and with their God. By giving mutual support, friendship and family

> merge. Both fellowship and community imply an inner and outer unity. Nowhere in the framework of community is there implied a hierarchy of command and control. While there is leadership, the leader's task is to focus energy, and align interests, not impose control.

African Christians join easily with their fellow Christians without any sense of marginalisation or discrimination. A Methodist believer, for example, may travel from *emakhaya* (the rural village) or *emaplasini* (farms) to *ekasi* (the township) for a short or long visit and will always find and feel at home with the Methodist fellowship in the township. The common unity binds them together into the communion as Methodists, without regard to ethnic or social backgrounds. Even if you are an *umhlali wase mjondolo* (shack dweller) you can join fellowship anywhere and feel at home. This applies to all the churches. It is all because of the communal values entrenched in African conscience by *ubuntu*. One finds mutual support in the communion, not because of what he is, but because of who he is. Not what she can bring, but what we can give her. In his chapter 'Christianity and the Anti-Apartheid Struggle: The Prophetic Voice within Divided Churches' in Elphick and Davenport's book *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History,* Walshe asserts that 'traditions among the Bantu-speaking people emphasized communal values and equality, particularly a commitment to an equitable distribution of rights of land usage' (1997:383).

In an African environment, a newcomer always receives mutual support and is automatically merged as a member of the family. Sharing and caring take over with no selfish considerations, as found in some Western cultures. This truth is confirmed by Kruidenier, who acclaims:

> Human dignity is communal because human beings find their sense of being through being part of the community. It is rooted in living and sharing space. Being a human is being with others. We are born into the community and for the community. Human dignity is not earned and does not rest on prizes or the respect that one has earned (2015:3).

4.2.2 Sharing and *koinonia*

Caring goes together with sharing and *koinonia* is characterised with a lifestyle of sharing. Sharing is the hallmark of communion. When *koinonia* is present, the spirit of sharing and giving becomes tangible. Indeed, '*koinonia* involves not only belonging to the Christian community but also having an obligation to care for its other members' (Ryken 2001:115).

In most contexts, generosity is not an abstract ideal but a demonstrable action resulting in a tangible and realistic expression of giving. *Ubuntu* is sharing one's life in and for the community. This is in line with the practice of the New Testament *ecclesia*, where believers' togetherness was marked by having everything in common. The communion members could sell their properties and share the proceeds with anyone in need. We read that they sold fields and brought the proceeds to the feet of the apostles to be distributed according to the needs of the people. According to Ryken: 'Their attitude can be summed up as follows: "What's mine is yours!" The sense of koinonia was palpable" (2001:119).

The cultures of the world are characterised by the benefits of sharing and receiving from cultural communities. This sharing is what unifies the cultural groups. This is why any person who moves out of the circle of communion suffers the consequences and is compelled to re-join the group in order to normalise her life again. Nürnberger concurs with Taylor (1963, 2001) and brings this point home when he writes:

> In Africa exclusion from the community is a horrific idea, tantamount to a death sentence. A lonely person or an excluded person is not a member of the community but a witch (2007:84).

The excluded person feels discarded, dismembered, and dislocated from the source of his or her being. It leaves one feeling aimless and as a wandering stranger who does not belong. Gilbert (1997:59) reinforces this by saying that: 'we are dependent beings, and to think otherwise – to make independence our project, however sincerely – is to live a lie, to fly in the face of reality.'

It is an emotional suicide and euthanasia to attempt to live outside the community. The aspects of caring and sharing as expressions of humanness reflect that impersonal contributions are not acknowledged or accepted in or by the community. A typical example is that of Ananias and Sapphira mentioned in Acts 5:1-11. They sold their property in order to share and care for God's church but decided to withhold part of the proceeds for their selfish gratification. The consequences of their action sound barbarous and brutal. Their act was impersonal, which was not consonant with the spirit of generosity prevailing at the time. They missed the point that Teresa Maldonado brings forth when she says: 'impersonal service is foreign to my community, where I know I belong' (1998:1003).

4.2.3 Participation

Ubuntu demonstrates that 'I' cannot exist without 'others'. We have seen that just as *ubuntu* is about caring, sharing, etc. *koinonia* embraces concepts of community, communion, joint participation, sharing and intimacy. *Koinonia* can, therefore, refer in some contexts to a jointly contributed gift. Impersonal involvement negates the individual's intercourse with the community since it can offer an impersonal gift with no emotional attachment or involvement.

Koinonia embraced a strong commitment to '*kalos k'agathos*' meaning 'good and good'; an inner goodness toward virtue, and an outer goodness toward social relationships. In the context of outer goodness, the meaning of *koinonia* translated into English holds the idea of joint participation in something with someone, such as in a community, or team or an alliance or joint venture. Those who have studied the word find there is always an implication of action included in its meaning. The word is meaning-rich too since it is used in a variety of related contexts.

This context shows the correlation between *ubuntu* and communion. It is intrinsic more than extrinsic in real life. It is all about relationships based on individual responsibility. Participation with others is both the virtue of *ubuntu* and the communion lifestyle. *Koinonia* is an opportunity for the expression of

the values, morals and ethics of communion. *Ubuntu* is, on the other hand, a theatron on and through which humanness is expressed.

Ubuntu enhances communion ecclesiology in its expression of caring, sharing and participation. The church in Africa expresses its communality as being closer to the theological concept of communion or *koinonia*. This is due to the gregarious nature of Africans that the late Kato (1975) referred to. The church in Africa, like anywhere else, is still on the journey of reformation – the eschatological journey towards God. Crabb expresses this succinctly: 'The church is a community of people on a journey to God. Wherever there is supernatural togetherness and Spirit-directed movement, there is the church – a spiritual community' (1999:21).

Theological and social synergy and symbiosis revolve around *koinonia.* In his doctoral research, *Ubuntu and the Journey of Listening to the Rwandan Genocide Story*, De Beer rightly concludes:

> If it is true then, that *ubuntu* symbolises harmony and connectedness with the other, the cosmos and the Supreme Being, as well as humaneness towards our fellow human beings, it stands to reason that genocide, apartheid and xenophobia are extreme violations of the spirit of *ubuntu* (2015:8).

The *ubuntu* motif plays some crucial determinative role in African communities and should, therefore, not be outrightly condemned and abandoned. *Ubuntu* helps churches to understand ecclesiological principles of *koinonia* and togetherness. Meiring (1996:11) points to some motifs that 'can act as correctives to the individualist, secularist, technological and self-centred character of Western society'.

Ubuntu brings Christianity and African culture closer. It is a powerful motif that can contribute enormously in transforming Christianity and vice versa. Let me close this chapter by a quotation of wisdom from one of the intelligentsias of this country, Dr Mamphela Ramphele:

We need to stretch our imagination beyond the comfort zones of today's realities. We need to root out those approaches and practices that hold us back from openness to new and different ways of tackling our ongoing challenges. First and foremost, we need to change our mindsets and embrace the values of our democracy and learn to live them out in our daily encounters at home, in our communities, in our workplaces and wider society. The 'I am because you are' – *Ubuntu* – should be the touchstone of our social relationships and we should distance ourselves from those who use *Ubuntu* as a slogan to market themselves in both the private and public sector without any intention of living its values (2012:209).

Chapter 5

Building the 'laager'

The South African Reformed theology's journey towards the communion

So communion with God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit also affects communion among brothers and especially communion with the suffering. Koinonia/communion therefore has a theological and a communal and a social dimension. It would be wrong to limit the ecclesial significance of koinonia/ communio to the area of sacraments and worship, or even just to the eucharist. There is, so to speak, both a vertical and a horizontal dimension of communion (W. Kasper 2004:56).

5.1 The Afrikaners: Christian heritage

The 6th April 1652 is a landmark day in South African history. This is when the Dutch emigrants settled in South Africa near the Cape of Good Hope. Their settlement was not intended to be permanent, as they were meant to establish a half-way station for the ships of the Dutch East Indies to re-fill or re-supply. The Dutch settlers were later joined by the French Huguenots, German mercenaries, and other European groups. As they established themselves in the Cape, the settlers engaged extensively in farming activities and were dubbed 'boers' meaning 'farmers' in Dutch. Their extensive agricultural activities forced them to engage slaves from Malaysia and Madagascar, including the indigenous people, especially the Khoisan.

Since this book is not on history, but on communion ecclesiology, it is ideal to look into the Afrikaner religion. However, it is relevant to highlight a few historical facts.

Around 1795, the Afrikaners in the Cape became discontent with the British imperialism. This eventually led to an exodus of Afrikaners leaving the Cape and trekking towards the north. This migration, which started around 1834, is historically known as the *Groot Trek* (the Great Exodus), and the participants known as *Voortrekkers*. This culminated in the formation of the two Boer republics known as the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. These two republics were founded on the principles of Calvinism, which were the principles of the Dutch Reformed Church. On 22 February 2015, Johan Eybers, in an article on the *Netwerk24* electronic news reported:

> In 1985, 92% of Afrikaners were members of Reformed churches. However, an opinion poll conducted among Afrikaners in February 2015 found that only 38% of Afrikaners claimed to attend church on a weekly basis (2015).

Another online poll conducted earlier in February 2013 by a popular Afrikaans newspaper, informs us that just over 30% of Afrikaners read the Bible at home

(Afrikaners n.d.). Zolile Mbali highlights that the theological grounding of Afrikaner political thinking as narrated by De Klerk (1975:205):

> in a complementary way, cannot be seen in other than a religious light. In religion, every human life, every nation, discovers its grounding and meaning. Without a religious point of relationship and an ultimate object, the universe, the nation and the individual would be incomprehensible, senseless and purposeless … On every particular nation especially there rests this special task to accept its providential role as a nation, and by realizing it to play its part in the ultimate attainment of the godly purpose of the universe (1987:42).

This quotation is very Eurocentric where tribes are categorised as nations based on their linguistic distinctiveness or particularity. The central idea here, however, is correct; that nations or individuals find their meeting if religiously attuned to a Godly intention of the universe. As mentioned above, Afrikaner religious persuasion stems from the Protestant practices of the 16th century Reformed faith, championed by the Swiss reformer John Calvin (1509-1564). Calvin believed the church should influence government policy and that races should remain pure and separate. All these influences led to the development of a unique brand of Protestantism in South Africa. Government policies on apartheid (separate development of races) were supported by Afrikaner religious doctrines. The Dutch and French who settled in the Cape were committed Calvinists or Reformed Protestants. Anyone who accepted the Christian faith was accepted in the Western cultural community. In the meantime, those outside were regarded as heathens while the Eastern slaves were predominantly Muslim.

Calvinism became the foundation of the Afrikaner's philosophy of life and view of the world. It also influenced all aspects of Afrikaner cultural activities. In addition, individuality and independence were intensified by a pioneering existence. The migrant farmers and pioneers who took part in the *Groot Trek* into the interior didn't have any kind of organised church life and not having ministers of religion, their only source of knowledge was the Bible. In their

struggle for survival, they gradually came to identify themselves with the nation of Israel.

The explorative and expansionist ideals were theologically a *missiological* zeal that led to the establishment of two Dutch Reformed (Hervormde and Gereformeerde) churches in the 1850s in the Transvaal, which led to the origin of the so-called three 'sister churches'. In their missiological outlook, the Afrikaners believed that they were called to spread the Christian faith in Africa. The influence of their Christian-national beliefs figured strongly in government and schools. An article by Cliff Jones and Orville Boyd Jenkins, 'People Profile: The Afrikaners of South Africa' first posted on the *Strategy Leader* website on 30 January 2003 summarises the Afrikaner religion as follows:

> Religion plays an important part in the lives of most Afrikaners. The Afrikaners are considered to be 100% evangelized. About 99% are cultural Christians. About 50% of these are considered Evangelical.
>
> Many are devout members of the Dutch Reformed Church. The Dutch Reformed Church's life and social attitudes have been deeply aligned with the tenacious culture. This has compromised its relations with other church bodies and for some years the South African church was excluded from the world Reformed Church fellowship.
>
> Various Pentecostal churches are also well established among Afrikaners. Whether staunchly Calvinist or enthusiastically Pentecostal, most Afrikaans churches are conservative in doctrine and ethos. Men wear suits and ties to church. Until recently, virtually all women wore hats. Worshipers tend to 'dress up' for church (1996).

Generally speaking, the Afrikaner community and the church are culturally interwoven. One of the best writings on Afrikaners that I came across is William Henry Vatcher's *White Laager* (1965). As old as this work may sound, it covers the real *volk* that has come out of national or ethnic crises. Vachter points out:

> [N]o discussion of Afrikaner nationalism is complete without some reference to the Dutch Reformed Church … the DRC and Afrikanerdom are almost synonymous, and the importance of the DRC to Afrikanerdom is considerable (1965:110).

From here on, DRC and NGK will be used interchangeably to refer to the Afrikaans Reformed churches in South Africa. After four centuries of the formation of Afrikanerdom in the southern tip of the African continent, their history has theologically evolved dramatically. Vachter makes a snap survey of the evolution of the three Reformed churches as we find them in today's South Africa. He highlights that 'since the days of Van Riebeck, the DRC has split into three segments, but fundamentally, there is little disagreement among them' (1965:112).

The following historical sketch of these three churches will enhance our understanding of their communion ecclesiology and help us to interpret what we see today.

5.1.1 The Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk

The Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK) is in English, the Dutch Reformed Church. It is the parent church of the three. It can be safely said that its origin is the Netherlands and was established in the Cape in the seventeenth century. It is the largest and the most influential of the three groups. Its polity is cardinally federal, with the independent synod at the provincial level. The synod is headed by the moderator, who is democratically elected annually by the synod. The Federal Council, made up of representatives of each independent synod convenes annually to discuss matters of mutual concerns. The local church is governed by a council composed of elders and deacons and chaired by the presiding *dominee/ predikant* (minister).

Several congregations are organised into presbyteries, depending on their geographical proximity. Local congregations are subdivided into districts.

NGK organisation has its practical aspects. It evokes a strong sense of membership and helps to develop totality of church influence and in turn a strong sense of belonging to a particular group (Vatcher1965:114).

5.1.2 The Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk

The Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk (NHK) split from the NGK in the mid-nineteenth century and had the Transvaal Republic as its stronghold. It was established by Dirk van der Hoff who arrived in the Transvaal Republic from Holland in 1852. Hexham and Poewe (1997:125) help us to understand that *Hervormde* means literally *re-formed.* Van der Hoff's theology cliqued with the Transvaal's ideals of nationalism and independence.

5.1.3 The Gereformeerde Kerk

The Gereformeerde Kerk (GK) has its origins in the former Orange Free State Republic. It is nicknamed *Dopper* due to its hyper-Calvinistic theological approach. It has established itself in Potchefstroom as its headquarters and derived and impressed the fundamentalist concepts out of the then Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (PUCHE) now called North West University (NWU). Its polity is remarkably congregational as it does not have a rigid organogram. It has no moderator or permanent administration. Authority lies with individual congregations.

The NGK finally found itself entrenched and enhanced in all two Republics (Transvaal and Orange Free State) and the two British colonies of Cape and Natal. The influential journey that this church has made in the Christian landscape of South Africa is expressed through the metaphor of a '*laager*'.

5.2 Building the 'laager'

The topic of this chapter prefaces as 'Building the laager'. I use this metaphor to explain communion ecclesiology in the South African context, with a special reference to the building of a *laager*. The *Voortrekkers,* on their journeys

through the interior of today's South Africa faced confrontations with the indigenous tribes. Conflicts, strifes, raids, etc. were the inevitable experiences of these trekkers. One of the defence mechanisms they used was the *laager.* The word *'laager'* is South African in origin and derived from the Dutch *leger*, meaning camp or army. A *laager* or a wagon fort is a mobile fortification made of wagons arranged into a rectangle, a circle or other shape and possibly joined with each other. It is an improvised military camp. During the time of the *Groot Trek*, the *Voortrekkers* would draw wagons into a circle and place cattle and horses on the inside to protect them from raiders or vicious nocturnal animals. Seiler (1975:448) mentions that: 'The *laager* was the closed defensive circle into which the Boer ox-wagons moved when threatened by attack from Zulu or Basotho tribesmen'. The *laagers* were also for domestic chores such as cooking, bathing and playing.

As a metaphor used in this book to bring home communion ecclesiology amongst the Afrikaner communities aligning themselves to the Calvinistic Reformed faith, it is worthy to note that the laager was the defensive battle formation made up of a compact ring of wagons - a controlling orbit of defence.

Barker's (a South African artist) words are loaded with meanings that the *laager* can convey in life. For instance, one can be referred to as possessing the *laager* mentality. This implies that he or she is the person who is inward or parochial in thinking. Sometimes a person is thought of as being 'trapped in a *laager*', which means a person cannot think of breaking the bounds to explore outside his or her scope of thinking. In some cases, a *laager* metaphor can be thought of as a safety cocoon; so if one leaves a *laager* he or she is regarded as either a sell-out or made vulnerable as he or she has departed from the *laager* of protection.

Sitting and conversing with the typical Afrikaners, one hears that the *verligtes* such as F.W. de Klerk, Beyers Naude' and Nico Smith had left the *laager*. They have abandoned the ideals of Afrikanerdom and become sell-outs. When Petrus Louis Le Roux resigned from the Dutch Reformed Church in order to become a missionary among the Pentecostals, his letter was dubbed: 'The

Boer missionary leaves the *laager*' (Sundkler 1976:24-28). The heroes are *verkramptes* such as PW Botha, Ferdi Hartzenberg and Andries Treunicht. Before delving too much into political ideologies, it will be ideal to note what Giliomee says highlighting who the *verligtes* (enlightened ones) and *verkrampte*s (constricted or narrow reactionaries) are:

> [Verligtes] are liberals in a new Afrikaans guise, who discarded tradition and favoured openness and freedom, also in the field of race relations. There were the verkramptes, who were narrow-minded and insular, clinging to the past and engaged in witch-hunts against everything not traditional (2003:549).

The question remains: 'Were there ever some theological *verligtes* and/or *verkramptes* among the Afrikaners?' I have no doubt to answer this question in affirmative.

The NGK is broadly blamed for racial problems of South Africa. History shows us, as mentioned by Jonathan Gerstner:

> Reformed church life and theology played a formative role in the development of South African culture and society. In particular, it contributed greatly to the formation of a distinctive identity among the white settlers and to their conviction of superiority to indigenous peoples and slaves (1997:16).

The NGK and the National Party that ruled South Africa from 1948-1994, were intertwined that they influenced each other's ideologies, activities and principles. In 1947, the DRC issued a statement of belief and intention:

> Dutch Reformed Church policy amounts to the recognition of the existence of all races and nations as separate units foreordained by God. This is not the work of human beings. Accordingly, the Dutch Reformed Church considers it imperative that these creations be recognized for the sake of the natural development through which they could fulfil themselves in their own language, culture, and community. Although God created all nations out of one blood, He gave each nation a feeling of nationhood and a national soul (Giliomee & Schlemmer 1989:47).

This is confirmed by Vatcher (1965:110-116).

Apartheid was seen as some form of social structure that offers some kind of equality, 'a vertical division between equal ethnic groups' (Le May 1995:200). In a review of Lewis Nkosi's book, *Writing Home: Lewis Nkosi on South African Writing, the City Press* (1 May 2016) quotes Nkosi:

> [In 1955, the *Drum*] had detailed its reporters to attend white churches in order to test the white Christians' adherence to the principle of 'brotherhood in Christ' – an interesting, if extremely hazardous idea to execute. Predictably, several things happened to reporters, including a hot chase of a photographer down a street by a group of churchmen. Simultaneously, the Johannesburg Security Police were called out to defend besieged Christendom (*2016*).

This was the fundamental ethical breach that cuts across everything and anything the NGK and the volk did religiously and politically. NGK, as part of the communion of saints, was expected to run human affairs on behalf of God. Instead, their basic error was that they felt they were a law answerable only to themselves.

Remember, this discussion is about the people who suffered enormously under the British brutality from the times of the *Schlagter's Nek* Rebellion (1815) to two Anglo-Boer Wars (1880-1881 and 1899-1902 respectively). The period of the *Groot Trek* was not smooth sailing. The *Voortrekkers* crisscrossed the sub-continent at the height of *Difaqane*, a period of widespread chaos and warfare among indigenous ethnic communities in southern Africa during the period between 1815 and about 1840). They also suffered from outbreaks of diseases such as malaria and smallpox. This is the same *volk* that has suffered isolation, concentration camps and internments (captivities). Vatcher highlights the fact that 'having been a minority group throughout most of their history, Afrikaners have learned the value of the *laager* that is of the united front' (Vatcher1965:115). This resilience convinced even the second president of the democratic South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, that Afrikaners possess emotional attachment to the African continent. It is the resilience that was inspired

by the slogan: '*Eendrag Maak Mag*' (Unity is Strength). Another slogan that was frequently used was '*Isolasie is die Krag*' (Isolation is Power). Through isolation, the *volk* developed some form of resilience. For most Afrikaners, community was defined in terms of kinship (origin in Calvinism, language and unique culture) and geography (South Africa).

The National Party and the NGK were interwoven in embracing and promoting the Kuyper philosophy of neo-Calvinism (discussed later) and Christian National Education in South Africa. John Ostrowick opens our eyes that Afrikaners Christian Education believes that:

> The education of the white children should occur on the basis of the world-view of the parents. For Afrikaans-speaking children this means that they must be educated on the basis of the Christian-National world-view of our nation. In this world-view, the Christian basis is grounded on the Holy Scriptures and expressed in the creeds of our three Afrikaans Churches. By the national principle we understand love for everything that is our own. The National principles must always be under guidance of the Christian principle.

This education system was implemented as a reaction against the British education system. Afrikaners wanted education based on Calvinistic theology and nationalistic ideals. Pam Christie asserts that:

> [T]hey believed that the church should have a strong influence over schools. They wanted to preserve their particular Calvinist religion, and also the identity of the Dutch Afrikaner people. And they wanted their schools to reflect these views (1996:173).

It became obvious that Christianity and racial segregation were an ambiguous relationship. As history unfolded, it became obvious that: 'Christian churches and missions controlled and operated the institutions that were the cornerstone of the society, such as the schools and hospitals' (Shore 2009:45).

This view was instigated by theologian, minister, politician and Calvinist reformer, Abraham Kuyper. He founded the Free University of Amsterdam

in 1880 and later became the prime minister of the Netherlands. Rodney Davenport, in his chapter, 'Settlement, Conquest and Theological Controveresy: The Churches of Nineteenth-century European Immigrants' in Elphick and Davenport's book, *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History,* says this of Kuyper's philosophy of neo-Calvinism:

> It accepted the duty of the state, through the parents, to ensure the Christian upbringing of children. Kuyper substituted a Congregationalist pattern of church government for an all powerful national church, each community and each corporate body to be sovereign in its own sphere. (1997:56)

To some extent, this philosophy influenced the NGK in South Africa to move from an ecclesiological understanding based on evangelical orthodoxy. This was different from the NGK in the Cape, which was orthodox, but not neo-Calvinist in trying to dialogue on burning issues such as 'mixed- race services or of dancing and secular musical entertainment' (Davenport 1997:61). They opted for the middle-road with no compromise on trinitarian theological issues, especially Christological doctrines, biblical authority, or belief in heaven and hell (Davenport 1997:61). This left some porous approaches for the church nationwide. This means then that as De Gruchy and Villa-Vicencio claim: 'Reformed Theology has in many instances become a curious mixture of pietism, German Romanticism, and *Volkstheologie*, and the negative aspects of Kuyperianism' (1983:161-165).

It could have borne much more and better fruit if the Afrikaner Calvinists had promoted and embraced an understanding of political society that requires responsible citizens who are freely committed to pursue the will of God, favoring the interests of all in a society. They missed being political heirs of the Godly covenant idea, 'whose prime consideration is a moral society of mutual commitment to justice' (De Gruchy 1995:93) and a society in which all are respected as equals, in which difference is enriching not divisive, and in which human beings discover freedom and fulfilment (De Gruchy 1995:274).

5.3 Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk and National Party became bedfellows

The National Party and the NGK became bedfellows, and their synergy in socio-political matters led to the entrenchment and enhancement of the apartheid ideology. By 1948, when the National Party came into power the communion of the Dutch Reformed Church was already in jeopardy. It is interesting to note that in 1829, the second DRC synod resolved firmly that no form of segregation in the church could be countenanced (Giliomee 2003:122).

Amazingly, the official policy of the church has always been that the race or color was not to count in its decision to baptise or confirm.

The NGK communion ecclesiology was rocked in 1950 when G.B.A. Gerdener, the professor of theology at Stellenbosch University, organised a church conference on the racial issues. This was attended by delegates from all mother and sister churches of the NGK family, including black and coloured churches as well as GK and NHK delegates. Giliomee informs us that prior to this conference, in a press release, Gerdener stated: 'If the contribution of every racial group in this, our common fatherland, is to be guaranteed, the way of separation and not of integration is the correct one (2003:484).

The final result is that the Afrikaner church leaders at this conference voted for total separation (total apartheid) and the elimination of Africans from white industrial life. This clashed sharply with then prime minister Malan's policy – the National Party. There were already some attempts of establishing the biblical justification of apartheid. Clashes, conflicts and theological debates ensued. The policy debated both politically and theologically at an alarming rate. Eventually, an amicable settlement was reached that territorial separation for the black population was inevitable. Afrikaner survival reigned supreme at the expense of theological *didache* on communion ecclesiology. *Koinonia*, as theologically taught, suffered an enormous onslaught. As apartheid was enhanced politically, so it was theologically, especially ecclesiologically. The historical process was something like this:

- In 1857, the NGK synod decided to have separate services for coloured members.
- A separate church, the *Dutch Reformed Mission Church* (DRMC) was formed in 1881.
- For blacks, the *Dutch Reformed Church in Africa* (DRCA) was progressively established from 1910 (Orange Freee State), 1932 (Transvaal), Cape Province (1951), and 1952 (Natal). In 1963, these different synods in different provinces were ratified into a national church (Cronjé 1982; Thomas 2002:194-195).
- In 1974, the synod of the DRCA decided in favour of church unity. In 1978, the DRMC decided likewise.
- In 1986, the *Belhar Confession* – with its strong emphasis on unity, reconciliation and justice was formulated and adopted by the DRMC.
- In 1994, the DRMC and some churches of DRCA united to form the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA).

The point above was driven by *discipline,* which became

> a crucial issue due to the historical separation which occurred at the Lord's Table, a situation which arose in the mid-nineteenth century arousing out of the 'weakness of some'… the decision that defied the God-given unity of the Church arising out of God's establishment of a new covenant (Duncan 2010:69).

Indeed, from the middle of the nineteenth century, the NGK entrenched separation and segregation along the racial bars. Cronjé sketches the historical development as follows:

- Missionary societies devoted their attention to the evangelisation of Hottentots, slaves and Africans (Blacks). Separate buildings were erected for this purpose and services conducted in the mother tongue.

- Where the DRC (NGK) took over from missionary societies work started by them (in separate church buildings) the DRC continues to minister to these groups as separate congregations (1982:22).

Retrospectively, the NGK was expelled from the South African Ecumenical Movement in 1940. This ecumenical movement was the predecessor of the modern day South African Council of Churches (SACC). The expulsion was apparently language instigated as the DRC/NGK insisted on the Afrikaans medium of church life. In 1960, out of Cottesloe's World Council of Churches conference, the NGK withdrew its membership from the WCC. In 1982, the NGK suffered another blow when it was expelled from the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. The domestic pressures of the 1980s put some squeeze on the NGK regarding their theological justification of apartheid, and the *laager* continued to open for the exit of the so-called dissidents. In 1994, the new dawn appeared, when the SACC welcomed the NGK as an observer member. The decades, if not the centuries of isolation of the DRC from ecumenical partnership or membership left the church in a somewhat precarious position regarding the testimony of Christ's high priestly prayer of the Gospel of John 17.

The context in which the *volk* found itself was used as a premise for racial separateness. This is highlighted by Russel Botman in his chapter, 'Is Blood Thicker than Justice: The Legacy of Abraham Kuyper for Southern Africa' in Luis Lugos' book, *Religion, Pluralism, and Public Life: Abraham Kuyper's Legacy for the Twenty-First Century* that 'the choice for the value of separateness, which became the norm in DRC, was not initially based on truth but on a contextually experienced desirability' (2000:349).

Self-interests took precedence over truth. The *laager* was strengthened by an ideological embrace full of injustice. The historical *ecclesial* division born out of or from the communion table articulated into a communion ecclesiology based on apartheid ideology and structures.

An article, 'Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa', posted on the *Wikipedia* website mentions the following:

> The joy that marked the formal unification of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa and the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in 1994 to form the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa should be seen against the background of a very difficult road on which church unity often appeared as being an unattainable goal.

5.3.1 The effects of the Belhar Confession

The Belhar Confession (Afrikaans: *Belydenis van Belhar*) is a Christian statement of belief originally written in Afrikaans in 1982. It was adopted (after a slight adjustment) as a confession of faith by the DRMC in South Africa in 1986. According to the Belhar Confession, unity is both a gift and an obligation for the church. This unity originally referred to non-segregation between Christians of different races, but after the formation of the URCSA in 1994, the word 'unity' came to refer to administrative unity within the managerial structures of the URCSA.

Another key theme of the Belhar Confession is the dichotomy of reconciliation and the justice of God. According to the confession, God is the God of the destitute, the poor, and the wronged, and for this reason, the church should stand by people in any form of suffering. It claims that individual, racial and social segregation is sin and that all forms of segregation always lead to enmity and hatred.

The Afrikaans section of the Reformed Church had some mixed reactions to the Belhar Confession. The URCSA has made it a prerequisite for the DRC in South Africa (DRCSA)/NGK to join the united denomination that all of its members adopt the Belhar Confession. Although the NGK is eager to join the new denomination, it has decided not to compel existing members to submit to the confession. The NGK had offered to compel only new members of the DRCSA to submit to the confession, and to request existing members to submit to it voluntarily. The URCSA rejected this offer. Its position was that all members of the NGK should be required to swear that the Belhar Confession is true, or face expulsion from the denomination.

The *laager* continues to open up. The Christian testimony continues to be further jeopardised. The NGK opinion of the Belhar Confession had varied over the years. Initially, it rejected the confession as being a political document or as a statement of liberation theology. Later the NGK acknowledged that the document's contents were true, with the proviso that references in the Belhar Confession to 'the poor' not be regarded as an implicit reference to non-whites. At the 2011 meeting of the General Assembly of the NGK, it was decided that processes to make the Belhar Confession part of the confessional base of the NGK should be initiated by its leadership.

Many Reformed communions around the world accepted the Belhar Confession as a document of surging forward, but in South Africa, some devotees see it as a divisive document coloured with liberation theology ideals. However, the evangelical conscience continued to remain in the hearts of some NGK leaders. For instance, the revivals of the Murray brothers (Andrew and John) emphasised the evangelisation and education for the black people. They encouraged and participated in interdenominational prayers and holiness meetings. Those who cooperated with English ministers and congregations were perceived to be those who have left the *laager* – often regarded as traitors to the *volk* (Elphick & Davenport 1997:127). Then prime minister H.F. Verwoerd discarded the WCC resolutions of the Cottesloe conference.

5.3.2 Some left, others stayed inside the laager

The list of the NGK leaders who embraced and championed the spirit of *koinonia* is never exhaustive and the evangelical witness of communion ecclesiology in the NGK continues to this day. Some deliberately decided to join the URCSA. They left the *laager* after realising that apartheid is irreversible cyanide – a toxin that will remain in the *volk's* conscience and, therefore, must be abandoned and dealt with at ecclesiastical level. Apartheid robbed the church of communion joy and privileges of human brotherhood.

- **Beyers Naude (1915-2004)**
  The South African cleric, theologian and the leading Afrikaner anti-apartheid activist Beyers Naude 'offered to retract his support for the Cottesloe resolutions if anyone could offer proof that they were in conflict with the Bible' (Giliomee 2003:528). He was from that day on regarded as a nationalist who has left the *laager*. Peter Randall (1981:11-17) informs us that Naude's career as a "prophet without honor" in his own Afrikaner community was launched after the Sharpville massacre of black protesters in 1960.

- **Nico Smith (1929-2010)**
  The following information is taken from an article, 'Nico Smith' on the *Wikipedia* website.

  > Nico Smith was a South African Afrikaner minister and prominent opponent of apartheid. Smith was a professor of theology at the University of Stellenbosch, a member of the Afrikaner Broederbond (Afrikaner Brotherhood) organization, and a minister of the apartheid-supporting Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). However, he abandoned his upper-class lifestyle [the laager] to live with the impoverished and segregated blacks of Mamelodi, a suburb of Pretoria. From Mamelodi, he worked to support the black community and oppose apartheid. Smith joined the Dutch Reformed Church of Africa (DRCA, the separate branch of the Dutch Reformed Church for non-whites, due to the DRC's refusal to oppose apartheid.

Of interest is that some of the National Party leaders were theologians of stature. One can highlight few of them.

- **Daniel François Malan (1874-1959)**
  > Daniel François Malan, more commonly known as D.F. Malan, was the prime minister of South Africa from 1948 to 1954. He is seen as a champion of Afrikaner nationalism. His National Party government came to power on the programme of apartheid and began its comprehensive implementation. He obtained a Batchelor

of Arts degree in music and science from the Victoria College (University of Stellenbosch). After that, he entered the Stellenbosch seminary in order to train as a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church. Along with his studies in theology, he obtained a master's degree in philosophy from Victoria College. Malan left South Africa in 1900 to study towards a doctorate in divinity at the University of Utrecht, which he obtained in 1905. After his return to South Africa, he was ordained as a minister of the DRC and served for six months as an assistant minister in Heidelberg, Transvaal. He also undertook a journey on behalf of the DRC, visiting religious Afrikaners living in the Belgian Congo, Northern Rhodesia and Southern Rhodesia (Daniel François Malan, n.d) .

- **Hendrick Frensch Verwoerd (1901-1966)**

  Hendrick Frensch Verwoerd (known as Dr H.F. Verwoerd) – the sixth in the line of prime ministers since South Africa obtained self-government. His parents became Dutch Reformed missionaries in the then Rhodesia, Bulawayo. He was a strong believer in the sovereignty of God, and desired to study Divinity, but never had the opportunity. Instead, he became an Applied Psychology and Sociology professor, Afrikaans newspaper editor-in-chief and prime minister of South Africa. He is regarded as the mastermind behind socially engineering and implementing the racist policies of apartheid (the system of legal racial classification and forced racial segregation that existed in South Africa from 1948 to 1994) (Hendrik Verwoerd n.d.).

These are the people who were highly educated and claimed avowed belief in God.

- **Hans du Toit**

  Hans du Toit was professor of Advanced Theological Studies at the University of Pretoria and a bosom friend of H.F Verwoerd. He visited Verwoerd regularly and eulogically praised his racial policies referring back to biblical citations. He assured the man, well-known as the chief architect of apartheid:

> I believe, have always believed, that your racial policies, because they are the result of your high aspirations, are right. I believed that their consequences on others, particularly on the Bantu, would be for their good. So long as there was that possibility, you were completely justified in opposing your policies on the country – justified, that is, by the benefits of your country (Allighan 1961:58).

- **Balthazar Johannes Vorster (1915-1983)**

  Balthazar Johannes Vorster, better known as John Vorster, served as the prime minister of South Africa from 1966 to 1978 and as the fourth state president of South Africa from 1978 to 1979. He was a highly educated lawyer, who had suffered internment at Koffiefontein in the Orange Free State in the early years of his life. D'Oliveira quotes him in his biography:

  > And, from both his parents he inherited a commitment to religion. To this day, he never goes to sleep without reading a chapter from The Bible, no matter what the time is, no matter whether he is in a jet flying off to Paraguay or Geneva, or whether he is out in the bush hunting. He explains: 'I just grew up like that. I simply cannot close my eyes at night without reading a chapter from The Bible. I have never played sport on a Sunday and I never will play sport on a Sunday because that is the way I was brought up. Religion came so naturally to me and I am very pleased about this because it gives you strength, security and a purpose in life. You know you have a calling to perform. It is the whole base on which you stand… I do not know of any other base and I would not give up my religion for anything in the world.

  B.J. Vorster called the professor of Church History at the University of Stellenbosch, T.N Hanekom, asking him if he knows of the first case of any person ever put under house arrest. This was on the eve of the 'house arrest' provision of banishing or limiting people who are suspected or charged for being a threat to state security. The professor's negative answer led Vorster to the Old Testament story of Shimei in 1 Kings 2:36-46. The former prime minister continued his story:

> I have read The Bible through many times because I read a chapter every night, no matter where I am, no matter what the time may be. And occasionally, when I have the time, I page through The Bible and read this and that (cited in D'Oliveira 1977:133).

5.3.3 The question that remains

The question that remains is how did the educationally and theologically elite devise and entrench a system that polarised and to a certain degree, destroyed the essence of the communion of the saints? We have seen of some from the *volk* who risked to depart from the *laager* and became unpopular within the *laager* itself. I have mentioned Beyers Naude' and Nico Smith, and there are hosts of others such as David Bosch and Johan Adam Heyns.

5.4 Missing the train though waiting on the right platform

To understand the Dutch Reformed communion ecclesiology, one has to turn to a noted evangelical, Johan Adam Heyns. *A Concise Dictionary of South African Biography* gives us a brief obituary of Heyns:

> Heyns was born in 1928 in the Orange Free State. He was educated at Potchefstroom and Amsterdam, with a speciality in ethics and dogmatics. He was ordained in 1954 and held various positions in the church before becoming moderator in 1986. Heyns led the move of the NGK to move away from its past and to become more non-racial.
>
> Heyns was a member of the Broederbond, a prominent figure in Afrikaner cultural groups and the Dean of Pretoria University's theological faculty. Before the 1994 democratic election Heyns acted as a facilitator in moves to bring together the church and political parties to reach consensus on moral and other issues. He was shot dead in his home, by persons unknown, in November 1994 (Joyce 1999).

Heyns wrote a book in 1977, with the Afrikaans title: *Die Kerk*. The book was translated into English in 1980 and known as *The Church*. This work is outstanding and has made some remarkable strides in the faculties of theology

around the world. It is a Magna Charta of communion ecclesiology by an NGK scholar of stature – the humble and compassionate NGK moderator ever existed – promoting racial unity not only ecclesiologically but also socio-politically.

Heyns was faced with the situation of a polarised and proliferated South Africa with questions labelled at the authenticity and the legitimacy of the church. In this work, he attempts to place the church at the centre stage of Christianity. The church is the essence of Christianity and it was conceived by God at the creation. It is one of the divine acts of God embedded in his Word.

According to Heyns:

> [It is] the citizens of the Kingdom who to the glory of the King and guided by the officials: a) experience and proclaim the blessings of God's Kingdom liturgically and cultically; and b) concern themselves with matters related to that Kingdom (1980:23).

The church is made up of the citizens of the Kingdom and these are those who are delivered by Christ from the power of darkness and are brought over into this Kingdom. It is occasionally a gathering or an assembly of the Kingdom citizens who, in obedience to the written Word, come together to listen to the proclamation of the Word in order to be nourished and strengthened by it for practical challenges in life. The church is built and centered around the Word, for 'the Church finds its *raison d'être* solely in the Word. God continually speaks; similarly, its continuity rests on God's fidelity to his Word' (Heyns 1980:19).

Furthermore, according to Heyns (1980:84), the church is an *eschatologica*l community guided by new rules on its way to a new destination.

In considering Heyns' historical development of the church, one encounters a Bible-based approach from the Old Testament to the New Testament. The church's embryonic origins lie in the eternal counsel of God. It came into being as a decision of the Triune God. The church is hidden in the creative acts of God and in the nation of Israel; as is also observed in the covenants. The God we encounter in the Old Testament is the God who 'would be the God of all men, and gather them from all the nations into one people'. He justifies this by

references to the participation of foreigners in the Assemblies of God (AOG) and his covenants: 'Through all the centuries of its embryonic development in the womb of Israel's covenant -history God had been nurturing his coming Church with a loving heart' (1980:41).

The church is not an interruption but it is a continuation of God's saving acts carried from pre-history. There can be no synthetic definition of the church, unless one delves into the epistemology of the concept of *ekklesia*. This is, however, supported by the fact that the images representing the church are to be grounded on authentic premises in order to validate their relevance to communion as expounded by the biblical text. These images are:

1. The church as **the body of Christ**. This image is a symbol, not as a reality (Heyns1980:50). It is the image that is closely bound up with the expression 'in Christ'.

2. The church as **the bride of Christ**. (Eph. 5:22). This means that the church stands in a love relationship with Christ and to him alone. As the bride of Christ, the church is expected to display fidelity and chastity. This is an exclusive relationship, with a festive spirit (Heyns 1980:58-59). The bride-groom picture of Christ-church relationship is demonstrated in the sacraments as well as in the messianic way of life (Heyns 1980:261-276).

3. The church is **the temple of the Spirit**. The temple of the Spirit is believers who are holy. This means them belonging to God alone and to no one else. It is the temple in which the priests perform their priestly offices (Heyns 1980:60). As the temple, the church is God's residential address in this world, and it has no walls of partition to divide people from one another. 'It is a temple in **which all are priests a**nd members of God's household, where all are servants one of another' (Heyns 1980:62).

4. The Church's final image is the one related to its task in the world, namely, **being witnesses**. This is a juridical concept where justice is served when the witness sticks to the facts they have to give. These facts lead to a verdict. It is worth quoting Heyns lengthily here to clarify this assertion:

> In the New Testament, Jesus Christ is the Fact about which evidence must be given. But this evidence is given in a court case. Here it is assumed that between God and man a case is being argued. In it the apostles are called as the first witnesses to testify about Jesus Christ, his life, and his work, and to demonstrate how unjust the attitude of unbelief is. The unbeliever is presented with the facts by the witness, and an appeal is made to him to let justice be done to Jesus by accepting in faith what he has done. The witness does not offer his interpretation or point of view, still less an account of his own limitations or achievements – only the facts. The genuine witness disappears behind the history of his evidence. Between the earliest witnesses (the apostles) and the later witnesses, e.g., the Church of the twentieth century, there is, of course, a fundamental difference: whereas they were ear- and eye witnesses, we are not. Yet this in no way detracts from the fact that present-day believers are called upon to testify (1980:62).

There is a relationship between the church and the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is a multi-faceted concept. Of the great observations is that God is King over his Kingdom, which is made up of obedient and blessed subjects. This Kingdom is a universal and dynamic reality that embraces cosmic reality. The Kingdom and the church are not identical. The Kingdom cannot be restricted to the church because the Kingdom is much wider than the church and the church is much narrower than the Kingdom. The two are not dualistically against each other. Their relationship is not mystical, but moralistic. The Kingdom is present wherever there is submission to God's sovereignty. Like any other kingdom, God's Kingdom is characterised by counter-reality. This Kingdom is inclusive of all human activity and nature at large.

God's acts relate to his Word. He makes himself known through his Word. He asserts himself and allows his divine power to be experienced through his Word. He is present through his Word. Heyns uses six modes of the Word used as a premise his discussion. Firstly, there is the *Word of Creation,* which broke the silence of eternity to bring into being the universe out of nothing.

Second, there is the *Word of providence* through which he sustains all things. There is also the *Word of Salvation,* the *Scripture,* the *incarnate Word*, and the *Word of preaching.* All these help the church to understand itself. The church is expected to remain faithful in terms of these six modes of the Word because

> unconditionally bound to the reliable written Word as the only authoritative source, the proclaimed Word witnesses to the incarnate Word as the highest culmination of the Word of Salvation, against the backdrop of the Words of Creation and Providence, and with constant reference to them (Heyns 1980:19).

Heyns speaks of the ecumenical practice that is biblically justified. This is when one recognises and appreciates one's own church as a true and Catholic Church of Christ, without any presumption of excluding others but accepting them as churches of Christ also. This view is in opposition to exclusivism, which says that all other churches are wrong; and syncretism, which says that all the churches must become one. The concept of 'ecumenical' refers to the spiritual attitude reflecting the consciousness of the unity of Christ's Church and an earnest desire for it. It is every effort that has been and is being made to promote, strengthen and consolidate the religious, ecclesiastical and social unity of all Christians in the world. It includes believers of all nations at all times. Although the crux of the Roman Catholic Church's ecumenicity is identical to Catholicity, for the Protestants it is clear that the ecumenical encounter is the involvement of churches, which paves the way for ecumenical dialogue to find the scope as well as the boundaries for the church (1980:173). That is why it is important to note that dialogue within the churches leads to understanding. This dialogue should not only be among different Christian traditions but also with other world religions. There should be a strong emphasis on the interrelationship among the same churches, and of different churches.

The church is the community. The New Testament evidences church life as a lively and ebullient community. The Spirit makes the church an eschatological community. It is the congregation of the faithful, the communion of the saints and the company of the witnesses. It is, therefore, a completely new community

guided by new rules on its way to a new destination. It is a community with one another based on a community with Christ through the Holy Spirit. It is a living organism still under construction. It is a community of faith, a praying community, a conversing community and a living community. It is on its journey towards perfection or maturity by building up the believers and purging itself of hypocrites. Each member of the community lives not for himself but for one another. The fruition of this community is to carry and to be carried (Heyns 1980:91).

Church and politics are realities that we have to reckon with. The New Testament provides two images of the state as the servant of God (Rom. 13) and as the enemy of God under his eternal judgment (Rev. 13). The Gospel of Christ is neither negative nor hostile but positive towards authority and its fulfilment of the duties God has entrusted to it. 'Both the *right* to govern and the *method* of government derive from God' (Heyns 1980:24).

The church and the state, including politics, are both aspects of the Kingdom or offices within it – each in its unique way. It is important to highlight their mutual relationship, the delimitation of their respective boundaries and their responsibilities for each other. The church's indifference to politics is rejected since politics is inside the Kingdom. The Scripture has the message for politics and that must be proclaimed loud and clear. The church must be fundamentally concerned with politics, however, should ensure that it does not surrender or lose its own identity in the process of political involvement.

> If in its involvement with political problems the church acts in such a way that it degenerates into a political party, it commits treason against the Kingdom, removes its own calling, and becomes a threat to the existence of the political party (Heyns 1980:216).

There must be a mutual involvement across the boundaries of their spheres. Politics and the church do not represent two realms to be classified respectively as worldly and spiritual, natural and supernatural, nature and grace. Christ receives all power in heaven so that he rules over church and state, religion and politics. It is worth quoting Heyns lengthily here to emphasise this point:

> The Church and politics are both distinctive modes of the Kingdom, and as such may be successful to a greater or a lesser extent. A particular aspect of this success concerns the Church's responsibility towards politics and the way in which politics (and the state) will accept or reject the Church's action. But it cannot properly fulfil its responsibility if politics and the state do not acknowledge its right in this regard. Consequently, the state may not look upon the Church as merely an association, an organisation, or a society people have established for a particular purpose, or as a public legal entity similar to a university or a municipality. As a body with its own distinctive character and existing in its own right, the Church may not be compared or equated with any other body or institution. Neither is it just another among those associations with a spiritual base that works to disseminate religious or moral principles. As the planting of God, it acts on his behalf- not under the state, yet not above or apart from it either, but alongside it; and to the state, which is a juridical institution is a mode of the Kingdom, it declares what God's Word allows it to say. In its turn the state must accept the Church's assumption to proclaim the Word of God authoritatively, submitting willingly to the guidance of the Word (Heyns 1980:217-218).

This means then, that the church must enjoy the protection of the state, while the state must submit to the discipline of God's Word. In their relationship, the church and the state are in positions of absolute equality. The church's priestly service in respect of politics consists chiefly of intercession, while its Kingly service consists of illustrating the significance of Christ's sovereign rule over its own members. The church's prophetic service should consist of proclaiming the Word and not making authoritative pronouncements on concrete political issues. Its task is to proclaim the Word, not to issue political statements or offer political solutions. That should be left to the competence of its knowledgeable members within the existing political party or by forming a separate, independent party.

As Heyns says:

> [T]he responsibility for devising political projects, schemes, and systems rests with the expert believers, who follow the dictates of their own consciences. When such action is lacking, the Church must be party to the blame; on the other hand, when its members do engage in these activities, it is a sign of a living Church. Clearly, then, both the nature and the limits of the believer's activity are far wider than those of the Church in its official capacity (1980:223).

The attributes of the church are of particular importance in the analysis and self-evaluation of the identity and the role of the church. Heyns follows the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed's one, holy, Catholic and apostolic church. These are the four attributes that define the true church.

In looking at the **unity of the church**, the church is not primarily the unity of her members, but the unity of Christ with the Father and the Spirit, as revealed in his unitive acts with respect to his church (Gal. 3:28).

The unity of the church is intrinsic to the very concept of the church. All Christians and all churches have the same historical and supra-historical origin. The church has one God who from all eternity decided on its existence. The church has one Saviour, one Head, one Mediator, one Perfecter, and only Jesus Christ is its redeemer from sin. This is done in cooperation with the Holy Spirit. So, in the trinitarian being of God the church discovers its deepest unity. All churches have one calling: 'The one God calls all, and the one Lord Jesus, calling them through the one Holy Spirit, is actively gathering them into unity' (Heyns 1980:115-116).

Those called are expected to define their position regarding Jesus Christ. They do this by verbalising it in a confession that he is the Christ, the Son of the living God. The propagating and proclamation of this confession is a mark of the church. The task of the church in the world is to witness. The church in its unity cannot remain silent, it has to speak. The church must dedicate itself to guarding this unity, making it an integral part of its message to the world.

Regardless of differences in doctrine, organisation, liturgy, history, etc. the church remains one since it is the gathering of believing citizens of the Kingdom.

The church remains the one body and the one and only bride of Christ. It is the unity of fellowship with God and with one another. The church's unity is also the practical unity of service. This service is determined by Christ's service, hence the church is 'the community of those who serve' (Heyns 1980:120). The church's unity must be discernible in the world. It should be discerned as the unity that is visible, audible and existential. It must be the unity of relationship, of action, and of attitude as expounded by Jesus in John 17. Generally, it must be the unity that finds concrete expression in word and action.

The unity of the church does not rule out the dimensions of pluriformity, uniformity and diversity. All these are the inevitable phenomena of the church, yet unity of the church is God's command to transcend the natural boundaries of language, culture and customs. It is the sign that testifies against the sinful fragmentation of human relationships and a false human unity. It is a unity of those who are in Christ, namely, a unity in the truth.

The second attribute of the church is **holiness**. This is not initially the holiness of the church members but is the holiness of Christ who acts on sinners. Holiness is not a phase in its development that it acquires in the process of an ethical evolution. It is an attribute given to it at the moment of its coming into being (Heyns 1980:127). The church's holiness is grounded in God himself and in his hallowing acts. Its holiness is its inner union with God in his Word. The church as God's possession reflects holiness in her socio-political life. Holiness is not grounded in ethics or morality because these are not the prerequisite for holiness, but its fruit. Holiness as a status does not depend on holiness as an act though both occur together normally. The church's holiness is its serviceableness to the Kingdom. This means that the church is first called to obedience to God – acceptance of his work in and for it and to live by that work. The church can only obey God if it lives under the authority of God's Word by believing this Word, by becoming a missionary church, and by prophetically engaging in the crusade against the sin in itself and in the world. A holy church cannot and may not tolerate sin in its midst. The church's holiness must be heard in the purity of its preaching and confession. It must also be seen in its actions that are consistent with the Scripture. Basically, the

church's holiness involves opening the doors to Christ and closing them to sin. This is the radical transition from death to life where obedience plays a major role.

The third attribute of the church is its **catholicity**. Catholicity is not simply a geographical, statistical, historical or an ethnic concept. Catholicity is the fullness of God whereby God will be all in all. Furthermore, when in the fullness of time the Father began to plant the church through the Son and the Holy Spirit (Gal. 4:4) it received its fullness in time also. The church cannot be confined to any one particular period. It is the church of all ages – past, present and future. This catholicity has to deal with the church's continuity in time with Christ. Catholicity begins with Christ and ends with the world. Christ is the Head, not only of the church but also of the world. The church's catholicity embraces the fullness of truth and of obedience. The church has been called to proclaim truth. This is the elective vocation and vocative election which must be unconditionally obeyed.

In this vein, Heyns writes:

> Called by God, the obedient church sets out prophetically to issue the summons to repentance and faith; as a priest invokes the name of the Lord; and as a royal house it proclaims God's sovereignty over the whole earth (1980:143).

Finally, there is an attribute of apostolicity, which is oriented towards the *eschaton*, not part of it. It is the condition of being the church, not a consequence. It indicates the church's historical continuity in respect of its origin, message and task. Heyns avers: 'The labours of the apostles are the foundation upon which the church is built, with Jesus Christ himself the keystone' (1980:144).

The church's apostolicity is realised unconditionally upon the Word and its missionary message to his world.

So far, Heyns has painted a picture of communion ecclesiology from the Reformed theological understanding. This ecclesiology is undoubtedly Christological in approach. It focuses on the fact that the church's confession

is Christological. The Church's dimensions and dynamics are its relation to God, itself and the world.

The Kingdom of God and the church are the two concepts within the cosmic context and are intertwined for different purposes. The Kingdom of God is the domain of God, while the church is the divine act of God. The Word plays an important role in the discussion of these two tasks.

The church is a messianic community with a special assignment in the world. This community is special since it brings the peace of God to the divided world. The messianic church is made possible by the ecumenical character. The ecumenical church approach to the world needs accomplishments more than can be expected. The church's ecumenical involvement is an inevitable phenomenon. Pluriformity, diversity and unity are the blessings, not the stumbling blocks to church maturity. They have to be appreciated as they reflect the unity and catholicity of the church. The church's political involvement is that of a prophetic role of addressing moral issues, without making any political statement. The church's task is the proclamation of the Word, not of political issues.

The church belongs to Christ and as a community, it has the missionary mandate to expand and to uphold holiness in the world. The church as part of the Kingdom of God is here to play the significant role of reflecting the character of Christ. According to Eugene M. Klaaren, Heyns' view of the church,

> as a sign or witness, suggested that it should not simply preach and administer but call itself and society to account. If he was not shaking the foundations of Afrikaner law-and-order theology, he was rattling the cage (1997:374).

After reading Heyns' powerful treatise on the church, one remains with more questions than answers. One of the fundamental questions is: 'Did the earlier Afrikaner scholars hold these views?' This question is complicated by the historically interwoven relationship between the DRC and the National Party; the same party that introduced the inhumane legislations that disrespected

humanity, church, and the natural order on a wider scale. We still do not know the reason/s for the murder of Johan Heyns on the eve of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission deliberations in 1994, or who pulled the trigger.

The remaining question is that the need for the NGK to break down the *laager* and accept the reality of the past, repent, and move on. There is a need for Afrikaner liberation from the tradition that became the scum in the nostrils of the world. The NGK failed in its prophetic role and worked against the biblical mandate of the church's unity, catholicity and mission in the world. In other words, it failed to become Christ's witness in the decadent culture. Instead, it opted for biblical justification for apartheid. In his 1991 book *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, De Gruchy reiterated what he has mentioned few years earlier,

> The attempt to give theological legitimation to the emerging racial policies of the National Party thus predated the advent of apartheid as government policy in 1948. But from then onwards, in document after document, the Dutch Reformed Church attempted to justify apartheid on biblical and theological grounds within the framework of neo-Calvinism as adapted by Afrikaner ideologists (1991:28).

The *volk* went through experiences of isolation, not only socio-politically but also ecumenically. They fell into and maintained the status of silence in the midst of pain and agony. The national crises were regarded as the divine order to be addressed humanistically, without turning to the God of the Bible. Their prophetic failure bears the negative consequences. As De Gruchy stresses:

> [I]n South Africa, Reformed Church order and ecclesiastical legalism often have prevented the Dutch Reformed and other Reformed churches from being able to move responsibly against injustice, and, by the same token, they have enabled the churches to still the voice of the church's prophets (1991:205).

The theologically elite in the Dutch Reformed Church failed to see communion ecclesiology from the New Testament perspective. They missed the fact that the church is *ekklesia kuriou* (the church of the Lord). This is what De Gruchy

calls 'the people of God, a new phase in their participation in God's mission to the whole inhabited universe (*ecumene*)' (1994:126).

The ecclesiology of Heyns elaborated above is theologically, canonically, apostolically, ecumenically and historically correct. The question is 'why did the NGK not take it seriously?' It is written out of conviction, hence does not have elaborated references or sources to align with other reputable ecclesiologist locally or abroad. However, it has an appealing list in the bibliography. He wrote out of theological conviction that I suspect was to be used as a final measurement for his own denomination. The NGK community, in general, should align itself with the unshakeable fact that the geographically defined community has universally disappeared and that the kinship ties are eroding. The NGK must situate itself to become the new community for lonely masses of humanity in this century. Overcoming the isolation of individuals in South Africa is an urgent task for NGK and for the church in general. This calls for radical, cutting edge, intentional, strategic, life and community transformation that will bring back the consciousness of humanity as the bearer of *imago Dei*. These tasks need a strong forge for ecumenical cooperation. Communion ecclesiology is not denominational cooperation but relationality that transcends denominational or traditional barriers.

5.5 The ecumenical journey

Before leaving this chapter it is vital to highlight the ecumenical journey of South African Christianity, with special reference to the Dutch Reformed Church. In the twentieth century, South Africa exploded socio-economically. The rapid industrialisation and urbanisation accompanied by accelerated economy ushered in new demands. These necessitated the then government of segregation policy to enact the legislations that affected socio-ecclesiastical formations and *ecclesial* expressions. Informal settlements, migrant labour system, social upheavals, moral confusion and the cultural melting-pot all made South Africa a microcosm of the world. The *ecclesia* of the time ascended the ladder towards fragmentation racially, ethnically, confessionally,

ideologically and emotionally (Viljoen1980:35). The NGK chose to retreat into the cage, ignoring the fact that international exposure and ecumenical contacts reinforce commitment to connecting the doctrines, teachings and practices of Christianity with the lives that people actually lead.

The church attempted some ecumenical manifestations in order to assert its communion as *ecclesia* – bearing witness for Jesus and declaring to the world that 'we are one'. The Christian Council of South Africa was formed in Bloemfontein in 1936 with the Transvaal and Cape synods of the NGK as members alongside the missionary movements and established churches. This was as a result of the visit of John R. Mott of the General Missionary Conference in 1934. Dr William Nicol was its first chairman. According to Viljoen:

> [The council's] main action lay in the field of organizing conferences. Its authority was limited in that it could not consider matters of faith and order and member churches could in no way be compromised to any specific policy or line of action (1980:36).

The excitement of the birth of this new baby did not last long. The Afrikaans member churches were dissatisfied with the mission's policy and the perceived neglect of the young and upcoming Afrikaans language during the proceedings of the conference. The two emerging nationalisms on the African soil, 'Boer' and 'Brit', were in constant conflict and in 1941 the NGK synods withdrew for the council. This left the remaining members to continue to struggle with the issue of racial injustice in the South African society.

The Afrikaans churches withdrawal from the Christian Council led to their formation of Federal Missionary Council in 1942. Their aim was to implement the mission policy and strategise for evangelism. Viljoen reveals the inner mission of the Federal Missionary Council:

> The Federal Missionary Council of the Dutch Reformed Churches was deeply involved in the planning and articulating of the policy of separation of races. Right from its start in 1942 it put pressure through delegations on the government to implement a policy of racial separation. Issues like mixed marriages, inter-racial, extra-marital sexual relations,

> separate residential areas, separate universities etc. were discussed. The all-white conference organized by the Federal Missionary Council at Bloemfontein, 1950 was a landmark in the articulation of the policy of separate development (1980:38).

The post-war euphoria led to the official acceptance of apartheid as a government policy in 1948. In 1949, the church responded when the Christian Council, with representatives from twenty-five churches, convened a conference held at Rosettenville near Johannesburg. The theme of the conference was 'The Christian in a Multi-Racial Society'. The statements out of this conference are regarded as the foundation stones of today's South African Council of Churches (SACC).

One cannot read this part of the South African ecumenical journey without reference to the Cottesloe Conference of Church leaders in December 1960. This conference was convened by World Council of Churches in reaction to the terrible incident that had marred South African image in the eyes of the international community: the Sharpeville and Langa massacres of black people who opposed the so-called pass laws. The conference delegates reached and adopted some clear resolutions on the need for interracial consultation, mixed marriages, migrant labour system, job reservation, economic justice, etc. This angered the status quo and seriously upset the regime – '[It] crushed the prospects for any meaningful ecumenical progress even on the limited level that it took place in the fifties' (Viljoen 1980:39).

The sequel of the Cottesloe Consultation led to the establishment of the Christian Institute of Southern Africa (CISA) founded by Afrikaans and English and clergy in August 1963. Membership was based on individuals instead of ecclesiastical formations. Its leader was the man who is regarded by many of the *volk* as the one 'who departed from the laager', Dr Beyers Naude', hated by his own people, but loved by black people. The black people affectionately called him '*Oom Bey*'. The institute's mouthpiece was a journal called *Pro Veritate*. The government saw it as subversive and a threat to its security and restricted it by putting Naude' under a house arrest. Members

from Afrikaans churches withdrew from the CISA due to some discredit and threat of disciplinary measures from their ecclesiastical formations.

The Christian Council of South Africa became the South African Council of Churches. The SACC became effective in the expression of communion ecclesiology as a way of truly representing the *imago Dei* that humans carry, regardless of race, ethnicity or any social class. It delved into issues like the economy, education, law, politics, society, and the church. What prompted the governments of Vorster and Botha to unleash acts of abhorrence on it, was basically their Message to the People of South Africa (1968), their mandate to implement the WCC's Programme to Combat Racism (1969), and the Conscientious Objection Debate (1974).

From the time of their withdrawal from the Christian Council of South Africa, the DRC spent much of its time exerting the creeds of racial segregation and seeking to define apartheid theologically. They did this in isolation, without any partnership or symbiotic relationship with any other Christian communion or ecclesiastical formation, nationally or internationally. They swam against the tide and the period was characterised by *dialogical personalism* that was promoted by theologians such as Ferdinand Ebner (1882-1931) and Martin Buber (1878-1965). Through their writing these two theologians 'developed a powerful critique of contemporary idealism, and particularly of the concept of the isolation of the self' (McGrath 1994:145).

The 'I-You' approach to the reality of theological search was not the best option. All human existential life should be analysed in dialogical terms. The DRC disregarded this and opted for the way of isolation.

5.6 Communion attacked from the laager

The communion of the saints in South Africa was at its climax of challenges in the mid-seventies and the eighties. The looming Eschel Rhoodie information scandal brought Vorster's regime to its knees and P.W. Botha took over the government reigns at a time when South Africa was isolated from the world

socio-politically and to a certain extent ecclesiastically. Botha became naive or deliberately ignored that 'the lack of access to community means that isolation rules' (Frazee 2001:30).

It was indeed a tumultuous time politically and religiously. The NGK was at that stage, never a part of any ecumenical formation. The SACC refused to accept the NGK as a member, due to its support of the unjust policies of the government. The same applies to WCC that since Cottesloe never wanted any 'comrades in arms' relationship with the NGK in South Africa. Other Reformed Associations, such as World Alliance of Reformed Churches, displayed the same sentiments towards the NGK. The ABRECSA (Alliance of Black Reformed Christians in Southern Africa) attempted some synergy with NGK, but to no avail.

The epitome of the Botha regime was the extension of the politics of isolation in many respects. This was fuelled by the fact that internationally, apartheid had become an indecorous sobriquet. I witnessed most of it and can paint the real picture without having to refer to any other source. The tentacles of apartheid closed in and squashed any perceived dissenting ideology. The apartheid fires of banishments, house arrests, detentions without trials, exodus into exile, etc. spiralled out of control in various ways. The escalation of industrial actions met with detentions without trials were the order of the day. Any opposition or criticism of apartheid was equated with communism or terrorism. The State of Emergency and other oppressive legislation were passed for more state repressions. Media was muzzled. Detainees died mysteriously in police cells. Thousands of young black South Africans skipped the country to exile. The homeland system was at its zenith to rob citizens of their South African citizenship and the freedom of movement. The military attacks on the frontline states, accused of harbouring ANC operatives or freedom fighters intensified. Archbishop Tutu refers to the *South African Review's* take on the policy of the Botha administration when he describes the policy as having a 'reform repression characteristic'.

> With one hand the government introduced limited reform, with the other it tried to eradicate opposition, which fell outside the narrow parameters prescribed by that reform, and beyond the country's borders it carried out a ruthless programme of destabilization in the neighbouring black-ruled states to stop them from giving sanctuary and providing military bases to its opponents (1994:53).

The clergy suffered immensely as they were banished, detained and harassed. It was a painful period for the church of Jesus Christ in South Africa. The *laager* was closing in to oppress those inside as well as those outside. The insiders were misinformed or kept ignorant of the tortures on the outsiders. The church's prophetic role, in general, was challenged. In reference to the government's repressive approaches, Pottinger writes:

> [A]central feature of the latter years of Botha's regime, then, was the obsessive desire to isolate these lobbies: denying them publicity, restricting their spheres of operation, harassing individuals intent on establishing contact with them and turning the full weight of the propaganda machinery, including the SABC, against them (1988:369).

This was a painful era for the church communions in South Africa. Any clergy denouncing the regime was regarded as a communist, Marxist, or even a terrorist. Initiatives for the communion to come closer were looked upon with suspicion. The government was not always in favour of these initiatives, such as those of the South African Christian Leadership Assembly (SACLA 1) in 1979. Any multi-racial Christian initiative or gathering was eyed with suspicion of sabotage or treason. It was only in December 1989 that President F.W. de Klerk issued a call to all churches in South Africa to jointly define a strategy to facilitate negotiations, reconciliation and change. He appointed Dr Louw Alberts, a Christian physicist, to facilitate and convene a church conference for this purpose (Gous 1993: 258). Dr Alberts was well-known within and without the NGK *laager*. He was the chairman or president of Youth for Christ South Africa for over thirty years and well respected in this organisation internationally. Although inside the *laager*, he was unapologetic about racial reconciliation and togetherness of the *ecclesia*.

The president De Klerk's call led to what became famously known as the Rustenburg Conference (1990). This conference was attended by delegates from 85 South African churches and was one of the most representative church conferences ever held. At the end of the week-long conference, leaders of the the Dutch Reformed Church publicly condemned their support and participation in apartheid.

The following quote is taken from Section 2.5 of their declaration:

> We therefore confess that we have in different ways practised, supported, permitted or refused to resist apartheid … Some of us actively misused the Bible to justify apartheid, leading many to believe that it had the sanction of God. Later, we insisted that its motives were good even though its effects were evil. Our slowness to denounce apartheid as sin encouraged the Government to retain it.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu accepted the confession in a spirit of forgiveness.

5.7 Some final thoughts

I close off this chapter with some final thoughts. It is impossible to overstate the intensity and complexity of the suffering that came to a head in the devastation of South Africa and then continued on into the current democratic post-apartheid years. From the Sharpeville shootings to the Soweto students' riots and the state repression of the 1980s, an ecclesiastical incarnation suffered setbacks. Loss was total. Carnage was rampant. Death in detention and banishments were twin horrors stalking the streets and households of the prophetic voices. The desperate slaying of innocent youth showed a complete lack of respect for human worth and rights. The angry detentions, banishments, and murders of ecclesiastical leaders showed absolute disrespect for the divine will.

Chapter 6

Matlo go ša mabapi – an injury to one is an injury to all

The Church that merely wants to talk, conducting a continuous monologue – as if it were the only one with anything to say – fails to recognize that it is but one aspect of the Kingdom. The Church must also listen to the voices of the world – and not expecting to hear only alien and terrifying noises, as if the serpent of paradise lived again. In faith, and furnished with scriptural revelation, it must hear the words and see the acts of that Lord who is Head, not only of the Church, but of the world too (Heyns 1980:97-98).

6.1 An ecumenical picture of English Christianity

I have chosen the topic of this chapter using the Setswana proverb: *matlo go ša mabapi*. Literarily, it means if your house is on fire, the neighbour is also affected. Mamphela Ramphele expresses the notion that 'human connectedness is such that when one of us is abused, we will feel the pain' (Ramphele 2012:163). It is within the community that one can derive and discover her meaning, but at the same time where one can receive emotional or even physical blows. Ramphele confirms that:

> [T]he greater the sense of one's humanity being affirmed by others, the higher one's sense of worth and self-esteem will be, and such affirmation is at the heart of the well-being of human beings who are creatures meant to live in community (2012:162)

Referring to the previous chapter, there is life beyond the *laager*. One cannot stay inside the *laager* and grow. The more fertile turf is outside the *laager*. The impact of the *laager* can be felt by and on the ground beyond its place. The heat from or inside the *laager* can reach those outside of it.

South African Christianity can be broadly divided into three major categories, based on language or origin of the churches. There are English churches, Afrikaans churches, and African Initiated Churches. The English churches are those that originated or were planted in South Africa by Europeans and Americans. This group includes Anglicans, Presbyterians, Catholics, Congregationalists and smaller groups such as Baptists, Assemblies of God, Nazarenes, Salvation Army, Wesleyans, etc. The Afrikaans churches are predominantly the Reformed churches, such as the three Reformed sister churches (NGK/DRC, NHK and GK), and the recently formed Uniting Reformed Churches of South Africa (URCSA), which was formed by the amalgamation of the NGSK and the NGKA. The Apostoliese Geloofsending (AGS) (Apostolic Faith Mission) and the Volle Evangelie Kerk van God (Full Gospel Church of God) can be categorised under the Afrikaans churches. The African Initiated Churches (AIC) are a totally different breed and will need another book to fully explore them.

6.2 Evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity: Communion lacking prophetic role

Many of the mainline Christian churches and few of the AIC are members of South African Council of Churches (SACC). The Evangelical branch of the Christian community is ecumenically organised into The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa (TEASA). These evangelicals comprise conservative evangelicals such as Baptists, classical Pentecostals and charismatics, and Holiness movement churches.

The classical Pentecostals in South Africa are the Apostolic Faith Mission, the Assemblies of God, and the Full Gospel Church of God. At some stage, there was a conglomerate made up of these three denominations called the Fellowship of the Pentecostal Churches (FPC). It died a natural death towards the end of the eighties. There are smaller formations, such as the African Gospel, Church of God, and the Pentecostal Holiness Church, which in South Africa is more liberal and traditional than in its original country of America. There is also a Protestant Pentecostal Church, which is more Afrikaans than English. The conservatives, apart from the Baptists, are also in diverse conglomerates, with most of them being planted in South Africa by mission organisations from abroad. Good examples are the Africa Evangelical Church and the Evangelical Bible Church, both originating from the erstwhile Africa Evangelical Fellowship. Other groups are the Evangelical Brethren, the Alliance Church, etc.

The Holiness movement still holds on to their overseas formations such as the Church of the Nazarene, the Salvation Army, the Free Methodists and the Wesleyans. From here, one encounters a huge conglomerate of the charismatics characterised by mega churches and smaller churches. Most of them are indigenous while some are from overseas or from elsewhere on the continent, especially Nigeria. They normally express their communion ecclesiology in the local settings or in some types of networks. In my doctoral studies, I coined a better name for them: Emerging Apostolic Churches, while

the American ecclesiologist, Peter Wagner calls them the New Apostolic Reformation Churches.

Evangelical Christianity in South Africa is also strengthened by the para-church organisations. Some of them suffered the repression of the state as they were suspected of promoting some communist ideals. This was due to their multi-racial or inter-racial activities. Some compromised their communion by dividing along the racial lines. One of them is the Student Christian Association (SCA). This student ministry in South Africa was founded in 1896 through the initiatives of key Christian leaders such as Andrew Murray and John R. Mott in the context of the energy generated by the Student Volunteer Movement at the turn of the last century.

In 1965, this movement sadly split into four racially based organisations as a result of the ideological pressures of apartheid (De Gruchy 1997:164). The SCA had been multi-racial, but pressure from the NGK in the late 1950s and early 1960s led to its fragmentation along the ethnic lines, with the SCA serving white English-speaking students, and with a parallel organisation for Afrikaners known as the Afrikaanse Christelike Studente Vereeniging (ACSV). The Student Christian Movement (SCM) was formed for black students and the Christelike Studente Assosiasie (CSA) for the coloured students. It was, therefore, with great rejoicing that the SCM (working in historically black institutions) and the SCA (predominantly white, English-speaking) merged in 1997 to form the Students' Christian Organisation (SCO). The other two sections (ACSV and CSA) subsequently merged in 1997 to form the United Christian Student Association (UCSA). The SCO have engaged in unity talks with the UCSA with no tangible results so far.

Only those who have lived with apartheid in South Africa can really appreciate the miracle of God in restoring these unities. Although white members are a minority within the SCO, there is a unanimous commitment to make the SCO an inclusive community and to forge relationships across cultural barriers.

There was also the Scripture Union, which had a strong historical symbiotic relationship with the SCM. The Hospital Christian Fellowship (HCF)

is South African pioneered and has become international. This is an evangelical, international and interdenominational organisation among medical professionals and other caregivers. Its purpose is to teach healthcare professionals, caregivers and volunteers how to meet the spiritual needs of their patients and fellow workers. Youth for Christ was started in South Africa in 1946 by the returning World War veterans. Campus Crusade for Christ also suffered racial onslaught when it divided to form Life Ministry for the blacks and Campus Crusade for Christ for the whites. Youth Alive, with its stronghold in Soweto, was pioneered under the auspices of Africa Evangelical Fellowship. The story of the para-church movements is huge and deserves another book.

I was a witness and a participant in 1985 when the evangelicals met at the Youth for Christ Centre in Magaliesberg, west of Johannesburg. The conference, organised by the Evangelical Fellowship of South Africa (EFSA), was called the South African Conference of Evangelical Leaders (SACEL). The purpose of the conference was to forge a united action to denounce the repressive state and its draconian legislations, and to offer an alternative to the government by making a statement. There was a joy in the presence of David Watson from World Evangelical Fellowship.

However, the conference ended on a bitter note as EFSA, the umbrella body that had organised a conference, split into three groups. The black evangelicals said that evangelicals are too soft and lenient regarding the repressive laws of the land; the white evangelicals' voice was an appeal to be progressive and allow the sovereignty of God to prevail while becoming sensitively prophetic. Some foreign missionaries and right wing whites were insistent that the Botha regime was radical and Christian enough to initiate and bring changes of ending apartheid. The evangelical movement split into three groups: Concerned Evangelicals (CE) mainly composed of black people; EFSA composed mainly of white people and the progressive blacks; and the United Christian Action (UCA) composed mostly of foreigners who were far to the right in their thinking. From that day on, there was a *maragana teng a bana ba mpa* (war of the siblings). UCA went into an aggressive arsenal against other evangelicals and mainstream Christianity. Their press releases and pamphlets

were unpalatable attacks on the church in South Africa for not praying for or supporting the government's efforts of ending apartheid. Many evangelical groupings and the likes of Archbishop Desmond Tutu were negatively painted by this group.

After the 1994 democratic elections, the Concerned Evangelicals and the EFSA merged to form The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa (TEASA). The evangelical communion in South Africa, to a certain degree, is still polarised, fragmented, and disorganised. Regardless of comprehensive efforts by TEASA, the communion of the saints on a broader scale is invisible.

The emergence or some popularity of evangelical fundamentalists resurfaced and gained some popularity in the eighties. They emerged as defenders of the Botha regime and Christian Western civilisation. These churches developed some acquiescent attitudes and approaches to the political regime. Schoffeleers' critique of De Beer's definition of the churches takes this line of thinking: [We] shall describe a church as 'acquiescent' if it is that Church's avowed policy to avoid political activism of a critical nature (1991:8).

Some mainstream Christians viewed these fundamentalists as a religious arm of the government that dated apartheid. David Noonan says of them: 'I believe they were sincere people. Some, however, we now know sold their souls to the government of the day – knowingly or unknowingly' (2003:274).

Right wing groups such as United Christian Action conglomerate and other groups were conspicuously verbal. They used the might of the pen, and through literature, their dogma was heard and read through publications, such as:

> Tradition Family Property (TFP) newsletter, critique of the New Nation newspaper and Liberation Theology by Young South Africans for Christian Civilisation (Johannesburg); The Aida Parker Newsletter (Auckland Park); Signposts (Arcadia) – both funded by the security arm of the former government; Family Protection Scoreboard (Arcadia); Stand To (Veterans for Victory, Houghton); Gospel Defence League (Cape Town), Christian Mission International (Primrose); The Catholic Defence League (Silverton); The Christian Resistance Group

> of South Africa (Edenvale); and Alliance for the Promotion of People's Rights (Sandton) (Noonan 2014:275).

Amazingly, in the same era, there arose two powerful documents at the end of the spectrum of these publications. These were *The Kairos Document*, mostly by the Catholics; and *Evangelical Witness in South Africa* (1986) (EWISA) by evangelicals concerned about repressive laws of the government of the time. The tone and the message of *The Kairos Document* were clear that apartheid was the enemy of God. *The Kairos Document* received lots of criticisms from the evangelical right wing, especially from those subscribing to *United Christian Action*. One of their mouthpieces, known as *Signposts*, condemned the document as 'political'. In one issue, the editor, Edward Cain condemned *The Kairos Document* by saying: 'It is based solidly on Marxist/Leninist ideological concepts with a sprinkling of Bible quotations to give it a religious flavour' (1986).

One of the positives of this document is highlighted by Chetty (2012:28), who writes: 'Whilst many churches used the document as a catalyst to seize this Kairos for Christian witness, others condemned it as political.'

EWISA was a critique of evangelical theology and practice under polarised state of apartheid. The conservative Pentecostals and evangelicals labelled EWISA as unpalatable for their evangelical comfort zone. This document was set as a catalyst discussion to address the theology that promoted political conservatism and evangelical exclusivism. For ages, evangelicals' hermeneutics of new birth excluded championship for social justice for the marginalised masses of the society. EWISA was an attempt to conscientise evangelicals of the biblical mandate for justice and prophetic commission to structural sins of racism, separate development, and ethnic balkanisation. This is clearly gleaned from one of the seven declarations of the EWISA document addressing:

> Dogmatism, purism (i.e. holier-than-thou attitude), the belief that one has the whole truth as against everyone else, the problem of individualism (individual faith) as against community faith, their ecclesiology (i.e. their view of the Church and understanding Biblically),

> a ghetto theology, fear of being influenced and misled, etc. (cited in Leonard 2010:110)

The Kairos Document and EWISA sent some chills down the spines of politicians and led to increased arrests of the clergy under the detention without trial policies. At the helm of the decade, the Pentecostals almost caught their senses by producing a document known as the *Relevant Pentecostal Witness* (RPW) in 1988. The paper was the first ever public response of Pentecostals to their socio-political context. The Pentecostals were lamenting their passiveness towards the social concerns, especially the soteriological emphasis that excluded condemnation of those guilty of the social sins of apartheid. One emerging spike from this document is a call for ecumenical cooperation, expressing communion ecclesiology at its core. The document states:

> Wherever possible we will seek to work with our brothers outside the Pentecostal tradition who are committed to bringing about a just society in South Africa ('that they all may be one… even as we are one' John 17:21) (cited in Leonard 2010:135).

This tradition was catching a glimpse of communion ecclesiology when the ecumenical tone of the document continues to declare: 'As relevant Pentecostal we need to seek fellowship with each other, irrespective of our denominational ties. We need to meet for fellowship, exhortation and spiritual upliftment '(cited in Leonard 2010:137).

It is important that Pentecostals acknowledge and accept this document, but one wonders how many current Pentecostal preachers know about it. The fact is that:

> Pentecostal spirituality has many inadequacies cannot be denied. Pentecostals had been criticized for putting emphasis on self-propagation through aggressive evangelism and church growth without sufficient concern for wider socio-political issues (Nkurunziza 2013:72).

The following extract from an article by Moss Ntlha, the General Secretary of The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa, describes the scenario and the

role the two documents (*The Kairos Document* and EWISA) played during the critical time in South Africa (Ntlha 1994). Communion was under some serious threat. The church saw that the prophetic voice could not be heard from the closet anymore. To a certain degree, the two documents were a triumph over the oppressors. The church needed to redefine itself in that cruel political and social landscape where nouveau racism and public protests were a trend. The nation was bleeding, and the church was leading, while the government was bleating out repression. Christian communion was divided – some supporting the status quo, while others were rebuking prophetically. Still others were dormant and lived in silence. Some went to prison, detained, tortured, while others skipped the country into exile. Others disappeared into the hands of the security forces and were never traced or seen anymore – some till today! The voice of the church echoed through *Kairos* and EWISA.

In many ways, the struggle to end apartheid came to a head in the 1980s. The Botha government took a hardline and militaristic stance in the face of mounting opposition. They were determined to defend white privilege by any means necessary. Equally, the people of South Africa built a mass democratic movement aimed at bringing the regime to its knees. Thousands of people were detained without trial. Many disappeared without trace, only to be discovered dead later. The role of the police in these murders is only now being admitted. There was, and could not be, any middle ground. Racism, violence, repression and death were rampant.

For its part, the evangelical church as an institution was caught in the crossfire. Both in what it believed and what it practiced, the church lacked prophetic integrity. The judgement of the biblical text seemed penetrating: 'Therefore salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned? It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear' (Luke 14:34-35). Indeed, in many ways the people ignored and dismissed the church as irrelevant. The church was in danger of being 'thrown out' by a generation desperate for truth and freedom.

A critical theological intervention was made in 1985 by Christian activists, theologians and ministers in the form of the Kairos document. This theological statement called the church to a radical, paradigmatic shift in her witness, from a mission of neutrality to one that embraced the struggles of the oppressed. Among evangelicals, this call was largely ignored, in spite of the pertinent issues it raised. In part this was because evangelicals did not see themselves as part of the ecumenical movement. Evangelicalism in South Africa has always been isolationist. It is also for this reason that the apartheid state found evangelicals easy targets for cooption in their programme of 'winning the hearts and minds' of the people.

Among evangelicals, a group calling itself Concerned Evangelicals (CE) emerged. They lived and worked in the black townships. For them, the Kairos document helped to clarify the questions they faced. They came together to critique the theology and practice of the evangelical church, in which they experienced a number of contradictions. I mention two.

The theological contradiction

Typically, as evangelical men, women and youth became involved in diverse forms of struggle in trade unions, civic structures, youth and women's groups, the pastor remained just about the only person whose profession did not predispose him for involvement in the struggle. Increasingly his sermons were unrelated to the daily experiences of his congregants. In fact, they opposed and denied those experiences. This caused alienation. Large numbers of people, particularly youth, left the church.

Mission and evangelism were often motivated by anticommunism and government counter-revolutionary theory. Evangelists preached the gospel to put down the flames of popular struggle. Government, big business, media and the church shared the view that this struggle for liberation could be dismissed as 'unrest,' and contrary to 'law and order.'

Historically, the English missions and ecclesiastical formations conflicted with the status quo regarding issues of race relations. The South African government under the National Party always viewed English churches with suspicion. They viewed these churches as liberal, anti-government, and/or communist-influenced. However, P.W Botha was the only apartheid head of state that mercilessly supported the

> destabilisation of English churches. He did this by scrutinising the internal matters of the SACC – even imposing the commission of enquiry on its finances. Then president of SACC, Peter Storey highlights that 'at the height of the church-state struggle in South Africa, President P.W. Botha announced a judicial commission to put the anti-apartheid South African Council of Churches (SACC) on trial' (1998:187).

The straw that broke the camel's back was Botha's directive to bomb Khotso House, the headquarters of SACC in Johannesburg. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission instituted by Nelson Mandela's democratic government heard that:

> On 1 September 1988, Khotso House, the headquarters of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and the UDF was damaged extensively by explosives set by members of the Security Branch. Twenty-three people were treated for shock. In October, Khanya House, the offices of the South African Bishops' Conference (SACBC) was damaged in an arson and limpet mine attack. Senior security force officers and Security Branch admitted to the Commission that they were ordered by either the then State President or senior members of the government to carry out the attacks.

The question that still taunts theologians is the passivism of the non-Afrikaans churches regarding the NGK's alignment or allegiance with the political ideology that undermined and disregarded the essence of communal ecclesiology. I suspect some of them took a stance of viewing the NGK and its sister churches as *maragana teng a bana ba mpa* (the war of the siblings not to be tampered with).

Peter Walshe's contribution to Elphick & Davenport's book *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History* (mentioned earlier in Chapter 4) is a powerful treatise informing us of the passiveness of the English churches and the Evangelical movement within the hurting society, which at the same time gave them the membership. There is also a contrast of the regime's political voice to and within the ecclesiastical circles, and the black political voices of hope. For instance, Walshe highlights the fact that,

> generations of political leaders within the ANC, also drew on Christian values for the building of a broader political community. There was, they believed, an ethical imperative to move beyond narrow identities of family, ethnicity, and race (1997:384).

Gaybba apologetically echoes the same lament:

> In my own country, South Africa, the madness that is apartheid has struck at the heart of Christianity by erecting structures that make any meaningful large-scale experience of unity in Christ extremely difficult. It has also struck at the heart of humanity, by being, in fact, a denial of genuine love for the other (1987:183).

Most of the English churches in South Africa caught influenza when the Dutch Reformed Church sneezed their ideology of theological justification of apartheid. They became infected at different levels and influence. Walshe mentions:

> [T]he English-speaking churches, on the other hand, failed to offer a prophetic, alternative voice: they condemned apartheid at annual conferences and in pastoral letters, but in practice these churches were part of the racially oppressive system (1997:385).

It is very sad that:

> [W]ithin the white-controlled racially-biased churches, systems and structures were developed to keep white and black separate. The colour bar signalled a line that separated not only races, but Westerners and Africans – or in the language of apartheid South Africa, European and non-European... *Ecclesial* structures were articulated with race-based and racially-inspired preferential treatment of whites vis-ạ-vis blacks (Smit 2014:150).

As is stated above, some of the English churches followed the structures and the polity of NGK based on racial classification. One can here recall the Apostolic Faith Mission, the Assemblies of God and the Presbyterians. Typical of the repressive socio-political system, these churches were either

ignorant or misinformed – the choice that any straight thinker can conclude is inexcusable! They were 'conspicuously absent from the non-violent Defiance Campaign of the 1950s' (Walshe 1997:388). The South African missiologist, Willem Saayman correctly recalls:

> [T]he growing corpus of apartheid legislation sparked increased Black resistance, while the English churches (with the exception of some remarkable individuals) mainly made ineffectual noises against apartheid (1991:72).

The churches and/or leaders who decided to make a stand against apartheid were conscious of the imperfection of their prophetic witness. Peter Storey paints a sad picture:

> The major three denominations – Anglican, Methodist and Roman Catholic – while multi-racial in constituency (80% black, 20% white), were largely segregated and still led by whites. White and black clergy were often paid differently; most white members quietly supported the segregationist policies of their government while black laity, disenfranchised in the country, were disempowered in their churches (1998:188).

From the conservative evangelicals, one group, the Baptists, are worthy of further consideration. All over the world the Baptists are known as conservative, fundamentalist evangelicals who unashamedly hold on to:

- the authority and sufficiency of Scripture;
- the uniqueness of redemption through the death of Christ upon the cross;
- the need for personal conversion; and
- The necessity, propriety, and urgency of evangelism.

They have a long, complex history in South Africa. Disregarding this complex history, there are three types of this formation in South Africa:

- The Baptist Union of South Africa (BUSA): Predominantly white churches with a sizeable number of black churches.

- The Baptist Convention of South Africa (BCSA): Predominantly black churches.
- Independent Baptists, who are diverse and are identified by their networks overseas or nationally.

In his book *Principles and Practices for Baptist Churches*, Edward T. Hiscox gives the Baptists' understanding of the Christian communion as,

> a company of regenerated persons, baptized on a profession of faith in Christ; united in covenant for worship, instruction, the observance of Christian ordinances, and for such service as the gospel requires; recognizing and accepting Christ as their supreme Lord and Lawgiver, and taking his Word as their only and sufficient rule of faith and practice in all matters of conscience and religion. (2004:20)

The Baptists are known for their strong congregational polity whereby emphasis is laid on the autonomy of the local church. In many cases, autonomous churches voluntarily join themselves in some form of association. Hiscox emphasises that 'there is, however, a spiritual unity in the 'Communion of Saints' existing among all who are truly born of God, however, various and dissimilar their ecclesiastical polity and relations may be' (2004:32).

This is to build wider fellowship and lateral accountability. After the evolutionary history of linguistic structures (English, German, and Afrikaans), 'cultural separation became a racial separation, and the inequalities of the South African economy resulted in a further separation – that of class' (Kretzschmar 1998:39).

The polarisation of the South African population impacted the Baptist formations just like all other churches. People belonged to the same church, making the same confession, practicing the same liturgy, and appropriating the same sacraments following similar formulas; but divided on or by colour of the skin. Kretzschmar continues:

> [T]he divisions of the 19th century became increasingly entrenched during the Apartheid dominated 20th century. Black and white Baptists

> lived in two different worlds; separated not only socially but also by the very structures of the Baptist Union. (1998:39)

The theology of privatisation abated the Baptist Union's concentration on the principles of unity and fellowship. The social realities were ignored. Black Baptists cried for unity and their pleas fell on deaf ears.

In the Preamble to *Statement of Baptist Principles*, the Baptists confess their ecclesiology as:

> We, as Baptists, believe in: The CHURCH as the whole company of those who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ and regenerated by the Holy Spirit. The local church, being a manifestation of the universal church, is community of believers in a particular place where the Word of God is preached and ordinances of the Lord's Supper are observed. It is fully autonomous, except insofar as it binds itself through voluntary association.

The statement continues to clarify the Baptist stance on congregational church government, and the priesthood of all the believers to enhance the *ecclesial* confession mentioned above. This confession is a modified part of the *Statement of Belief* of the Baptist Union that was adopted in Durban in 1924 (Cape Town Baptist Seminary n.d -b). In a radical turn-around, participants to the Awareness Workshop of the Baptist Convention of Southern Africa (principally the black Baptists of South Africa), held at Barkly West, from 31 May to 3 June 1990, adopted the following declaration, though still maintaining the co-existence or parallel existence with the Baptist Union:

> We understand ourselves to be created by God in whose sight all persons have equal status, dignity, and full human rights. Further, we understand ourselves called to be a community of people participating fully in the struggle for justice, peace and the common good.
>
> Where injustice, conflict, domination, and exploitation exist, we as individuals, as a community of believers and citizens of South Africa, are compelled to expose, resist and reject those practices.

> We will continue to expose, resist and reject the practice and ideology of Apartheid, or any other oppressive system that denies the inviolable human rights of persons as it may be applied to, or affects us as individuals, as a community of believers or within society as a whole (Black 1991:43).

Generally speaking, the Baptist voice comes strongly through the Baptist Union, which is predominantly white. The independent Baptists are not associational or connectional in such a way that their prophetic voice can be collectively heard. There are, however, some sporadic Baptist voices that are audibly noticed in calling for a communal lifestyle that can demonstrate that indeed in Christ 'we are one'.

The divisive formations among the Baptists and the classical Pentecostals were really artificial and subliminal. The Pentecostal churches marred their witnesses for Christ by following after NGK in a manner that they still fail to justify today. For instance, Allie E. Dubb, speaking of the Assemblies of God, says:

> In South Africa today, the Assemblies of God is a loose, non-hierarchical association of independent ministers and local groups rather than an ecclesiastical body in an administrative and legislative sense. The advantages of this association are the provision of a corporate identity for its constituents vis-à-vis the outside world, and of the means for the united and co-operative action. Its corporateness is expressed in the existence of a Biennial Conference, a General Executive, Regional Advisory Committees and various affiliated institutions (2001:14).

This can be taken further and be analysed differently, depending on where one stands; that the Assemblies of God is a racially divided church. The AOG did not escape the ravages of apartheid. This non-segregated missionary church developed into separate sections for black and white members of the community. The emphasis of 'association' in Dubb's quotation above is unfortunately based on the racial lines. A leader of the AOG once said that AOG is a denomination based on the tri-cameral system that then president

P.W. Botha introduced in the early eighties; whereby the legislature in Cape Town composed of three chambers for racial groups: Whites, coloureds, and Indians. There is a talk that the structure is three circles inside one circle. There is also a metaphor of the AOG as a three-legged pot. This is how the AOG superficially looks like. Allan Anderson also highlights this when he writes:

> In a racially divided society, this structure was construed as lending support to such division, and this was the main criticism of the AOG by its younger black leaders at the time. One told me that he and many other AOG leaders were 'definitely against' the group system. One of the main reasons was not that the AOG actually had an apartheid system but that this was what it appeared to be to outsiders. It is thought that the divided structure would remain until new and more enlightened leaders arose to change it (2000:106).

John Bond is one of the leaders in the AOG who wields an enormous apostolic power. One cannot write AOG history in South Africa without making any reference to him. He has always promoted communion within the AOG. The following statement was released at the General Conference in Mmabatho in September 1989:

> Our churches are open to all who wish to worship God through our Lord Jesus Christ, regardless of race, colour, or political sentiments. We strongly affirm that the only Christian stance is to recognize people as people (1994:275).

One fact to note, however, is that the AOG was never an Afrikaans church and it always had an open membership of any person of any colour. The good news is that many schisms that were caused by apartheid pressures have, or are in the process of reconciliation by uniting to forge their witness for the gospel in the new South Africa. Peter Watt says: 'There are so many idiosyncrasies, differing styles of leadership and administration among the groups that an engineered union may prove destructive' (1992:148).

This calls for boldness and openness towards the reality of the dawn of the new era upon all of us in South Africa.

The Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) is the largest Pentecostal denomination in South Africa. It bears the brunt of the burden of the racism that split and shook Pentecostal communion ecclesiology in South Africa. Anderson paints this painful picture:

> The Pentecostal mission churches in South Africa have been victims of their own prejudices and captives of the apartheid system that ruled South Africa until 1994. Almost from their inception, white Pentecostals favoured segregation. This was particularly true in the Apostolic Faith Mission, the largest of these churches and an illuminating example of the general trend throughout Pentecostal mission churches (2000:85).

Church history shows how one of the AFMs early morning stars, John G. Lake suffered some criticisms and setbacks for running racially integrated church services and conferences. From as early as 1908, racial segregation became a norm. Black people were treated differently when it came to the sacraments such as baptism, and separate racial conferences were instituted. It seemed that when the NGK sneezed, the AFM caught a cold. On 7 July 1917, the executive council of the AFM adopted a resolution that clearly demonstrates the prevailing racial prejudices:

> [We] do not teach or encourage social equality between Whites and Natives. We recognise that God is no respecter of persons, but that in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to Him. We therefore preach the Gospel equally to all peoples, making no distinctions. We wish it to be generally known that our white, Coloured and Native peoples have their separate places of worship, where the Sacraments are administered to them (Anderson 2000:85-86).

This resolution was extended and maybe clarified by the white General Conference in April 1944. The following resolutions taken at the conference clearly demonstrated the AFMs support of the emerging apartheid structures of the National Party that ascended South African *realpolitik* in 1948:

1) Race Relations: The mission stands for segregation. The fact that the Native, Indian and Coloured is saved does not render him European.

3) Native education: The mission stands for lower education but is definitely against a higher education (Anderson 2000:86).

The good news is that in 1990, the AFM, after going through the *genesis* experience, formalised itself into a composite church, led by a once regarded rebel Dr Frank Chikane. Communion of the saints formalised into the unity that Christ prayed for in John 17. There was a time of pleading for forgiveness and reconciliation. Under the dynamic spiritual leadership of Dr Isak Burger, the AFM revolutionised itself into the journey of becoming an inclusive South African Church.

The Full Gospel Church of God (FGC) is one of the classical Pentecostal churches in South Africa. It is recorded elsewhere that this is the largest Pentecostal church among the South African Indians. From as early as the fifties, the FGC in the footsteps of the AFM, entrenched racism whereby 'the whites were the exclusive decision-making legislative body and had the sole right to change the constitution" (Anderson 2000:102).

From 1975, attempts of reforming the church towards unity worked against the ideal. The fundamental problem after forming the Ordained Ministers Council (OMC) was the inferior theological education the black ministers received. This served as an exclusive factor. The three black sections united on 18-19 May 1990 to form one united and integrated church. The journey towards integration was not smooth sailing. Hope came to the horizon in 1997 when the two associations formed a federal system with separate moderaters and executive councils, and, at the local level, separate regions and districts (Anderson 2000:104).

As mentioned earlier, the evangelicals and the Pentecostals were conspicuous by their silence when South Africa experienced the baptism of fire from 1910

to the mid-1980s. This was probably due to their message of 'conversion' that was seen as the solution to the structural injustices and the depravity of human nature. Perhaps due to the pacifist approach to the degrading conditions of the marginalised and the non-franchised sections of the South African society! Maybe this silence was due to alignment with the government's equation of anti-apartheid with communism, so they did not want to be regarded as communists by those in higher political echelons. However, it may not be a surprise that some of them seared their consciences due to a poor quality or non-existence of theological education regarding Christ or *ecclesia incarnate*. This does not exclude the role played by a few of their ecclesiastical leaders who stood the ground and took the public prophetic stance. On this matter, Walshe informs that:

> [E]vangelicals and Pentecostals were likewise divided. Although prophetic dissidents emerged from within each cluster of churches, neither offered a critique of the established political order, and both condemned liberation theology (Walshe 1997:389).

The Pentecostal messages of racial superiority, passiveness, conversion equalling liberation, etc., especially with references to the likes of Nicholas Bhengu, Frank Chikane and others, are expanded on by Allan Anderson and Gerald Pillay, in a chapter entitled 'The Segregated Spirit: The Pentecostals' in Elphick and Davenport's book *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History,* (Anderson & Pillay 1997:227-241). Clark and Lederle continue in this vein:

> [I]ndividual members and pastors may take their own personal stand, and when the political impact of Pentecost is being evaluated it is often this individual relationship with society which must be taken into consideration, in view of the silence from official church quarters (1989:85).

A legitimate conclusion can be reached that despite sitting on the fence, most of the English churches in South Africa played a certain role in forging communion and in unity, or as individuals played some prophetic role.

Raymond Simangaliso Kumalo from the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal mentions the suffering that some prophetic voices experienced:

> Christianity has benefited from the legacy of these individuals who played a key role against the system of apartheid, even though they were actually doing this against the will of their churches. Some, like Desmond Tutu, were hated by members of their own church for their anti-apartheid activities. Others, like Frank Chikane, were even ostracized and dismissed from their churches. This shows that it was not necessarily the church as a whole that fought the system of oppression, but rather some outstanding individuals (2014:226).

At the end of everything, the Pentecostal ecclesiology can be basically captured as,

> the community of the saved; it is a group of people who are individually empowered by the Holy Spirit for service within the community and in external witness; and it is a commissioned community (Clark & Lederle et al. 1989:67).

This ecclesiology is expounded by some notable Pentecostal leaders such as Hollenweger (1977:424). The Pentecostal authors agree that the church is where believers are and with Christ in their midst, there is the charismatic manifestation of the power of the Spirit.

Indeed, an injury to one is an injury to all. The influence of the NGK's racial policies on the South African English and Indigenous churches was not without repercussions. An example of this was in the area of education within some English churches' institutions. The Bantu Education Act (No. 47 of 1953) authored by Dr H.F. Verwoerd (then minister of native affairs) was intended to separate black South Africans from the main, comparatively well-resourced education system for white learners. This led to some reputable institutions being shut down or taken over by the apartheid regime. Some of the institutions that went to the state are the London Missionary Society's Tiger Kloof (Vryburg), the Lutherans' Bethel (Lichtenburg and Middleburg),

the Methodists' Fort Hare. This was a very painful era, not only for education in South Africa but for the church that to a large extent lost its ecclesiastical influence into the education that would develop future leaders. Joy Brain's chapter, 'Moving from the Margins to the Mainstream: The Roman Catholic Church' in Elphick and Davenport's book, *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History* gives a broader picture of the impact of this 1953 Act:

> Under the 1953 Act, the subsidy was to be withdrawn over a four-year period. In addition, all schools were to register with government departments, and only pupils belonging to the denomination that controlled each school could be enrolled there (1997:204).

Any socio-analyst of ecclesiastical culture in South Africa cannot be blamed for contending that the Pentecostals supported the regime's policies of aggression and oppression of the marginalised majority of black people in South Africa. This aligns with Anderson's assertion:

> Pentecostals in South Africa, like many other Evangelicals, have been charged with supporting the 'status quo' as far as socio-political issues are concerned, and there is justification in this charge (2000:89).

The biblical principle of *homothymadon* and the theological notion of *communion ecclesiology* suffered enormously in the compromising hands of the Apostolic Faith Mission's racial divisions, the Full Gospel Church of God's associations, and the Assemblies of God's group's systems. The fact that will remain a historical mark in the consciences of the generations to come is that the Pentecostals failed to address the urgent and glaringly obvious needs of South Africa during the years of oppression. They deliberately and systematically disengaged and played a passive role while the house (South Africa) was burning. Thomas (2002: xxv) is accurate when he states that 'the largest of the Pentecostal churches, was inevitably giving moral support to apartheid.' The NGK fuelled the fire by promoting and justifying the racially biased policies. The English churches in their various formations sat on the fence and imbibed the NGK proposals.

Evangelicals are coming back to their senses. They are moving away from the traditional view of emphasising conversion, marginalising the importance of justice and communion of the saints as reflected by the canonical rubrics of *koinonia, ecumene, ekklesia, and homothymadon.* In his book *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World* Robert Webber (2002) categorises evangelicals into three groups:

- Traditional evangelicals (1950-1975)
- Pragmatic evangelicals (1975-2000)
- Younger evangelicals (2000-)

The 'traditional evangelicals' are enculturated in modernity. They maintain the distinctiveness of twentieth-century fundamentalists and see Christianity as a rational worldview, grounded in propositional truth. Their ecclesiastical understanding was couched in the stability of the society or society. The advent of postmodernity was regarded as a threat to this stability. The security of the familiar was the option and change had to be resisted.

The subsequent generation of these traditionalists, called 'pragmatic evangelicals', experienced a revolution against the past and embraced the slogan: 'newer is truer and bigger is better.' The influence of the Church Growth movement of the time led to evangelical reforms in church practices that promoted seeker-oriented services, contemporary worship styles and the usage of business principles in church growth and polity. These evangelicals were, however, still wrapped in the same theology and entrenched in a modern scientific worldview. James Hopewell describes them as those who

> saw God's salvation occurring in individual souls and thus sought reliable formulas for gathering large numbers of persons into congregations. For dependable, sophisticated techniques they turned to organization science (1987:25).

Pragmatic evangelicals distinguish themselves from the rationalists by a historical, innovative approach to ministry, which often views Christianity as a therapy to answer people's needs. They are experts in generation-specific ministries and pride themselves on extreme cultural sensitivity, attempting to

offer their seeking generation an accessible, experiential and personal faith. Their predecessors' criticism is that these pragmatics are driven by consumer culture, whereby, instead of changing the culture, they are driven by it. What can be appreciated from these evangelicals is their emphasis on the church as the community, the company of the redeemed mingled, though not the same, with the unconverted. Like the children of Israel who left Egypt with the 'mixed multitudes' so is the church.

The 'younger evangelicals' are those who shifted into the twenty-first-century culture. These are committed to constructing biblically-rooted, historically-informed, and culturally-aware witnesses for Christ. They hold the postmodern worldview, believing that the road to the future runs through the past. They view Christianity as a community of faith and prefer smaller and intercultural churches. They lean towards team ministry and decentralised leadership and very concerned with the plight of the poor. The young evangelical regards the church as a home, a family, and a shelter from mishaps of life. For her, the church is without or beyond walls. He prefers the church that is in the community incarnating Christ's love to human plight. They take risks for God's kingdom and are initiative takers.

At the end of the day, evangelicals are a powerful force to reckon with. Some of them may not be the prototype of the modern South Africa's church, however, 'their liminal features serve as helpful catalysts for contemplating issues of great significance for the future of the Church' (Labanow 2009:126).

They are a capsule or pocket that contains the germ of future social development and of societal change. They contain a seed of what is to come. They are the eschatological hope.

The Old Testament prophetic voice: 'For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?' (Esth. 4:14) is the caution that all branches of Christianity in South Africa should have taken note of. This is the language of

strong faith. The Europeans who touched the soil of the most southern part of Africa were raised and brought here for honour in this place.

The NGK, in particular, missed the boat. They coiled into the laager and failed to see the justice of God in the mission fields of Africa. The isolation from the ecumenical formations nationally and internationally could have conscientised them of the theological mandate of living as a communion ecclesiology in the world. It could have been a huge inspiration if the NGK was ecumenically involved, when in 2010, there was a historic union of two Reformed bodies of churches – the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Reformed Ecumenical Council. This was a merging into one body that can send the message to the world: That they may all be one (Kirkpatrick 2010). Isolation is never power, but unity has always been strength (*Isolasie is nie krag nie, maar eendrag maak mag*). Instead of following the Huguenot's example of developing a theology and praxis of resistance to an unjust state; they took the decisive step of justifying the historical situation of political tyranny (De Gruchy 1991:237). Everything went well for them. The national leaders of the volk accepted and respected them. The Dutch Reformed Church indeed rode high on a crest of popular acclaim – all in the name of God! They gained a special seat in the high echelon of the regime and their advice was treated as divine and irrevocable. They were determined to preserve Abraham Kuyper's neo- Calvinistic legacy by following what Botman refers to as 'the institutionalization of the value of separateness, thus excluding other races from "being with" the Dutch Reformed community' (2000:351).

They missed the train though waiting on the right platform (good Calvinistic theology!). They should have believed that Christ wants to create 'a people', not merely isolated individuals who believe in him.

By copying or emulating the structures and the church governance of NGK, some English churches, and other foreign missions neglected their duty in the prophetic role of justice and the purity of the gospel. Their pacifist approach was exactly what Esther was going to do, if not for Mordecai's instructions into her ears. Sitting on the fence while the other side was on fire is not a reputable

testimony for the person, works, and teachings of Jesus Christ. Indeed, *matlo go ša mabapi* – if my neighbour's house is on fire, I am not immune. My house may be reached or affected by that fire. Of course, another Setswana proverb in relation to this is that *go ša baori* (Fire burns those who sit around it). No one can stoke the fire without feeling the heat. Indifference in spiritual matters is no different from non-participation or passiveness. Theological mandate is the incarnation of *ecclesia* in context. Christ must be in context if theology is to be in context. The price was paid for this indifference and continues to be paid.

The Evangelicals *eschatologically* carry the brunt of their non-prophetic role at a time when the world (South African society) needed them most. As Johann Metz avers:

> [I]n its essence Christianity is not a spirituality secluded from the world and its history. It does not teach, if I may say so, mysticism with eyes closed, but rather, a mysticism with eyes open (1993:210).

Christ and the gospel are weaved, intertwined, or connected to the realities of the world in which *ecclesia* finds itself. There is a call for repentance from this indifference. South Africa is a beautiful country with a history blended with bitterness and sweetness. Ours is a nation that accepts the meanest crumbs of comfort that can be thrown back to us, and propel us forward to the life of togetherness that is so clearly expounded in the pages of *sacred scriptura.* The time has arrived for:

> Black and White Christians to give the fullest expression to what it means to be members of one church – sharing one another's burdens and rejoicing in one another's successes. This will take time, but the challenge must not be avoided (Villa-Vicencio 1995:31).

There is no animosity or hatred inter-racially as some people suspect. South Africa has not and will not revolve around Mandela, but around the cultural steepness of African *ubuntu* in essence. Many white South Africans and some people elsewhere regarded Mandela as their protector, while black people regarded him as their liberator. When South Africa was mourning the passing on of this icon, I received unceasing calls from friends abroad

expressing their concerns for the looming civil war. To their surprise, South Africa demonstrated *ubuntu* par excellence – reconciliation, forgiveness, and peaceful co-existence. The message of Christ is strong in this nation, though many times disregarded or marginalised when ungodly laws and policies are enacted. Anthony Egan, in a chapter titled 'Kingdom Deferred: The Churches in South Africa, 1994-1996' in the 2007 edition of *The State of The Nation*, sensitises us that:

> Whatever the religious conviction of its members the government pursued a modern liberal agenda informed by what it saw were the best social policies available, often from western states. Conservative Christians were distressed to see liberalisation of abortion policy, greater tolerance of pornography, legalisation of homosexuality, the secularisation of state education and the end to Christian civil religious hegemony in public events (2007:450).

Fortunately, to some extent, though not satisfactorily, the church in South Africa was well prepared for the post-apartheid era. All the historical events that sought to destroy the expressive communion have to be acknowledged. The gates of hell failed to annihilate the church that was purchased by the blood of Christ. Herman Holtzhausen reminds us that:

> Tutu's *ubuntu* became of significance to all of us when in 1995 the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act promulgated that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, headed by Tutu, will focus on confession and forgiveness. His understanding that *ubuntu* can only come to actualisation through forgiveness set the tone for the post-apartheid years. Perpetrators, in particular, the white church in general and everyone standing apathetic to our apartheid past were forgiven – with the hope of reconciliation and justice bringing us real peace and security (2015:4).

This notion will be taken further in the next chapter, as reconciliation is theologically a pastoral task. The church in the post-apartheid era has embarked on a new journey towards reconciliation through restorative justice. It is unfortunate that the South African church seems to feel that she

has arrived in the Promised Land and, therefore, has no need for a prophetic role. The task is bigger than ever before. There are many challenges on the journey to the Promised Land. There are giants in our country that the church needs to face, challenge and even destroy, such as HIV and Aids, corruption, unemployment, xenophobia and homophobia. The South African church must show that God is and will be at work in the wreckage and rubble created by colonialism and apartheid. God can sovereignly use these disasters to create a new people of God, *ecclesia in communion*. Whether through the denial of the authority of the scriptures or despair at the lack of socio-cultural cohesion, South Africans nearly lost their identity as *a people of God*. But they didn't. God's people emerged from the catastrophic centuries robust and whole, since God will never leave himself without a witness (Acts 14:17).

6.3 African Independent churches: An audible but lost voice in chaos

The term, 'African Independent churches' has evolved in recent times. From African Independent churches to African Instituted churches to African Indigenous churches, then African Initiated churches – all bearing the descriptor, AIC. This acronym will be used from here to designate these churches. These churches are an ecclesiastical power to reckon with. They are not uniquely South African but are found all over the African continent and have been adequately documented in the southern and western regions of Africa. Common and distinctive among them is that they were all established by an African initiative rather than by foreign missionary agents. Their ecclesiology is blurry as they are diverse and, therefore, difficult to analyse, categorise or classify. They are proud that they are pioneered and led by Africans. One of the hallmarks of their systematic theology is what is known as 'syncretism'. This means they combine indigenous African beliefs or cultural norms into their modes of worship, theology and practice. They intertwine Christianity and African culture.

Whatever the reason for their existence, they came into being as an effort to escape from the white control (political), or as a process of schism and

synthesis from the traditional Protestant faith (historical) and an attempt to accommodate the Christian belief within an African worldview (cultural). Whether there are political, historical or cultural reasons for their existence, fundamentally these churches are African-initiated and led. The symbiosis between the oppressive system of the state and state religion must have posed a serious challenge to African leaders who led this phenomenal secession.

In the South African context, this ecclesiastical phenomenon can be divided into Ethiopian, Messianic, Zionist, Apostolic, and charismatic. **The Ethiopian churches** retain the Christian dogma of their mother churches from which they seceded. They are Protestant in theology as noted by Stephen Hayes: '[They] have displayed less overt theological innovation. They have generally maintained the theology and ecclesiology of their parent bodies, and sought to conserve them' (2003:137-138).

> This truth is further expressed by Sundkler who writes: '[T]hey retained the liturgy, hymn-book and catechism of the particular European church that they had left behind, but emphasized African leadership' (1976:16).

Their point of departure is that their church movement should be under the control of the black people. The typical examples in this category are the Ethiopian Church, the Methodist Church of Africa (formerly the Bantu Methodist Church, nicknamed 'Donkey Church'), the Presbyterian Church of Africa (formerly the Bantu Presbyterian Church), and the Zulu Congregational Church.

The tempo of the emergence of these churches increased before and after the First World War, when:

> [T]he African Church became the sounding-board for social and political aspirations expressed in an 'Ethiopian' myth. The noble name of 'Ethiopia' symbolised the whole of Africa, a free Black Africa, liberated from colonial overlordship, and to be led by the Africans themselves (Sundkler 1976:15).

The Zionist churches, such as Zion Christian Church (ZCC), trace their roots to the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion, founded by John Alexander Dowie with its headquarters in Zion City near Chicago in the USA. The ZCC is the largest of the Zionist churches in southern Africa with its headquarters in Moria outside the city of Polokwane in the Limpopo Province, South Africa. To a certain degree, the ZCC can be classified as a Messianic church because of the sanctity of its hereditary leadership since its founder, Engenas Lekganyane. Generally, these churches will always have the name 'Zion'. Bengt Sundkler confirms this when he writes:

> *Zion* forms one large group, or family, of churches in the prolific world of 'African Independent Churches.' In a South Africa dominated by white caste and white colour, some of the African leaders felt that they could not stand this dominance any longer. They decided to strike out on their own and form their very own religious organizations, apart from the European-led mission churches (1976:15).

The Zionist groups are numerous and meet in big or small communions in leaving rooms, school classrooms, along the city freeways, and rarely in buildings of their own. They are charismatic in worship and strongly believe in Divine healing and Prophecy. Conservatively speaking, the Zionists (*aMaZioni*) are predominantly found among the Nguni (Zulus, Swazis and Xhosas) people. Their regalia used to be signified by white and green colours and a wooden stick. Their music is always dreary with slow dance motions. This has changed a lot, of course, due to acculturation processes in South Africa.

The Messianic groups, apart from ZCC, are numerous. One can think of the popularly known Isaiah Shembe Church, a smaller faction of the Nazareth Baptist Church (*iBandla laManazaretha*) that was established in 1911. They can be seen on Saturdays with their white paraphernalia, always worshipping kneeling down by some river or stream facing the east. They have a huge following, composed mostly of the Zulu people since the KwaZulu-Natal province was its birthplace. Since the death of its founder Isaiah Shembe in 1935, the church has been going through legal battles at courts trying to determine the legitimate leader and the cultic centre (*Ekuphakameni*). It is

a Messianic group that runs its affairs by the extra-biblical revelations of a charismatic pioneer. As part of their confession, they believe in the saints (holy ones) as 'a sanctified congregation of baptized persons … all those who passed away and who are accepted as holy ones … This holy congregation is constituted of elected ones' (Oosthuizen 1976:77-78).

There is also the International Pentecost Church (IPC) founded by Rev. Frederick S. Modise in Meadowlands, Soweto, around 1962. Its headquarters are in Zuurbekom – south-west of Soweto. According to Allan Anderson:

> The headquarters, which was opened by President F.W. de Klerk on 5 May 1991, has multimillion rands worth of buildings, an auditorium seating 20 000 and several other buildings including a well-equipped restaurant to feed the thousands who come in buses and combis every weekend to be healed by Father Modise (1992:109).

Like Shembe, Modise is regarded by his followers as a living messiah, the Christ incarnate, who is the Way to God or eternal life. Modise is addressed as 'Father' by his people and is regarded with high esteem. To elaborate on the dogma this group follows demands another book. There is no systematic theology or confessional creed followed except the *dipaki* (witnesses), which must be recited secretly by the devotees whenever they are sick or in trouble.

The Apostolic groups are the half siblings of the modern Pentecostal churches in South Africa. Their names always carry Apostolic, Apostle, or even Saint _____. Though not formalised, their theology centres around divine healing, baptism by immersion, prophecy (which is always extra-biblical in nature) and ancestral veneration. Like the ZCC, they were born out of the early Pentecostal movement. Their forebear is the St Johns Apostolic Faith Mission led by Mrs Christina Nku. The groups are common among the Sotho people. Their predominant colours are blue and white, and they traditionally carry an iron sceptre. Note the dominance of these colours (blue and white) in corporate images of Assemblies of God and Apostolic Faith Mission, in particular. Their worship is characterised by drum-beating and high-speed circular dance movements interjected by *glossolalia* utterances. Like many other AICs, they

are diverse and suffer due to the lack of clear polity. This is evidenced especially after the death of the pioneer or a founder.

The charismatics are the new kids on the block. These are the groups that have no connection with either classical Pentecostal churches or any Protestant formations. These formations attract the urban yuppies due to a predilection for the use of English and Western Gospel music and proclivity towards television evangelists' styles. They have no clear theological dogma. The local church is built around the charismatic leader who may manifest some form of a charismatic gift, especially a gift of healing, deliverance, prophecy, etc. Their emphasis in *kerygma* is health and wealth. There is no clear polity and some employ business principles to structure and govern the church. They are legitimately evangelical and Pentecostal, but with a very thin ecclesiology to be documented or distinctly classified.

Generally speaking, the AIC, like many of the evangelical groups, place their spiritual agenda ahead of earthly politics. The lack of structured ecclesiology makes the movement eclectic. The prophetic voice denouncing the evil of apartheid is scanty within the AIC. However, they also suffered like anybody else under the regime. They kept quiet due to their emphasis of 'peace' that predominates their conversations and salutations. The ZCC people are known to salute by saying *Khotso* or *Khotsong* (Peace to you). The Zionists and the Apostolics have in their *kerygma* the interjections of *Khotso e be le lona* (Peace unto you) or *ukuthula ebandleni* (Peace in the church!), or *ukuthula kube nawe/kagiso e nne le wena* (peace unto you), or even *khotso baratuoa* (peace beloved).

These churches have little church organisation. They often face serious problems when the founder dies (Olowola 1998:312). As was mentioned previously, the ZCC is one group that survived schisms due to hereditary leadership, though after Engenas' death in 1948, 'a leadership crisis between his sons Edward and Joseph ensued, resulting in the ZCC (star) and the St. Engenas ZCC (dove) churches led respectively by these two brothers' (Anderson 1992:44).

As mentioned above, the lack of polity normally leads to legal battles and church splits after the death of the charismatic pioneer. This can be cited in relation to the Shembe group, Modise's IPC, Christina Nku's St Johns Apostolic Faith Mission, and others.

One of the authorities on the AIC and what they stand for is Marthinus Daneel, who for more than forty years studied and served the Zimbabwean AICs. As a leading academic in the AIC, he has developed a narrative style of theologising, which has enhanced and given us a greater understanding of this communion phenomenon. He claims to have no hesitation in classifying the AICs of southern Africa as Christian churches. The following are the grounds for his attestation:

- The AICs, by and large, consider themselves churches of Jesus Christ. On account of their biblically based faith, they claim membership equal to that of all other denominations known to them, in the universal church.
- They recognise the Bible as the Word of God and therefore as normative for all of church life. In some respects, AIC biblical interpretation can be qualified as fragmented, literal, and/or fundamentalist, often as a result of limited or non-existent theological training opportunities for AIC leaders, but the inspirational, didactic, and ethical impact of Scriptures are unmistakable.
- The AICs generally believe in the triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The salvific work of Christ is understood holistically in the African context and is proclaimed/enacted as good news in a manner that qualifies the AICs essentially as missionary institutions.
- All the churches concerned celebrate the sacraments of baptism and holy communion.
- The AICs develop Bible-oriented ethical codes for Christian living, which also reflect contextualised traditional mores and customs. Church discipline is implemented at various congregational committee and church council levels.

- In the creation of communities that can be characterised as 'havens of belonging', the AICs cater to the existential needs of their members in a manner that convincingly and concretely portrays the love and service of an incarnate Christ (2007:9-10).

Any systematic theologian, church historian, or a missiologist will agree with the above points with some cautions and reservations. These traditions are littered with messianic tendencies where the pioneer is regarded as a mediator between God and followers of the pioneer. So, Christology is at stake here. Most of the AICs embrace extra-biblical revelations as authoritative messages from God, though most of these messages are personal, biased and circumstantial. So bibliology and the doctrine of revelation are at risk. All other facts given above can broadly be true, especially the last one, which is the central theme of this book.

The ecclesiology of the AIC is based on the felt needs. Relationships, not programmes are primarily aimed at connecting with each other. Mwambazambi avers that Africans are attracted to these churches because 'these churches are believed to provide biblical answers for this 'worldly needs' like sickness, poverty, hunger, oppression, unemployment, loneliness, evil spirits and sorcery' (2011:3).

Since the intervention is believed to be by the Spirit, through his gifts, there is a strong belief among the Africans that these gifts 'provide for the universal need for solutions to life's felt problems' (Anderson 1994:57). In fact, if there is a Christian group that excels in pastoral care, it is the AIC. Van Wyk (cited in Lukhaimane 1980:49) observes of the ZCC: 'They are touching some real needs of their people and are achieving real results in financial strength, moral character and missionary expansion'.

To the AIC, pastoral care is when the shepherd (pastor, bishop, evangelist, etc.) cares for the felt needs of the sheep, especially in times of crises, such as sickness and bereavement, but also in times of milestones and celebrations. This also applies when the sheep (congregants) take care of the shepherd. The AIC pastor's residence is a hub and convergence of the sheep to come and do

some domestic chores for the shepherd. This may be a daily routine or regular practice. In their minds, one cannot go to the shepherd's residence empty-handed. They come to offer the service, but they also bring along a token that may be a live chicken, sheep, cash, groceries or agricultural products. They demonstrate *ubuntu* of caring, not just to be cared for. Anderson (1992:101) asserts that 'ZCC members are taught how to give to the church; and it is one of the strongest self-supporting indigenous churches in the country.'

Their prophetic role in the decadent politics of apartheid opens a gap for scrutiny. Like many of the AICs, the ZCC suffered abuse in the hands of politicians due to the theological shallowness or ignorance. What can be appreciated of them is Retief Müller's observation:

> [T]he ZCC form transcends the older boundaries of ethno-linguistic affiliation by incorporating a wider spectrum of people, making it at once contextually significant in multicultural twentieth- century – and contemporary South Africa (2011:21).

The crux here is that communion ecclesiology in the AICs is very much symmetrical to *ubuntu* – and very much the Old Testament communal lifestyle. For the AIC, community is not a luxury but a necessity for life. Africans are gregarious by social interaction. They are a community of the saved (Dubb 2001), gathering together for mutual support – not only in spiritual matters but in all spheres of life. This sentiment is raised by O'Donovan:

> The local church is the community where we can be accepted regardless of racial, social , or ethnic background because we are all equally forgiven sinners before God. The local church is the community where people are obligated to support and care for each other because they are brothers and sisters in Christ (1996:155).

This explains the impact of African social structure on the understanding of the church. An African regards the extended family members and clan community as a family. It is in this kind of family where one feels at home, feels accepted and understood. The distant cousins are called brothers or sisters,

hence closeness and affection overflow. It is where one can run for support or help in times of trouble or need.

Communion ecclesiology in the AIC is strengthened by the *letsema* concept. African Christians build their own churches – men and women form a labour force to put up the structure. They are there for each other to give emotional support in times of grief, bereavement, or sorrow. They are always available to celebrate when one of the members has achieved (graduations, thanksgiving for completing a project, etc.), or has reached a particular milestone (birthday, wedding, etc.). The AIC, with roots in African philosophy of life, enhances mutuality and fellowship. These churches may fail prophetically to address socio-political issues but are parochially dynamic in giving each other support. *Koinonia* is real and experienced among the AIC more than in traditional mainline Christianity.

Ecclesiologically, AIC's weaknesses can be evaluated by basing their lack of community around a common purpose. This includes their charismatic counterparts. This is evidenced , for example, by the issue of authority. Because of the lack of united community around a common purpose, there is no clear understanding of and respect for the authority structure. There is a thin line between the *realpolitik* and *vox populi* in their structures. On many occasions, the leadership is irresponsible in leading the community in such a way as to uphold and advance the common purpose. This explains the legal wars that usually ensue after the death of the pioneer of the community.

Another problem is that of the lack of common creed. A 'common creed' is a shared understanding of the beliefs and practices that guide the community (Frazee 2001:59). There is no common confession of faith among the AIC and the charismatics. The lack of creed creates a lack of liturgy. Diversity among these confessions is observable. What unites them is experience, not confession. This experience does not create a culture of individualism as can be expected. The creed is realised not confessed, so experience plays a pivotal role in expressing one's faith.

There is also a problem of traditions. It is difficult to prescribe the traditional dictates or commonalities of AIC and the charismatics. They have no unifying or common symbols or festivals or any activity that reinforce their beliefs, values, practices, virtues and/or purposes of a community. In some cases, the symbols and practices overlap, but these are not universal enough to prescribe their culture or confessional creeds. There is, however, an attempt to rediscover communion by revitalising some old traditions that impart purposes, values and beliefs in their thoughts. These are observable by the manner they enter theological academies to be equipped for ministry. They garner for polity practices and structures to lead and advance the purposes of their communities.

One can also consider the lack of standards. These are the written or unwritten guidelines that define what is expected of the followers or low-level leaders in the church. Individualism encroaches the culture to overlook the issues or standards of marriage, leadership, etc. In other words, there are no countercultural practices to maintain and sustain the community. If a Zionist lady marries a Seventh Day Adventist man, it is always expected that the woman will automatically embrace and join her husband's faith.

What about a common mission? Many of these churches do not have any clearly defined mission that brings them together into a community. They possess no distinct set of beliefs and practices that unify them on a wider scale. The Lukan principle of: 'They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayer… All the believers were together and had everything in common' (Acts 2:42 and 44) engrained in them a common mission. Their secret was their togetherness enhanced by a common purpose. They did all these together. They were all on the same page; they had a common purpose. It was an authentic community, a way of life together, the place where the Christian life is lived out; where a band of people put their faith into action. This is lacking in AIC and charismatic communities. They do it in a slimmer scale with no ecumenical outlook or output. Communion ecclesiology is community serving together to transform lives.

In some instances, the AIC, like their evangelical counterparts emphasise the tithing of one's income. In South Africa, many mainline denominations do not practice this tithing principle. They introduced a ticketing system that is paid either quarterly or annually. There is no doubt this has or is killing the South African system. The regularity or faithfulness to keeping these payments in some places is equated with spirituality. It qualifies someone for a decent Christian funeral or wedding. Conversely, the AIC do not run it this way. Members give out of joy with no limits.

The journey is still going on. Reconciliation and restoration are not yet complete. These principles are eschatological in nature. In agreement with Anderson, who declares:

> [T]he journey back from an abnormal to a normal society in South Africa will probably take longer than any imagine, despite the remarkable transition to political democracy and the towering inspiration to reconciliation of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela (2000:97).

Reflections on the past must propel the church to move forward, not to sit and lick wounds of despair. Like the Peace churches (Mennonites) after the Second World War, the churches should come together,

> in a community of witness as a result of external challenge, from both church and state. The development of this community meant both intention and extension, a reflection on their own identity and on their common mission (Peachey 1976:248).

Jesus is calling his church to unity and communion that reflects *koinonia*. Days and eras of suspicion and reservations of each other are gone. All Christian churches of different traditions and confessions need to converge into the trinitarian communion, and all reservations set aside. Cecil Robeck, in a chapter in the 2010 book edited by Anderson, Bergunder, Droogers & Van der Laan, *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods,* calls for ecumenical journey of the Pentecostals and charismatics. His call appeals to all of us:

> Calls for unity have been confused with compromise. Calls for agreement have been described as demanding mindless conformity. Calls for greater cooperation have been portrayed as devaluing the integrity of local congregations and, in some cases, of individual leaders. And calls for surrender to a common ideal have been spun in ways that that make that surrender sound like the quenching of the Holy Spirit (2010:286-287).

History can bear out that not all the Christian churches, including the Afrikaner churches and the English churches, remained trapped in the *laager* (apartheid). In her 2009 book, *Religion and Conflict Resolution: Christianity and South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Megan Shore contends that:

> There were elements within each of these traditions escaped the trap. Nor did all Christian churches, in their entirety, contribute to the implementation of apartheid policies. In fact, there were voices of protest from within Christianity against colonisation and the unofficial

Chapter 7

The forgotten golden nuggets

Coloureds and Indians

Since Christ is entirely present in every congregation of worship, every congregation of worship held by the local community is in the fullest sense God's ecclesia, Christ's body. The individual local community is of course not simply the ecclesia, the body of Christ, since there are other communities which are just as much God's ecclesia and Christ's body. But each is truly God's ecclesia and Christ's body because the Lord is present in each, truly, wholly and undivided (Küng 1968:235-236).

7.1 The coloured people: A historical overview

The arrival of the Dutch settlers in the mid-seventeenth century changed the demographics of the southern tip of the African continent. The indigenous Khoisan people of the Cape mixed with the Europeans and started the road to extinction. The European movement towards the eastern and northern frontiers brought them into contact with the Bantu population groups. During that time, racial intermarriages became a usual phenomenon. This led to the advent of the population group known in South Africa as 'coloureds'. The term *kleurling* (coloured) did not emerge until the nineteenth century (Armstrong 1987:84). These people adopted the European culture and religion extensively, though holding to some indigenous cultural traits. Their number grew fast in the Cape and the *platteland* (rural) areas that emerged through the *Voortrekkers* settlements in the interior.

Like many South African population groups, the coloured people suffered an evolutionary stigma of reference. They were called all sorts of names: Hottentots, Basters (bastards), Griquas, Free Blacks, etc. They surfaced as the products of extramarital relations between Europeans and members of the black population and were denied categorisation as Europeans. Elphick and Shell examine these extramarital unions in the seventeenth and eighteenth century in their chapter in Elphick and Giliomee's book: *The shaping of South African Society 1652-1820*. They write:

> Patterns of miscegenation and intermarriage seem to have varied markedly from region to region. In Cape Town, the rate of European – black concubinage was higher than in the settled agricultural regions, mainly because of the many Company bachelors and sailors on the outward-or-homeward-bound fleets. In addition, there were more interracial marriages in the port than elsewhere in the colony. In the cultivating regions of the southwestern Cape, the near equal sex ratios among Europeans reinforced stable family patterns and probably kept frequencies of miscegenation low. In the newly settled regions European sex ratios were very high, and considerable miscegenation, but not intermarriage, occurred (1987:134).

As can be expected, the South African history student will be left baffled by the political evolutionary dealings by the regimes on the coloured inhabitants. The evolutionary history of these coloured people encapsulates their emancipation, political emergence, inclusion in common voters' rolls (1853 and 1909), removal from the voters' rolls (1952-6), incorporation under segregated constitutions (1909 and 1983), industrial colour bar, group areas, etc.

South Africa did not extensively export slaves, but imported them, especially from India and Malaysia. The Indians were imported to the British Natal while Malays were imported to the Cape. Through the notorious apartheid laws known as the Groups Areas Act and the Population Registration Act, the Malays were, assimilated into the 'coloured' grouping.

> Some of the Malays from the East have kept themselves apart from the general mass of the Coloured People to this day. They are found to-day as distinctive communities in the Cape Peninsula and in a few towns, such as Paarl and Stellenbosch in its immediate vicinity (Marais 1957:2).

This explains the rationale behind the two types of the so-called 'coloureds' in the Cape today – the Cape Malays and the 'Cape Coloureds'. Generally speaking, the Malays are the Muslims and the 'Cape Coloureds' are Christians. It is estimated that 87% of the coloured population of South Africa classify themselves as Christians (Jenkins 1996). The DRC (NGK) has been dominant among the coloured population. This is probably due to the identification of this church with the Afrikaans language. The 'coloured' Dutch Reformed Mission Church was formed in 1881. This church became a moral strength for their communal opposition to apartheid ideology. The Pentecostal and charismatic movements exploded among the coloured people in the last hundred or so years.

7.2. Muslims and Christians: Extended family

The ecclesiastical journey of the coloured people is closely intertwined with the Dutch Reformed Church history on race relations. The coloured people, like Africans, are very gregarious. The extended family is part of a societal

structure and this influences the church in a more remarkable observance. The church is the family where one finds oneself and asserts one's identity. Communion ecclesiology is very strong among these people. This explains why the 'Cape Coloureds' and the Cape Malays (Christians and Muslims) live side-by-side without any conflict or friction. It is in religion that one finds who and how to treat the neighbour. There is phenomenal warmness, hospitality and welcoming spirit in the so-called 'coloured' churches. In some poor situations, their togetherness gives them stability, perseverance and resilience. Some families, no matter how the kinship binds them together, may belong to different churches or denominations, or even religions, without any discrimination or prejudice. Religiously mixed marriages are possible, allowing each spouse to maintain his or her religion without any interference or impediment. This mixture has a synergy that is difficult to explain.

It has been mentioned that the Cape Malays have retained the Islam of their Malay heritage. The Griqua and other coloured people are mostly Christian, predominantly of the Reformed faith emanating from the connection with the DRC and an affinity with the Afrikaans language. The open and transparent relations between the Christians and Muslims among the coloured communities testify to the witness of the gospel of symbiotic co-existence.

> The Cape Malay Muslims have a unique culture, and their heritage includes a form of Islam. The Malay Muslims, however, are reportedly more open than the Indian Muslims to overtures from the Christian community. Other Coloureds who are Muslim would require more specialised communication strategies for a significant relationship with Christian communities (Jenkins 1996).

The coloured society live side-by-side in harmony: Christian and Muslim, rich and poor, rural and urban, educated and uneducated, professional and artisans. Family ties play an important role in breaking social barriers. To a certain degree, Van der Walt attests to this when he says that there are three bridging structures (social capital, spirituality, and education) that enable people to rise above the mayhem in order to gain deeper perspective of and insight into events, conditions, and the lives of others (2009:283-284). This is

insightful and worthy of pondering. Van der Walt maintains that these three bridging structures 'enable people to cross chasms between themselves and others. They help people to rise above their own differences and motivate them to cooperate in the best interests of all' (2009:284).

The harmonious co-existence between the Malay Muslims and coloured Christians may be instigated by the Muslim's subscription to an ethical code of a very high standard, which according to Meiring, 'emphasises the following aspects: Islam has established a brotherhood which is not interrupted by boundaries of colour, race, nationality, language or social status' (1996:200).

It must, however, be mentioned that it was not only the DRC that has done the missionary work among the coloured people. There is an extensive history of fruitful labour by the Rhenish, Moravian, and London Missionary Society, both in the Cape and on the northern frontier. One cannot write or speak of South African church history without reference to the role played by a certain mission station at Genadendal in the Cape. This mission station is pivotal to the impact of Christianity among the non-European settlers.

7.3 The Indians in South Africa: A historical overview

The Indian population of South Africa is concentrated mostly in the present KwaZulu-Natal and scattered in Gauteng (the old Transvaal Province) and the Cape. In his book, *Pentecostal Penetration into the Indian Community in Metropolitan Durban, South Africa,* Gerhardus Oosthuizen paints the picture that the Indian immigration to South Africa was a selective process of indenture which served as an alternative to the slavery system. It is worthy to quote Oosthuizen lengthily here to show the magnanimity of this Indian immigration:

> On the first boat, *Truro*, which landed on the 17th November, 1860, there were three hundred and forty-two South Indians – of these 83 children were under the age of 14 and 75 were women between the ages of 16 and 46. On November 26, 1860, the second boat, the *Belvedere*, arrived from Calcutta (North India) with 351 Indians on board – these

> were Hindustanis with only 5 Christians on board. These two shiploads were the biggest but a number of other ships followed in their wake. The first group (from Madras) were 12% Muslim; 5% Christian; 1% Rajputs and some Pillais (traders) but the majority were ordinary labourers of the lower castes (1975:12).

Like all populations other than the whites in South Africa, coloured people and Indians suffered enormously under the racial segregation laws. Cultural and religious marginalisation and prejudice took a toll. The Orange Free State (present Free State) had a law prohibiting Indians to settle in their territory. Davenport (1991:491) states that 'Indians were accordingly excluded from the Orange Free State by stages between 1885 and 1890, largely on the insistence of English-speaking shopkeepers.'

Their trading rights were restricted and later banned as residents in 1890. According to Davenport:

> [T] the Free State was the only part of South Africa where it became legally impossible for a black person to become a landowner in his own right in the period before Union. The myth of the white nation with an exclusive claim to rights survived remarkably in the Free State, where at any given moment the black population was at least double the white in size. (1991:75).

As a result of the segregation laws, Indians were 'denied civil and political rights, forbidding them to own fixed property, rendering them liable to registration and confining their residential quarters to special locations' (Muller 1993:371).

7.3.1 Christianity among the Indians

Evangelism and education were the twin tools that brought Christianity to the Indians (indentured workers) of the British Natal. From the Catholic to Methodist witness, and later other denominations, Christianity gained roots among the Indians. The church was always formed first, followed by the school; except with the Anglicans who did it the other way round. Christians, Hindus, and Muslims attended these schools without any discrimination

based on religion. When the apartheid regime entrenched and enhanced its racial segregation legislation mentioned earlier (the Group Areas Act, the Population Registration Act, and others), Indian conglomerates, which once proliferated, began to disintegrate. The unity based on family values and an irreverent caste system that was starting to disappear suffered a big blow. The arrival of the evangelical groups such as the Baptists, Church of the Nazarene, Evangelical Church of South Africa, the Reformed Church in Africa (NGK), and especially the Pentecostals, changed the ecclesiastical landscape among the Indians. In his chapter, 'Community Service and Conversion: Christianity among Indian South Africans' in the Elphick and Davenport book *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History,* Gerald Pillay writes:

> [B]y far the most significant development in the history of Indian Christianity in this period was the establishment of Pentecostal churches. Between 1925 and 1980 Pentecostals acquired more Indian members than all other denominations put together (1997:290).

7.3.2 Kutum and communion ecclesiology

One cultural trait that defines family among the Indians is *kutum.* this concept is disappearing speedily due to urbanisation, modernity, and cultural contours due to population mobility and the rise of multiculturalism in the broader South Africa society. This *kutum* was and is particularly common among the Hindu where family relations are of primary importance. This system is basically the family structure that is made up of 'self, father, son, grandson, grandfather, wife, and the mother that bore me' (Kapadia 1955:122). This means the family can be the five generations staying under the same roof, led by one patriarch. Different Indian languages have names for this system. For instance:

- Hindi and Gujarati*: Kul* or *Kutum*
- Tamil and Telegu: *Kudumbam* or *Kudumor*

In the Indian culture, this is the most important structured kinship unit. In his 1975 book on Pentecostal penetration into the Indian community in Durban, Oosthuizen elaborates on *kutum*:

> The joint family included the male head, his wife, unmarried children, unmarried brothers and sisters, young married brothers, married sons and brothers, and married sons with their wives and children – it varies from a couple of individuals to over a hundred. With the patriarchal joint families the father and/or mother is still alive; with the fraternal joint families the brothers are living together (1975:51).

Kinship marriages are built on strong family relationships. This normally posed a stumbling block for conversion to Christianity. Conversion is dependent on the authoritative decision of the *Bada* or *Periver* (the big man), who is the apex of the household. Once the big man succumbs to Christian conversion, the whole household follows suit. In many cases, this results in a church becoming or reflecting the *kutum* … they are all related to each other. An injury to one becomes an injury to all. Bear in mind, this has changed significantly in the past century or so, but subliminally the attachment is still there. Pillay, in agreement with Oosthuizen, points out:

> The joint-family system (*kutum*), which had provided communal stability, though still dominant up to the mid-1920s was visibly diminishing, and well-established customs were either changing or falling into neglect. The Indian elite was becoming entirely urbanized. Young Indians, forced to cope in a Western context, were slowly becoming alienated from their traditional culture (1997:291).

The *kutum* system seems to have been prevalent in the Bible, especially in the New Testament during the apostolic era. The head of the household wielded tremendous authority and could make the decision for his family. Conversion was common in households based on the head's decision. The following texts prove the point:

> He then brought them out and asked, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' They replied, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved--you and your household.' Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before

> them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God--he and his whole family (Acts 16:30-34).
>
> Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time (Matt. 24:45)?
>
> Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, 'Your son will live.' So he and all his household believed (John 4:53).
>
> He will bring you a message through which you and all your household will be saved (Acts 11:14).
>
> Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized (Acts 18:8).

Kutum influenced the concept of the church among the Indians, regardless of church denomination or tradition. Indians believe the church to be a fellowship of professed Christians. Most of their churches embrace the autonomy of the local congregation under a strong pastoral figure who is a visionary and a patriarchal father. Any new church in a particular geographical area is supported by a praying community with intense feelings of togetherness.

This togetherness transcends any form of organisation or structure. Indian Christians support decentralisation of church polity. However, the organisation serves to guide and steer towards the right direction, not to control. Even the pastoral figure must not become a personality cult, but an effective, charismatic leader who commands the right to lead. The reason for Pentecostals thriving among the Indians is this decentralization under the charismatic leader who is perceived as 'a big man' (Bada or Periver).

The Indian voice in denouncing apartheid was not audible enough. There were lots of Indians' voices in politics, businesses, professions, etc., but not so many as prophetically. There were strong figures but they were not heard in public ecclesiastical circles or places.

Chapter 8

The pastoral application of communion ecclesiology

God values human culture. God values our identity, our ethnicity, our heritage. Yet those things cannot wholly define us, nor can they save us… The church is called to be the church. In other words, we are to be a community of God's people who are constantly forming and being formed into God's image. We are called not only to be good, but holy (Rhodes 1998:121, 135-136).

Theological teachings on communion ecclesiology are undoubtedly self-explanatory. There is no doubt that Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Christianity, are all in sync with the inevitable communion ecclesiology. The 'togetherness' of the New Testament is the community of the Old Testament. The marks of this community are unity, symbiosis, synergy, *homothymadon* and *koinonia*.

Communion ecclesiology cannot skirt around the realities faced by humanity in the face of despair, corruption, disease pandemics and epidemics, social disintegration, cultural decadence, etc., including all negative aspects based on socio-economic greed. The world is no more an arena where humans just live out their lives and Christians carry out their mission. The Christian faith is called upon, or challenged to throw light on everything that affects the human-nature relationship. Nature is not the enemy of humanity. The two are in profound and mutual interrelationship. The genuine ecclesiality responds to the needs of human beings in relation to the environment they find themselves in.

8.1 The six functions of communion ecclesiology

Communion ecclesiology has six ecclesiastical functions. These functions are eclectic in approach and are, therefore, not exhausted.

8.1.1 Identity

'Identity' is a specific characteristic by which communion ecclesiology is recognised or known. The mission of the church in the world, though not of it, is to transform the world (Pelzel 2001). Identity has to deal with convictions, vision, and mission of the church. Communion ecclesiology is called upon to maintain its prophetic role of valuing people above monetary profit. Communion ecclesiology is people in relation to Christ and his church. These people do not relate in a vacuum. They are intertwined with a particular socio-cultural context that needs to be protected so that they can feel safe and secure. This includes even the environment in which they experience

life. The communion in the world must find itself immersed in the issues facing the kingdom of God at large. Mildrow (cited in Kritzinger, Meiring & Saayman 1994:208) helps us to understand that for effective communication, identification is essential. This is not simply physical outward conformity, but a full and sympathetic entering into the life of others in an act meaningful in itself.

Identification is the concept of *being* rather than *doing*. Our postmodern culture, influenced largely by the West, is the culture of doing – effectively and efficiently. This is how a person is judged or evaluated in a broader scope of society. Performance is a yardstick for effectiveness and success. By contrast, there is still a high degree of a 'being' culture, which is still common in Africa and elsewhere. This is being together – a value that enhances the incarnational ministry of the church in a real sense. The church identity is being there. A leaven is soaked and absorbed by the dough and is invisible, though pervasive. The *ekklesia* is to be pervasive with invisible influence in the world. This does not call for covert activities but for an influence that is irreversible and felt even by those who are in its opposition.

The church in the world is called upon to face the reality, accept the responsibility to sustain and heal the earth, and become a *mature* species. As members of the *koinonia* with *Iesus Hominum Salvator* (Jesus Saviour of humanity) *ekklesia* can no longer view the world in terms of 'we' and 'they.' Instead, there is only 'us' – a diverse, global community of interacting and interdependent individuals and species. Identification with nature is *primo pro patria* (first place for our country) in regard to our interaction with nature. Not only with nature, but also with the human community at large, since it is within the community that we discover our identity. Fundamentally, 'our identity is formed in community, and therefore, understanding others helps us understand ourselves' (DeYoung 2009:32).

Communion ecclesiology is church joining communal laments. It is when the church personally and psychologically experiences the mode of reality.

Unfortunately, the loss of identity is the loss of public awareness and imagination. Brueggemann surfaces this lament:

> Given our privatistic inclination, we do not often think about public disasters as concerns for prayer life. If we do, we treat them as somehow a lesser time. We have nearly lost our capacity to think theologically about public issues and public problems. Even more, we have lost our capacity to practice prayer in relationship to public events (1984:67).

The world is corrupt, yet the church's prophetic stance must be known. As a result, *ekklesia* must be convinced and convicted that there must be some theological response to the social and environmental disturbance. The *ekklesia* is theologically charged to identify with the victims of the world corruptions. There must be a clear vision for e*kklesia* in the context of what the final product should look like after people have been affected. Then the mission must be clear as to how the vision will be expedited.

8.1.2 Dialogue

One of the best ways of reclaiming the communion's role is through dialogue. The word 'dialogue' derives from two roots: 'dia', which means 'through' and 'logos' which, means 'the word', or more particularly, 'the meaning of the word.' Dialogue is a powerful tool that forges identification. This calls for self-denial, and it inevitably leads to the ability to serve. The gospel story is the essence of Christianity even if we reduce talk of God's self-revelation in Christ to a necessary minimum. The Christian identity is shaped by the believer's alignment with the story of Jesus, and this is typically a gradual process of growth in faith and love. This is necessitated by *theocentric* dialogue that aims towards Christological understanding. According to Ted Peters in his book, *God- the World's Future: Systematic Theology for a New Era, i*t is true that 'dialogue and the honest listening for truth cannot knock one faithful to Christ off the track' (2000:355).

An ecclesiastical dialogue which cannot speak of God is by definition inadequate for Christology. The story of Jesus is a reality retold by those whose

lives are shaped by it, and it is always a reality mediated through narration. 'The community is the group that experiences God's story with humankind' (Gregersen, Drees & Görman 2000:183). Dialogue enhances faith. Christianity is naturally a life relationship between God and humanity. It finds its expression in prayer – and prayer is a dialogue. Revelation, that supernatural link which God has established with humanity, can likewise be looked upon as a dialogue.

Dialogue opens the avenue of pastoral services to be rendered. Through dialogue, humans understand the intricacies of their faith. Lindbeck rightly asserts that 'one must learn the language of faith before one can know enough about its message knowingly to reject it and thus be lost' (1984:59).

The ecclesiastical community is called upon to initiate, engage and facilitate dialogues in order to please the triune God and adequately serve humanity. This is love that leads to liberation. Moltman (1989:160-162) echoes the sentiment that dialogue strives to bring to expression the love which alone makes truth creative. Dialogue is a sign of hope for ordinary people if it happens in the interests of their life and liberation.

Dialogue involves exploring the roots of the multiple crises facing community today. It enables reflections, understanding and processes that fragment and proliferate the unity of the community. Dialogue provides an opportunity to participate in a process that displays the community's successes and failures. Dialogue is a special kind of discourse that enables people with different perspectives and worldviews to work together to dispel mistrust and create a climate of good faith, to break through negative stereotypes and to shift the focus from transactions to relationships, thus creating community. Michel's proposal to Muslims, Christians, and Jews in a modern pluralist society is that: 'Dialogue must characterize the way the religious groups live together in every place, and it makes no difference who is governing and who is governed' (2005:22-23).

Dialogue makes participants more sympathetic to one another, even when they disagree, and assists enormously in preparing the ground for negotiation or decision making on emotion-laden issues. It is when the communion

dialogues with itself around the biblical truth that the community is formed – the spiritual kind of community the Trinity enjoys, which experiences change, growth, and healing (Crabb 1999:124). This is confirmed by VanGemeren, who states that 'real dialogue takes place when the church as a whole and the individual Christian relate at the same level to the biblical text' (1988:35).

8.1.3 Integration

'Integration' is the process of combining into an integral whole. It is the action of incorporating new converts and former dissidents into a community. It has to deal with cohesion, uniformity, and pluriformity of the church. Hans Küng highlights this when he writes that 'faith is never, in the final analysis, a matter of adherence to objects, rules, or dogmas, but in the sacrifice and self-giving of one person to another' (1986:31).

Integration is generally the focus on relationships among the affected communities. It is the dynamic interplay between the *ekklesia* and the community of the outsiders. There must be some element of spiritual fellowship or communion between human beings and God in contrast to juridical approaches that over-emphasise the institutional and legal aspects of the *ekklesia*. Integration reinforces a communion ecclesiology that emphasises that the Church is basically a 'communion' or fellowship among human beings and God (Doyle 2000:15). Integration focuses primarily on relationship, which is the interconnectedness that lies at the heart of what *ekklesia* is. The cohesion of *ekklesia* in the cosmos is love, forgiveness, acceptance, commitment, and intimacy. The church is a web of interwoven relationships. These relationships offer a share in the life of God as well as passage to a journey along with *ekklesia* called to act as a leaven in the world. Just as a leaven is integrated into the dough, so should the church be integrated in order to influence the world.

Communion ecclesiology should be understood as God and humanity in a relationship. This relationship is sometimes expressed in social sciences as coexistentiality and co-essentiality. In this context, 'coexistentiality' means that God and humanity are present at the same time. Their symbiotic relationship

is unbreakable. 'Co-essentiality' means that God and humanity exist for each other and that one cannot exist or be without the other. However, this bears in mind the transcendence and imminence of God. Dialogue as a way of integration enforces and enhances this relationship. 'In this sense, not only interdependence, but also a particular form of interaction or dialogue is implied' (Le Roux 1993:97). Interaction and dialogue accelerate integration.

8.1.4 Policy

'Policy' is a plan of action adopted by a church. It is a line of argument rationalising the course of action of a church and may include a written contract or certificate of insurance. It points to the development of church procedures, programmes, and projects to be undertaken. The *ekklesia* must be intentional in addressing the imbalances left behind by the corrupt activities of the world and its systems. The ecclesiology in context is the theology in praxis. The church must intentionally become proactive by designing policies that play advocacy for the victims. Gabriel Mendy makes an appeal to the African church to 'readily take concrete steps to address the inhumane situations that generate division and violence in the society so that justice, peace, and unity will prevail' (2013:266).

Küng emphasises this when he avers that 'the only theology adequate to the modern period is one that is critically/constructively engaged in the experiences of the modern person' (1988:164).

Formulating and understanding the polity assists to enter the world of the conqueror and the victim alike. The *ecclesia* as a communion should understand, and where possible assist to formulate, the policies that are God-honouring and God-fearing.

8.1.5 Management

'Management' is the direction to be taken in areas of financial and human conditions balanced with the capacity of the church. This includes the administrative structure of the church, which is necessitated by the church's

influence on and for the poor. The legacy that should be pursued by the church is one of managing itself in a way that will benefit or bring some positive results for the betterment of the poor and the oppressed. The reality of the matter is that 'the cake is getting larger, and the slice which goes to the powerful and the rich is increasing, while the rest end up with much smaller portions' (Wahl 2009:626).

'Church management' is one of the expressions of servant leadership by *ekklesia* to the doomed world. This calls for stewardship into the chaotic world. Resources are to be channelled and managed in God-honouring manners, and this on its own is the Gospel in demonstration. Ecclesiology in context embraces the fundamental truth expressed by theologian Colin Gunton:

> [T]hat which is created out of nothing remains essentially fragile and, given the fall, is always in danger of returning to the nothingness from which it came. It is part of the continuing care of God for the world that he protects it from its self-induced fate (2002:28).

God can accomplish this through humanity, which is placed in the cosmological context for the management of it at all cost. This is the task that can be achieved *consilio et animis* (wisdom and courage). It is the human religious duty to ensure that the nature-human ecosystem balance is maintained and managed responsibly for the future generations (Badke 1991).

8.1.6 Reconciliation

The church moves with the times. The church's empirical journey as a communion together with the Trinity must express itself to the world, especially in socio-economic and political spheres. Communion ecclesiology must be visible in the context. This means that communion must address cultures and challenges in the public domain. There is a need for ecclesiology in context.

Ecclesiology in context is when the church applies a combination of theological and social-scientific approaches to the development of practical models and strategies for the church's interaction with modern society and its challenges

(Van der Ven 1996:5-21). Communion ecclesiology was in Paul's mind when he spoke of a charismatic congregation 'that seeks the revitalisation of the given social order by God's present saving power through the Christ event, which assimilates and creates unity and reconciliation' (Tilly 2016:235).

The fact remains that South Africa has been an abnormal society for years under the repressions of colonialism and apartheid. Our society has been polarised and disintegrated, without national identity, patriotism and/or national pride. DeYoung (1997) suggests that the realities of our challenges are the barriers of isolation, injustice, exhaustion, betrayal, and denial. Our national hostilities had been exacerbated by assimilation, tokenism, inferiority, rage, and fear (*swart gevaar* or *wit gevaar*). The church in South Africa has to accept that:

> Every individual is automatically, by birth, placed within a certain social context. Through this destiny, each individual obtains a certain social status, rights, obligations, educational opportunities, participation and integration within this society, freedom, power, influence, and honour (Tilly 2016:225).

Reconciliation is, however, the pastoral task of building bridges to connect the two opposing forces that are historically, ideologically, or culturally divided. On the surface, it can be meaningfully associated with reuniting, reunion, bringing or coming together again. It is an act of harmonising the incompatible views or beliefs. It involves consistency and harmonisation. Reconciliation is when former enemies agree to an amicable truce. Reconciliation means losing myself and coming together into the person I historically or culturally regarded as my enemy. This is easier said than done. As Avery Dulles highlights, it is generally accepted that 'the primary factor that binds the members of the Church to each other is the reconciling grace of Christ' (1987:57).

It takes grace for two enemies to come together and dissolve into each other for peace and for justice to prevail. Reconciliation paves the way to healing, restoration and self-discovery. It averts violence, conflict and hatred. The communion in the world should strive for reconciliation. This is factually captured by Thomas F. Michel:

> So long as no reconciliation takes place, the wounds to the human relations fester and grow and turn into resentment. Discord produces more discord, violence engenders even greater violence, and the state of conflict is perpetuated. The only way out of a spiralling succession of violent reactions and counter-reactions is for one party to take the initiative to reconcile. Reconciliation heals what force can never heal, the suspicion and resentment caused by wrong- doing one against another (2005:130-131).

In 2014, Bernard Lategan from the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study, as part of the Tutu-Jonker Dialogue series hosted by the University of the Free State, delivered a paper: 'The Role of Hermeneutics in the Ongoing Quest for Reconciliation: Epistemological Frameworks,Strategic Choices and Practical Application'. He proposes that in order to demonstrate the implications and possibilities of a hermeneutical approach in service of the ongoing task of reconciliation, Christians must move from singular to multiple identities. Lategan points out that:

> One of the most serious hindrances to achieve reconciliation in practice is the presence of 'singular identities' informing our self-understanding. The transition to a 'multiple identity' is counter-intuitive and very hard to accomplish. The underlying problem of binary thinking and singular affiliations (Amartya Sen) will be discussed, as well as the conceptual framework and hermeneutical strategies needed to embrace a richer, deeper understanding of identity as [a] prerequisite for reconciliation (2014).

The British Reformed theologian, Colin E. Gunton, elaborating the Christological implication regarding reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:19) concludes that reconciliation is universal in intent, but not yet fully realised (2002:164). This is due to the proclivity towards a singular identity that is widely negated in theological debate, as Lategan highlights above. This fact is also pointed out by Ted Peters who avers that the unity brought in by reconciliation

> is not simply a matter of turning plurality into oneness, of eliminating every distinction by collapsing all things into a single, universal

> mass of undifferentiated being. It is rather a matter of coordination, cooperation, integration, and harmony (2000:243).

This clearly demonstrates that identity and reconciliation work hand-in-glove. The church in unity is challenged to become a bridge-builder as a pastoral task to display communion ecclesiology. The reconciliation tasks of building bridges are to be visible in the way *ecclesia* reconciles the Trinitarian God with nature, human populations, sciences (natural or social), and with God himself. Peters (2000:243) continues to inform us that 'the task of God's Spirit is reconciliation, restoring wholeness to a creation broken apart by self-absolutization and sin.'

The world is hurting. Human deprivation is escalating. Misery is everywhere. National, tribal and ethnic conflicts are increasing and becoming the norm. The gap between the rich and the poor is widening exponentially. Church proliferations and denominational disintegrations are the order of the day. Bridges of reconciliation are a must.

8.2 Communion ecclesiology in the world

Ecclesia is called to perform certain services or ministries to the world and certain assignments within itself. As the called-out ones, the Christian community proclaims communion that binds them together. Humans are communal creatures intrinsically yearning to love God and other humans. The church is identified by prophetic, priestly and messianic people. This means the church is here on earth to bear witness for God, intercede and bear witness before the world, and finds its destiny in the person and works of Christ (Moltmann 1977:300-303). It is not a perfect body, but as Oyeku Samson Kalawole (2015:194) says: 'The Church is the manufacturing industry where "wild human beings" are processed and refined into "children of God" with Christ-like character.'

The church moves with the times. With its empirical journey as a communion together with the Trinity, the church must express itself to the world, especially

in socio-economic and political spheres. Communion ecclesiology must be visible to be in context – in the cultures and challenges in the public domain. There is a need for ecclesiology in context. *Ecclesia* is Christ incarnate. The communities see and experience Christ through and in the church.

Communion ecclesiology in context is when the church applies a combination of theological and social-scientific approaches to the development of practical models and strategies for the church's interaction with modern society and its challenges (Van der Ven 1996:5-21).

For a very long time, ecclesiology in context had been stereotyped to practical theology, not systematic theology. This is an error that needs ratification with the conviction that practical theology is the implementation of systematic theology, especially that branch known as 'ecclesiology'. The modern ecclesiology cannot skirt around the realities faced by humanity in the face of societal illnesses and social disintegrations. The world is no more an arena where humans just live out their lives and Christians carry out their mission. The community of faith is called upon to throw light on everything that affects human relationships. Humanity has been created in order to live in profound and mutual interrelationship.

Genuine ecclesiality positively addresses the social disintegration. Karen Kilby, in a chapter in the Crisp and Sanders book, *Advancing Trinitarian Theology: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics,* rebukes us strongly that 'disengagement and escapism are certainly powerful temptations for Christians' (Kilby 2014:93). It is a genuine and authentic ecclesiality to draw the world into communion, reconciliation and peace. The relationship between the church and the world repudiates any suggestion of humanity that is separated from, and privileged over other people in the world. It is a truth that the church, at once a visible assembly and a spiritual communion, goes forward together with humanity and experiences the earthly lot of the world; she is like a leaven and a kind of soul for human society.[5] The authentic ecclesiology is not detached

5 See the full details of The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. Gaudium et Spes. (GS 40) Chapter IV. The Role of the Church in the Modern World

from the world. It is an intimate part of the world and humanity with human history included.

As summarised by Peters:

> The central concern of the church is the kingdom of God, and the way to show this concern is through carrying out its apostolic ministry of reconciliation. This is done through presenting the gospel in word and sacrament. Like an electric arc between two terminals, the church is called to bear the light between Easter and the consummation (2000:317).

Regarding the historic union of the two Reformed bodies of churches – the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Reformed Ecumenical Council in 2010 – Joseph D. Small asserts that the unity they seek, was 'not to produce a monolithic super-church, but to achieve genuine *communion* in common (not uniform) faith, common (not uniform) worship, and common (not uniform) mission' (Small 2010:88).

This means that as a communion, the church should become an academy of justice by promoting moral responsibility of forging unity, and what Peters (2000:243) referred to as 'coordination, cooperation, integration, and harmony.'

Ecclesia, as the image bearer of Christ in the world, faces the enormous task of pastoral care to the hurting and the disabled. Ministries or services must be expedited and accelerated, not under impulsive obligation but as a sense of divine calling and purpose here on earth. Dulles (1987:161) concurs that 'for practical purposes, all Christian communities may be said to have office holders or functionaries who regularly exercise a special ministry.'

The church is called not only to worship, but also to serve. The church serves the global community and in her composition and expression. She is transcultural, transeconomic, and transnational (Dearborn 2000:212-216). Communion ecclesiology finds its essence of fulfilment in and through involvement. Anthony Egan (2007) sees the church's involvement in one or more of the three options: withdrawal, opposition, or critical cooperation. The

first option of withdrawal denies the *ecclesia* of its identity and mission in the world. The second one of opposition may sound prophetic, but it is not always correct. It must be done with a clear conscience based on canonical dictates and intrinsic conviction. The third option is an inevitable task of the church in the world. The church must be immersed and involved with clear motives without any hidden agenda externally (government, funds etc.) or internally (ego, self-seeking glory, etc.). One of the church strategists in America, Randy Frazee (2001:22) captures this when he writes that 'when the church is fully functioning, it exudes the presence, power, and purpose of Jesus Christ.'

It is important to note that it is not so much the geographical or cultural elements that become decisive for the *ecclesial* traditions, but the differing sources of their evangelisation and traditions. The different churches have a basic unity deriving from the same *paradosis* common to all of them tracing back to the originating event of Christ's life, death and resurrection. The diversity of churches is due to the parallel streams of the same *catechesis,* taking different concrete forms of traditions: kerygmatic, catechetical and liturgical (Vellanickal 2012:36).

In the spirit of Belhar Confession on unity, reconciliation, and justice; communion ecclesiology should dignify and humanise tradition. These three articles: unity, reconciliation, and justice enhance the dignity of life.

> Where people from diverse and even antagonistic backgrounds live in closer proximity, where they are exposed more to each other, where they share in each other's daily joys and sorrows, they start to develop sympathy, empathy and interpathy (Koopman 2011:32-41).

This throws out any theological rationale for racially separated churches. If confession and fundamental tenets of dogma are the same, why should cultural distinctives such as ethnics, and linguistics be used to separate or segregate the church into tribalistic communions? Koopman embraces the Belhar's three articles by expositing the fact that 'this unity is a unity in diversity. It is also a unity in the paradoxes of hybridity, featuring liminality and plurality, complexity and ambiguity' (2011:34).

Chapter 9

Now, our eschatological journey

The charge to the community lies in the calling of believers through Christ to the kingdom of God through the power of the Holy Spirit. This charge is made visible through the sign of baptism. The community of the baptized is the community of those who have been called (Moltmann 1977:300).

We believe that the mission of the church is to (1) proclaim the good news of salvation to all humankind, (2) build up and train believers for spiritual ministry, (3) praise the Lord through worship, (4) demonstrate Christian compassion to all who suffer, and (5) exhibit unity as the body of Christ (World Assemblies of God Fellowship Statement of Faith – Article 6: The Church and its Mission).

Every phenomenon in life has a history. History is history no matter how good or bad it was. It has actually happened and it cannot be erased ideologically by denial or marginalisation, or even by attitudes. It cannot be eradicated, visually, by removing its symbols in the public space.

> History is thus theatrum *gloriae Dei*, 'a theatre of the glory of God'… an arena within which the glory of God may be discerned and recognized (McGrath 1994:134).

History plays an important role in enhancing and promoting patriotism and self-understanding. Christianity is rooted in history because it revolves around a historical figure, Jesus Christ. He is the eschaton. The universe with its events, historically and future, revolves around him. He is the climax of God's purposes on earth. Everything finds its meaning in him. He is the Head of the Church. Christ is the climax of history. There is no *ecclesia* without Christ. Debates, discussions, and dialogues about *ecclesia* cannot carry essence without Christ. Christology and ecclesiology are intertwined. Communion ecclesiology is one of the *soteriological* outcomes of Christ's activities in the world.

The South African Christianity should reflect on its role in this day and age. Churches have to represent all people and all identities – across race and gender lines. As we have seen in the previous chapters of this book, it is problematic, when particular voices have a say over others. It is not a better option for the DRC to retreat into the den and lick its wounds. The English churches must get out of their cocoons and break the web into freedom. The African Initiated Churches should climb the theological ladder and stop being abused by politicians for their agendas. Evangelicals and Pentecostals must enter the real world and become a prophetic community in the society. The church in South Africa must recognise itself as *peccatrix maximus* (the greatest of sinners) that has failed to live up to its calling. It is, therefore, called upon to become *ecclesia docens* as well as *ecclesia discens* (the teaching and the learning church), since the grace of God is still available, and as fellows with the Trinitarian God, still is *ecclesia cruces* (the community of the cross).

9.1 Communion ecclesiology: Sociological and theological factors

The early church was a human community with Christ in their midst. Like many religious phenomena, the early church drew its membership basically from the lower classes of society. Christ's core group and the initial cell were poorly educated and less cultured. To some degrees, they were too far down in the social ladder to influence the political elite or initiate significant socio-political transformation. This cell was *missiological* in outlook and, therefore, created communities and societal structures. During their eschatological journey, they engaged with the educated and political elite of the time. These new adherents began to conceptualise the nature of faith and how to articulate it in the most credible manner.

Reading through the works of the German theologian, Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923), one is left with the reflective conviction that the social profile of the church influences its character and agenda. The early church was a sociological factor with a remarkable social inclusiveness that cut across social (free and slave), ethnic (Jew and Gentile), and gender (male and female) distinctions (Gal. 3:28). This presented the early church with a confrontation with sophisticated Gentile idolatry and secular humanistic philosophies. The church had to discover ways of articulating and affirming the dignity and activity (person and work) of Christ.

Faith in Christ is an implied accommodation of an ethic of love. It is a call to surrender self and love for others by the sharing of possessions as a campaign for social equality. The church's incarnation and being in those days was an outcome of an absolute ethic of love. The church, through its incarnational ministry, established a cultural synthesis. The historical facts remain that theologically, the church continued with Jesus' absolute ethic by insisting on moral conduct that contrasted with the prevailing norms of the then secular society.

9.2 From dynamic community to cultural synthesis

Troeltsch, in one of his famous works, *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches* (1912) depicts the early church changing from a dynamic community to a stable institution. The emergence of a priesthood set apart to exercise leadership and administer sacraments was an attempt to embody and visibly demonstrate the salvific power at work within the church. An increasingly institutional form of the church diminished the place of a universal priesthood of all believers and the idea of religious equality. Patriarchal attitudes and hierarchy defined the structures of the church. An institutional dimension is necessary for the church to relate to other social institutions within the social order. If the church is to forge a harmony, an integrated partnership with other social bodies, then an institutional aspect is vital. The church as the *pneumatic* community gathers around Christ and his Word, not around a celebrity or any charismatic figure. The word *around* is very important. Christ is part of, though the Head of the Church at the same time. He is both immanent and transcendent.

The above description was not visible in the early church. De Klerk and Schnell describe the Johannine community (at the end of the apostolic era) as having no ecclesiastic organisation and clerical offices. The community was characterised by the following:

- They are a group of ex-Jews
- They lived towards the end of the first century.
- They see themselves as distinct from, firstly, the Jews and, secondly, the 'world'.
- The distinctive criterion is acceptance or otherwise of Jesus as the only begotten Son of God.
- Because of their faith in Jesus, they were persecuted by the Jews.
- The ecclesiastic organisation takes a back seat to faith in the Son, their only Master (1987:258-249).

Although the idea of the church is not significantly traced in the Gospel of John, it is, however, presupposed. According to Smalley: '[T]he company of the disciples, from the first moment of their calling, forms the nucleus of a new and growing community of which Jesus is the head' (1985:233).

The same notion is carried by Guthrie (1975:280) that this gospel 'gives teaching regarding the inner meaning of the institution.' This community is recognised by life. It experiences life together. Life is part of Johannine language. Apart from *signs* and *belief* in this community, *life* also forms part of it. This life 'is the sum total of all that is imparted to the believer in his salvation. It is the highest experience of which humanity is capable' (Tenney 1978:190-191).

Communion ecclesiology is never experienced in ecclesiastical structures since these structures can be too humanistic, secular or even theologically unsound. The life of the church is *dunamis* in the power of the Holy Spirit. Tenney continues this line of thought that life is what *ecclesia* is all about:' Life … is not just animal vitality or the course of human existence. It involves a kind of nature, a new consciousness, interaction with environment, and constant development' (1978:191).

The essence of the church is that it is institutional. Individuals are born into it, and the institutions of the priesthood and the ecclesiastical hierarchy mediate grace by virtue of their place in the institution rather than their individual holiness. The church is prepared to compromise with the world because they see the institution as remaining holy in spite of individual inadequacy. The church's main priority is to ensure that every individual comes within reach of the influence of the sacraments, which are the means of grace. This is why the church wants to dominate society – in order to ensure universal access to the means of grace. Churches tend to see the New Testament and the early church as the starting point, which leads to a willingness to see doctrine as something which develops over time and also to compromise.

Communion ecclesiology, since it was recaptured at Vatican II and since it started to permeate the Protestant and Eastern Orthodox circles, has become a platform for ethical reflection on cultural and social life, individually

and ecclesiastically. The Eastern Orthodox speaks of *soborny*. Kärkkäinen enlightens us that this refers to

> the organic unity of the church, not by negating individuals but by employing them. Each member contributes to the common activity of the church, and each member does his or her work with the help of others. So, individuality is preserved not extinguished (2002:22).

There is a hierarchical structure of the church in the Eastern Orthodoxy, but the equality of all members is honoured. The Catholic Church has *Una sancta ecclesia subsistit in* … (One holy church subsists in). Of course, that one holy church is a Catholic Church. By this the Catholic states that it is linked with other Christian communities by a true union in the Holy Spirit (Lumen Gentium 15). The Lutheran ecclesiology has a strong doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. For Lutherans, 'the inner life of the church is the priesthood of Christians for each other. The priesthood of Christians flows from the priesthood of Christ' (Kärkkäinen 2002:42).

This priesthood authorises the whole church to be involved in all horizontal activities, such as evangelism, preaching and social justice, and the vertical activities, such as praise, worship and adoration. Kärkkäinen's (2002:43) hierarchy is that 'the special office is necessary for the sake of order (1 Cor. 14:40).' Despite some variances within the Reformed tradition, *ecclesia* is broadly seen as the graced, covenanted community that is visible and climaxed into Christ. The free churches' ecclesiology is also based on the priesthood of all believers though each member has a direct, unmediated access to God. Membership in these churches is voluntary and it comes through the new birth. The latecomers to Christian tradition are the Pentecostals and the charismatics. According to Kärkkäinen (2002:71), Pentecostalism represents a grassroots spiritual movement 'rather than a novel theological construction'.

The church is the community of believers with each believer bestowed with *charism(s)* in order to serve the community internally or externally.

9.3 Communion ecclesiology today – that we may be one

It has been stated from the beginning that community is *koinonia*, a fellowship characterised by sharing and participation. Chester and Timmis elaborate:

> [W]e are the community of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 13:14) in community with the Son (1 Corinthians 1:9) – sharing our lives (1 Thessalonians 2:8), sharing our property (Acts 4:32), sharing in the gospel (Philippians 1:5; Philemon 6), and sharing in Christ's suffering and glory (2 Corinthians 1:6-7; 1 Peter 4:13) (2008:43).

Sharing and participation demonstrate the intrinsic connection of togetherness and oneness of mind. This is *homothymadon.* Community is the communion's lifestyle and a hallmark of Christ in our midst. Chester and Timmis continue:

> [O]ur community life is celebrated and reinforced in Communion, where we participate (koinonia) together in the body and blood of Christ: 'Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf (1 Corinthians 10:16-17) (2008:43).

Christ anticipated this prior to his departure from the world – that his followers become a united community with the attitude of servanthood where hierarchy is invisible, though present for discipline and order. This is in line with Minear's thought:

> [T]he Lord establishes rules for superiority among his disciples which belong to an entirely new kind of human society … the fact that the disciples have but one father, one master, and one teacher places them all on one level of genuine equality in relation to the teacher (1975:147).

The ultimate goal of communion's organisation and order is the health and welfare of the community. The emphasis is 'function', not an 'office' *per se*.

Communion ecclesiology is embracing *dogma* and *praxis* in the spirit of *koinonia* – fellowship with other members of communion, where the principle of 'one another' reigns supreme:

- Love ***one another*** (John 13:34)
- Be devoted to ***one another*** (Rom. 12:5)
- Honor ***one another*** (Rom. 12:10)
- Rejoice with ***one another*** (Rom. 12:15)
- Serve ***one another*** (Gal. 5:13)
- Carry ***one another's*** burdens (Gal. 6:2)
- Forgive ***one another*** (Eph. 4:32)
- Encourage ***one another*** (1 Thess. 5:11)
- Offer hospitality to ***one another*** (1 Pet. 4:9)
- Confess our sins to ***one another*** (Jas. 5:16)
- Pray for ***one another*** (Jas. 5:16)

The 'one another' principle calls for tangible form of unity so that the world might believe. The 'one another' practices cannot be carried out behind the scenes or hidden in secret corners of any spiritualisation as some conservative theologians believe. When hidden, how shall the world know and believe? For decades, if not centuries, advocates of ecumenism promoted varied forms of 'one another' principle based on the unity of Christians. The following list summarises Robeck's (2010:291) historical survey of this model of unity:

- The Elizabethan Settlement of the Act of Uniformity (1559) required *conformity to a uniform set of standards* for the English clergy.
- In the twentieth century, some independent and free churches advocated for *federal unity*, by which they remained independent but developed covenantal agreements with one another.
- Some Anglican communions advocated for some form of *organic unity*, leading to the cessation of existing denominations for the emergence of some new form of an organism with varying practices.
- Others pushed for some denominations to be *united,* but need not be *absorbed*.
- Cardinal Willebrands in 1970 proposed a *communion of communions* under the papal oversight.

- The World Council of Churches in 1975 set forth a model of *conciliar fellowship*.
- The Lutheran World Federation suggested the unity in *reconciled diversity.*

All these were attempts to express communion ecclesiology in reality but failed. From the 1990s, any attempt at unity is left to the prevailing sovereignty of God. It is a calling that Christians must heed. Whatever unity may be entered or reached must take the shape of genuine *koinonia* that is already divinely given.

At the 150th anniversary of the Evangelical Alliance in 1995, the theme 'Together we Stand' emerged as a a penetrating and persuasive account of Evangelical convictions. The conference considered the theology, nature and history of unity and tried to obtain answers from those inside and outside the Evangelical tradition. Clive Calver, in his paper titled 'All One in Christ', pointed out that 'while we may be divided in our styles of worship, or forms of church government, a basic unity of conviction lies at the heart of our combining together' (1996:51).

Jesus' ultimate desire, expressed four times in the intimacy of conversation with his father, was that his people might be one (John 17:11, 21-23). He articulated his will and his specific intention for his church. Again, it is vital to reiterate that his desire for communion *ecclesia* should be age inclusive, socio-economic inclusive, social status non-discriminative, gender inclusive, raciallly inclusive and international in scope. His church should be united together under his Lordship. Calver, in another paper at the same conference re-captures the desire for 'oneness':

> The desire of Jesus was therefore for the church to represent the one place in society where there was to be no racial discrimination, class-preference, generation gap or any other form of division. This was to be the greatest miracle of all. A society of all different kinds of people, yet bonded together in loving commitment as one body, because they loved Jesus (1996:124).

Communion ecclesiology is *ubuntu* - when people come together to forget about themselves but not about others. It is not a *laager* within which one can be trapped and locked into parochial attitudes. The biblical unity can be disturbed by human depravity found in cultures of the world. The cultural decadence is coloured with egotism, a superiority complex, racism in its various forms, relativism, etc.

The southern African cultural context is marked with racism, expressed in various forms such as tribalism, ethnicism and xenophobia . Racism becomes dangerous when it is institutionalised, as happened in South Africa. The technical reference to racism is the idea that certain non-racial characteristics, especially cultural patterns, are results of race. Good examples are those who use the behaviour of some people of a particular race to generalise the behaviour of the entire race – 'All [whites, blacks, Indians, etc] are like that', or 'That is typical of them [blacks, whites, coloureds, etc.]!' The outcome is always hatred, intolerance, or uncalled-for discrimination. This attitude is often expressed more freely and forcefully by the privileged race in a given context. These people with a superiority racial complex tend to oppress those not of their own stock and are legitimately called 'racists.' The oppressed sector of the society can also be racist since no people can be immune to the virus of racism or ungodly attitudes based on racial differences. The essence is that sinful attitudes and behaviour can be based on differences of culture, language, tribe, socially defined class or caste, as well as on race.

Communion ecclesiology permeates and transcends racial discrimination and segregation. It is for this reason that both the Cottesloe and Belhar conferences perceived racism as heretic or ungodly. These two formations, together with many others, were consciously correct when they said: 'No restriction of class, race, color, social standing, nationality, or character is imposed upon any prospective believer' (Tenney 1975:245).

Jesus' prayer in John 17 is 'that they may be one.' Jesus had in mind the communion of his followers composed of people from different cultural and racial backgrounds. As mentioned above, the absence of direct reference to the

Church in John's Gospel does not excuse any *ecclesial* reference. As Guthrie points out:

> [T]here are ecclesiastical interests in this Gospel which should not be overlooked. The allegories of the sheepfold and of the vine both contribute to the teaching of this Gospel about the Church, as does the high-priestly prayer of chapter xvii (1975:281).

The two metaphors of 'sheepfold' and 'vine' truly reflect and demonstrate 'oneness'. Sheep are all in one fold under the care and leadership of one shepherd. They are not the same, but diverse, though united. The vine is one tree with many branches. One looks at it but does not see branches but a tree. One tree is made of different branches. Branches are not just existential members of the tree, they are functional. This follows the Reformers' doctrine of a priesthood of all believers: 'All are priests, but not all lead. All are priests, but some are called by God to give direction and exercise authority' (2004:61).

Christ's prayer is that his disciples should find and keep their unity in order to manifest the glorious communion of the Trinitarian God. This is the awakening that the twentieth-century ecumenists caught, as attested by Marsh when he maintains that these ecumenists were right in supposing that 'a disunited body of disciples could not probably be thought of as in full possession of the benefits of the intercession of the Lord!' (1991:565).

The church as the community of believers needs to create some safer places by emphasising the theological concept of community that Jesus envisaged in John 17. PhD graduate from the University of Aberdeen, Cory Labanow correctly asserts that

> churches cannot be left to their own cultural preferences when formulating models of community. Sustained and repeated attention on Jesus' vision for love within the Church such as the passage in John 17, may be a helpful starting point (2009:110).

Inclusion and exclusion dilemmas of the apostolic church era should be used as an object lesson for communion lifestyle of today. The Pauline

concept of *koinonia* should be explained fully to forge an understanding of communion ecclesiology and where the church should be going regarding vertical and horizontal relational activities. The positive and the negative post-biblical Christian history should be explored to create safe places. Shaping relational atmospheres is not merely a social task, but a deeply theological one as well. The systematic and historical theology addresses these tasks of acceptance, inclusion, and forgiveness in the multi-cultural context where *ecclesia* is in operation. The task needs to be intentional and deliberate. As Thiemann maintains:

> Political and cultural diversity is a gift to be nurtured and celebrated. The freedom upon which such diversity is based is particularly precious and must be preserved and extended to those who have been excluded from full participation in a free society (1991:47).

As stated above, it is also a Pauline ecclesiology that *koinonia* is *pneumatic*, Christological, communal, participative, missiological and incarnational. Sociologically, *koinonia* is non-discriminatory, non-racial and non-sexist (Gal. 3:28). Scholars from sociology, anthropology, theology and even psychology verbalise the notion of 'separate but equal.' They use this slogan to segregate schools, public places and hospitality industries, including churches. In a chapter entitled 'Reading the apostle Paul through Gal 3:28' in the book edited by DeYoung book, *Coming together in the 21st century: The Bible's message in an age of diversity*, Mini Haddad agrees with the apostle Paul that these tenets are non-negotiable. She writes:

> [W]hile Scripture has been used to segregate and oppress people based on superficial issues such as skin color, gender, and class, the Bible is filled with examples that regard gender, class, and ethnicity as irrelevant to one's service in God's covenant community (2009:74).

These tenets make up communion ecclesiology in its essence as the mirror for the world to see Christ. Should communion fail in one or all of these tenets, then it has failed Christ who is the Head of the Church. This does not mean unity without diversity. The church must always have a room for diversity

because there are many styles of being a Christian and of forming of Christian churches. In his paper 'Church Unity and Diversity in the New Testament', presented at the third symposium of the Institute for Theological Research held at the University of South Africa, W. Nicol points out:

> [T]his unity is in the first place an invisible, spiritual reality but it must be made an earthly reality by the practical love and co-operation among Christians and local churches (1980:1).

This continues the truth that the two aspects of the church (unity and diversity), do not compete against, but rather promote each other. Diversity is strength. Unity is power. Togetherness is love. Participation and sharing demonstrate *ecclesia's* character. The essence is that the church is a trinitarian, eschatological, worshipping, sacramental, serving, ordered, cultural, and missional community. According to Moltmann (1977:121), the church, is a messianic community. This means the church is Christological in character. It is a free society of equals, an open fellowship of friends. Therefore, the church members are called upon to strive for, forge and 'find deep unity with each other, though widely separated by time, by space, by nationality, by educational background, and by ecclesiastical connections' (Tenney 1975:249).

Christ is at the center of the community as a member (brother) and a leader (father). Crow (1982:36) rightly asserts: 'Our unity centers in Christ. The church is not simply an association of individuals, but nothing less than Christ himself living in the community.'

Communion is all living in and as the family with Christ, the Emmanuel among them. There is no place within the communion for discrimination of any kind or nature.

Philip Graham Ryken opens the eleventh chapter of his book, *The Communion of Saints,* by saying:

> Ethnic diversity. Racial reconciliation. Social justice. Gender equity. Handicapped rights. It may sound like the political agenda of the radical left, but these phrases describe important themes from the Bible. The

> New Testament places race, class, and gender in the context of the good news about Jesus Christ (2001:137).

It is, therefore, logical to conclude that most, if not all the local churches of the apostolic era were multi-racial in composition. This marked *ecclesia* distinctively from Judaism or Greek philosophical societies of the time. The South African New Testament scholar, Jan A .du Rand, mentions that the 'Johannine community could have been comprised of both Christians from Judaism as well as those from Greek heathendom' (1991:60).

This is what made the churches of those times different. There were no socio-political barriers as there were (and still are) in the NGK and some English churches in South Africa from the eighteenth century to the present. Jesus prayed for the unity (John 17:11, 22). He could be uttering the same deep heart's desire today, belaboring that 'unity prevails wherever there is a deep and genuine experience of Christ; for the fellowship of the new birth transcends all historical and denominational boundaries' (Tenney 1975:249).

We should be certain in our beliefs that speaking of the unity of believers does not refer to unanimity, uniformity, or a union. In the communion ecclesiology context, unity implies spiritual nature and devotion that enables God's people to bear a convincing testimony before the world- *missio Dei* at its core.

9.4 Missio Dei – Task of communion ecclesiology

The church exists for the sake of *missio Dei* (God's mission). 'As such, it lives, suffers, and lays down its life to serve God's creative and redemptive mission to the world (Jinkins 2003:180).

The Christian God has always been a missionary God. God's missionary method is the communion. Humanity is created in the image of the triune God (*imago Dei*). Humanity as God's image bearer represents God on earth. The communion is persons-in-community as God's instrument to bring God's glory on earth. In fact, as VanGemeran says, missiology's bedrock is that

'God is the Creator, who is interested in humankind. The theocentric interest correlates with the anthropocentric concern (1988:51).

The crux is that

> our identity as human beings is found in community. Our identity as Christians is found in Christ's new community. And our mission takes place through communities of light. Christianity is total church (Chester & Timmis 2008:50).

Christians are the image-bearers of the Trinitarian God. For the world to see God, they look at the church. The church is the representation of Christ and his character. Authenticating legislations that separate believers racially, ethnically, politically, or otherwise, does not only misrepresent Christ's character but also muzzles and suppresses the church from fulfilling the purposes of God in the world. These legislations result in what Tenney (1978) in his commentary on the book of Galatians, calls a failure of legalism that empties one of the personal experience of freedom of Christ.

Missio Dei is the triune God's work on earth. Kritzinger, Meiring and Saayman (1994:40) assert that 'mission is not primarily the activity of men and women. Mission is God's work. Mission is first and foremost to be regarded as *missio Dei*, God's mission on earth'.

Willem Saayman (1991:5) continues to define *missio Dei* as 'the great mission of the triune God in the world, and then especially as characterized in the mission of Jesus the Messiah (Luke 4:18-21).'

While unity is the character of *ecclesia,* mission is her task. Mission as a task involves people. Members of *ecclesia* are expected to be responsible reproducing committed followers of Christ. They are committed to Christ and his command to make other people disciples too and to relate them to communities of Christian people called churches. Hence, 'the church is the divinely ordained institution that links believers to one another for correction, training in righteousness, and preserving the apostolic message' (Tennent 2005:174).

Churches are people. People are the object and goal of the *missio Dei* as well as the agent or strategy for *missio Dei*. Communion ecclesiology is inevitably tasked as God's missionary agent or vehicle in the world. An absent mission means an empty church. A divided church means an empty mission. Unity enhances mission. Without a mission, *ecclesia* has no reason to exist. Saayman (1991:16-19) explores expansively indicating the necessity of unity-in-mission and mission-in-unity. This he argues from the acknowledgement of Jesus as the Messiah and King, the nature of the church (catholicity and apostolicity), the person and the ministry of Jesus Christ, the various charisms of the Holy Spirit imbued on Christians, and of course the political and the ideological context in which mission operates. This is strengthened by John Stott when he writes: 'Koinonia also expresses not only what we have received together, but what we give out together, not only our common inheritance, but also our common service' (2009:97).

Paramount is that *missio Dei* is what *ecclesia* is all about. The two are inseparable. Anthony Robinson, an American pastor and leadership guru is succinct in his statement:

> Mission is not one of the many programs of the church, the church exists for mission, for the changing and transforming of human beings and human communities, in the light of the gospel (Robinson 2003:74).

The invaluable lesson here is that *ecclesia*'s primary mission is to correct the historically disjointed missiological initiatives brought by sanctioning the evils of the state. Forster bears this out when he writes:

> From a theological perspective, any nation that oppresses its people cannot be in line with the values of God-'s Kingdom. Pragmatically, it is also not sensible to expect that the principles of God's Kingdom would be upheld through State-sanctioned or State-enforced, religion (2012:73).

The message and the messenger must synchronise. This is the problem that the NGK struggled with. Their message of God's love and grace did not confirm them as the bearers of that message. The ungodly state was governed by godly

principles and policies. Pure theology, such as the ecclesiology of J.A Heyns, did not synchronise with what was happening within the NGK *laager*. They missed an opportunity by failing to become a prophetic community that endeavours to alter fundamental social policies that move beyond social witness and social service to seeking social change (Corbett & Smith 1980:27). For the current South African Christianity, the fundamental truth remains: 'Our secular loyalties need to become less important in light of our loyalty to the Lord' (Pretorius 1996:173).

The South African church is on an *eschatological* journey. Though scarred and bruised by the dents and scratches of apartheid, the church is still under construction. The fact that South African society is more divided on a Sunday than any other day of the week, should caution the church to its legitimacy to exist in this polarised society. Healing and pleading for forgiveness must continue. Leaning on historical, ecclesiastical errors will not emancipate Christianity from the shackles of the past. The spirit of patriotic faith needs to be revived. As Ajith Fernando points out:

> [T]he church's embarrassing historical association with the colonial rulers remains with us. One of the best ways to overcome this stigma is for Christians to be true patriots. Our people should know us as those who truly love the country. We should work for the welfare of the country we belong to (2001:48).

Pastoral tasks must change for the better. Dialogues must continue because dialogue creates closeness and understanding. The genuine church must continue to be marked by 'k*erygma* (worship and celebration), *didache* (teaching and learning), *koinonia* (community and care), and *diakonia* (service and witness)' (Robinson 2003:103).

The church in South Africa is challenged to break out of the *laager* and identify with Christ. This is echoed by Ryken who maintains that 'union with Christ overcomes racial, economic, and sexual divisions within the communion of the saints' (2001:137).

Communion ecclesiology is Christians united across the globe; it overcomes geographical and national, ethnic, class and gender barriers. Stephen Rhodes, in his book *Where the Nations Meet: The Church in a Multicultural World*, rightly informs us that 'before the church can ask our culture to believe the gospel, we must show our culture that we believe it by how we live together' (1998:18).

The South African church should learn from biblical teachings on communion ecclesiology, from the broader church history, and from its own history that departure from the theological truth leads to heresy and the embracing of ungodly policies and legislations. Communion ecclesiology, as it exists in all Christian traditions, though at different levels of understanding, should be re-visited and applied in ecclesiastical practices. It is crucial that the communion of saints, togetherness, unity, and *koinonia* should mark the church's identity. Christians are called upon to gather around the fireplace or *kgotla* (courtyard) to dialogue with one another (*ubuntu*). The principle of *ubuntu* should permeate and overarch the identity of the church. The *laager* must be opened up. Some church members must leave the *laager* and embrace *missio Dei* in the world. This is a special appeal to the *volk* and the NGK traditions. The South African church is *eschatologically* moving, and the move must impact the socio-political and economic spaces. The wall of hostility must be broken. Faith must be strengthened and become practical. In other words, our confessional creeds must become faith incarnated. Rhodes encourages us 'to live by faith is to go on a journey, to intentionally leave behind what we have known, what we have come to put our trust in, and to move out beyond our field of vision' (Rhodes 1998:33).

The church in South Africa gradually constructed walls in society and took these walls into the church community. The church has, unfortunately, allowed gender or sexism to keep itself divided. It is true that 'we embrace class distinctions. We segregate ourselves by racial designations. We exalt theological differences at the price of unity. We use cultural diversity as an excuse for divinity' (DeYoung 1997:7).

It is a historical pain that we all have to deal with. The structural segregations we experience today were, unfortunately, birthed out of the church. Matsobane Manala reminds us of this:

> Racial discrimination in South Africa appallingly originated in the church. The Dutch Reformed Church's decision in 1857 to allow separate Eucharist services, capitulating to the demands of those who believed black people were either non-human or sub-human, greatly compromised the integrity of the church (2015:339).

The exclusion culminated into enacting the disempowered leadership. The black church leaders were not viewed by their white counterparts as those with the capacity to lead. This is highlighted by Villa-Vicencio & Grassow, who maintain that:

> An ingredient common to all the settler churches was a commitment to the maintenance of white control over the gospel of Christ. Few, if any, black Christians were consulted on the work and organisation of Christianity (2009:113).

These proclivities and attitudes cause the church to deviate from its primary calling of playing a prophetic role in society. The canonical mandate is clear that *ecclesia* should become a prophetic community. According to Corbett and Smith (1980:17), 'Every church should be a prophetic community. Otherwise, it is not fulfilling its appointed mission in society.'

Communion ecclesiology propels the church towards the enormous pastoral tasks of identity, dialogue, integration, policy, management and reconciliation. Furthermore, there should be some intentional responsive actions towards the Lord's so-called high-priestly prayer in John 17: that they may be one. Once the unity is entrenched and realised, then *missio Dei* allows for *ecclesia* to fulfil God's mandate in the world – this is e*x gratia* and *Dei gratia* (act of grace and by the grace of God). In a real sense, the church of today, together with her leaders are pastorally involved as artisans in the house of God (Van Hoozer & Strachan 2010).

The way forward is to embrace multiculturalism in the church. This calls for adapting, adopting, or abandoning some of the traditionally established liturgical norms. This calls for us moving out of our comfort zones. A multicultural church is *eschatological*. As Rhodes says:

> The multicultural church is composed of a pilgrim people, making their way as immigrants in this world, longing for that 'better country' (Heb 11:16). Obedience to the promises of God does not necessarily guarantee success, but it does give victory (1998:221).

Multicultural churches are the foretaste of God's kingdom. They make God's kingdom visible. Charles van Engen (1991:111) writes that 'all such congregations are "branch offices" of God's kingdom in this world, the anticipatory sign, the eschatological heralds of that which is coming.'

Communion ecclesiology is living in expectation and hope of better things to come. It is waiting patiently for the rewards of our efforts of incarnational Christ's lifestyle. According to DeYoung, communion ecclesiology is a new community in which:

> The peace of God awaits us if we choose to enter the womb of God. There we find restored identity, revived emotion, renewed energy, and resurrected hope. Then we can advance toward discovering a new way of relating in a community of the reconciled. It is the community of Jesus Christ: where all are welcome at the table of fellowship; where all voices and viewpoints are treasured; where each person is fluent in the experiences of others. We have a long way to travel down the road of reconciliation before we arrive at such a desired state of togetherness (1997:130).

Our senses become normal when we are part of the communion of the saints. We discover our identity when we are reconciled with the Trinitarian God and his Church. The fullness of life is experiencing God through an entrance into communion with the saints. An American church strategist, Mark Dever (2004:130), rightly points out that 'our lives together as church communities are the confirming echo of our witness.' Christ as the central member of this

communion makes zöe and *bios* meaningful. Furthermore, 'Christians need, then, to enter into a new awareness of sanctity in deep communion with everyone and everything that exists past, present and future' (Ntlha 2009:57).

Personal autonomy and individual self are not coactive with communion ecclesiality. Humanity and every piece of creation in the entire cosmos are radically connected through time, space, and life itself. That is why it is crucial to know that: 'Doing theology entails community analysis so that theologians may have a broader knowledge of the community they intend to serve' (Modise 2015:14).

Today, ecclesiology is in a stage of transition and there is a budding awareness of *the communion ecclesiology*. The faithful in the church are yet to be aware of the need and relevance of the *koinonia.* It is a proud matter that even before Vatican II, the South African ecumenical community had taken many steps in anticipation of a blooming *communion ecclesiology*. Still, we need to go further in this regard. It is a living reality that South African Christianity is a communion of togetherness with the Trinitarian God. If this is an *ecclesial* reality, the faithful should be encouraged to foster this *ecclesial* consciousness and to lead their *ecclesial* life according to this reality at all levels. South African civil servant, writer and cleric, Rev. Frank Chikane strengthens this hope as he writes:

> Ahead of us, we can see the land of promises. These are promises that could fundamentally change the world. They are based on simple principles: the common good of all of humanity, the destruction of narrow nationalistic interests and the establishment of a world in which we can all live in peace and prosperity, sharing the common interests of all humanity (2013:138).

In the post-apartheid South Africa, the communion of the saints should see itself as a new fellowship, made up of the people whose minds have been renewed. This fellowship is clearly pictured by Robinson:

> This fellowship which is so deeply rooted in God's gracious dealings differs qualitatively from all other human groups in society. This is so

> because it transcends all criteria by which other social/societal groups are formed. Indeed, the new fellowship cuts across all others groups in society and draws its members from all ranks. Position, esteem, possession, heritage, race or sex should have nothing to say in the composition of the congregation (1996:83).

This is the rallying call from the cathedrals, chapels, sanctuaries, and auditoria on the daily basis: Acceptance and inclusion in the fellowship, because: 'The body of Christ represents the essence of unity and solidarity' (Manala 2015:344) – especially in regard to those stigmatised by racism, sexism, health status such as HIV and Aids, or any social standing that may be deemed as insignificant by those in power.

The famous American Baptist preacher John Piper captures the hope and joy of communion ecclesiology as follows:

> The ultimate goal of God in all of history is to uphold and display his glory for the enjoyment of the redeemed from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. His goal is the gladness of his people because God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him. Delight is a higher tribute than duty. The chief end of God is to glorify God and enjoy his glory forever. Since his glory is magnified most in the God-centered passions of his joyful people, God's self-exultation and our jubilation are one. The greatest news in all the world is that God's ultimate aim to be glorified and man's aim to be satisfied are not at odds (1996:219).

The church in South Africa must move boldly to the next level to reclaim her legitimate position and role in the divided society. Frank Chikane, in his defence for not abandoning the Apostolic Faith Mission, despite some ill-treatment, says we need to continue to proclaim the Kingdom of God on earth despite belonging to this kind of a church. He goes on:

> A church organization therefore becomes a vehicle to minister to this divided society which has resulted in a divided church. A church that has conformed to the unjust and corrupt structures of our society. A

> church that consciously or unconsciously blesses structural violence or call it 'systematic' violence (1988:78).

This boldness is a mark that can break any political or ecclesiastical red tape. No human power, wisdom, or civilization can destroy the communion of the saints. The fact remains that South Africa continues to be a multi-culturally diverse country. The changing demographics must be visible in the church. The church gathered should be reflected in the church scattered. As Jan Edwards Dormer propounds: 'The mission community is increasingly diverse, with sending countries from all parts of the globe' (2009:188).

Bi-cultural marriages are becoming a norm. Refugee settlements on the church doorsteps are the reality. Borders are open and the foreign influx of different nationalities is irreversible. Demographics of our city centers, suburbs, townships, villages and informal settlements are in a dynamic swinging rhythm, influencing our culture decisively. The mission field had come to our churches' doorsteps and aisles. As Timothy Gombis asserts: 'God is building the multiracial, multiethnic, multigenerational church of Jesus Christ, which stands as a monument to his triumph over the powers of darkness' (2010:182).

9.5 The Grand finalé

This section gives some notable quotations regarding the Church.

1. 'The [Church is a] company of Christians knit together by the profession of the same faith, and the communion of the same sacraments, under the government of lawful pastors, and especially of the Roman bishop, as the only Vicar of Christ on earth' – The Latin Church: *Bellarmine De Eccl. Mil., 2*.
2. 'The Church is a divinely instituted community of men, united by the orthodox faith, the law of God, the Hierarchy, and the sacraments' – The Greek Church: *Full Catec. of the Orthodox Est. Church*.
3. 'A congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the sacraments daily administered according to Christ's

ordinances, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same' – The Church of England: *Thirty-Nine Articles, Art, XIX*.

4. 'A congregation of saints, in which a gospel is purely preached, and the sacraments are rightly administered' – The Augsburg Confession: *Aug. Con., Art VII*.

5. 'The Church is a community of believers, or saints, gathered out of the world, whose distinction is to know and to worship, through the Word and by the Spirit, the true God in Christ the Saviour' –The Helvetic Confession: *Helv. Conf., Art. XVII*.

6. 'A true congregation or assembly of all faithful Christians, who look for their salvation only from Jesus Christ, as being washed by his blood and sanctified by his Spirit' – The Belgic Confession: *Belg. Conf., Art. XXVII*.

7. 'A congregation of men embracing the gospel of Christ, and rightly using the sacraments' – The Saxon Confession: *Saxon Conf., Art XII*.

8. 'The Church is a society of the elect of all ages and countries both Jews and Gentiles; this is the Catholic, or universal Church. The Church is invisible, and known only to God' – The Scottish Confession: *Scot. Con., Art. XVI* (1–8: Hiscox 2011).

9. 'A visible Church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the Gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ, governed by his law, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word' –*The New Hampshire Confession, Art. XIII (Brown n.d).*

10. 'It is a community of persons elected by God for eternal life and born again by the Holy Spirit, who embrace the pure doctrine of the gospel with true faith, use the sacraments according to the divine institution, fulfil the obedience, owed to the ministry, and are given righteousness and eternal life because of and through Christ' – *The Heidelberg Catechism, CMa 113* (Van der Borght 2014).

11. 'We believe in one holy, universal Christian church, the communion of saints called from the entire human family. We believe:

- that Christ's work of reconciliation is made manifest in the church as the community of believers who have been reconciled with God and with one another (Eph. 2:11-22);
- that unity is, therefore, both a gift and an obligation for the church of Jesus Christ; that through the working of God's Spirit it is a binding force, yet simultaneously a reality which must be earnestly pursued and sought: one which the people of God must continually be built up to attain (Eph. 4:1-16);
- that this unity must become visible so that the world may believe that separation, enmity and hatred between people and groups is sin which Christ has already conquered, and accordingly that anything which threatens this unity may have no place in the church and must be resisted (John 17:20-23);
- that this unity of the people of God must be manifested and be active in a variety of ways: in that we love one another; that we experience, practice and pursue community with one another; that we are obligated to give ourselves willingly and joyfully to be of benefit and blessing to one another; that we share one faith, have one calling, are of one soul and one mind; have one God and Father, are filled with one Spirit, are baptized with one baptism, eat of one bread and drink of one cup, confess one name, are obedient to one Lord, work for one cause, and share one hope; together come to know the height and the breadth and the depth of the love of Christ; together are built up to the stature of Christ, to the new humanity; together know and bear one another's burdens, thereby fulfilling the law of Christ that we need one another and upbuild one another, admonishing and comforting one another; that we suffer with one another for the sake of righteousness; pray together; together serve God in this world; and together fight against all which may threaten

or hinder this unity (Phil. 2:1-5; 1 Cor. 12:4-31; John 13:1-17; 1 Cor. 1:10-13; Eph. 4:1-6; Eph. 3:14-20; 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 1 Cor. 11:17-34; Gal. 6:2; 2 Cor. 1:3-4);

– that this unity can be established only in freedom and not under constraint; that the variety of spiritual gifts, opportunities, backgrounds, convictions, as well as the various languages and cultures, are by virtue of the reconciliation in Christ, opportunities for mutual service and enrichment within the one visible people of God (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:1-11; Eph. 4:7-13; Gal. 3:27-28; James 2:1-13); that true faith in Jesus Christ is the only condition for membership of this church' – *Confession of Belhar*, 1986. Par. 2.

12. 'Coming together is a beginning

Staying together is progress

Thinking together is real unity

Working together is success'. (Rossouw 1989:15)

13. 'We believe that the one true Church is the whole company of those who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ and regenerated by the Holy Spirit; that the local Church on earth should take its character from this conception of the Church spiritual, and therefore that the new birth and personal confession of Christ are essentials of Church membership' – Passed by the *Baptist Union Assembly*, Durban, September 1924. (*1988:177*).

14. 'Our churches are open to all who wish to worship God through our Lord Jesus Christ, regardless of race, colour, or political sentiments. We strongly affirm that the only Christian stance is to recognise people as people' – *Assemblies of God Southern Africa Statement*, Mmabatho, September, 1989. #3. (Bond 2000:275)

15. 'The one Body unites together all its different members. Unlike Israel after the flesh it is not a nation constituted by ties of descent and culture. For Christ has broken down the barrier of alienation between Jews and

Gentiles and every barrier of race, nation, tribe, caste, class, language, culture, social status and gender to form a single new humanity. The claim of Christ and his Body on believers far outstrips the claim to loyalty of any group defined by any of these terms. Not race, nationality, culture or class but baptism and the Holy Spirit determine who belongs to the Church. No member of the Body can reject any other; for God has accepted us all in the beloved Son and bound us together in one Spirit, as members who need one another for the Body to function properly in its work and witness to the world. In covenant with God, we are all in covenant with one another, called to walk together in God's ways and ordinances, in a community of mutual love and care. The one Body anticipates, and is a sign of, when God will unite all things with Christ as their one Head. Thus God calls the Church to be the vanguard of a new humanity. As the community of the faithful the Church stretches beyond this world to include all believers who have departed this life' – Confession of Faith of the *Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa*, par 22.8. (*Confession of Faith* 2013)

16. 'The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same' – *Methodist Church*, Article XIII – Of the Church.

17. 'Let us each renew our personal commitment to Jesus Christ and seek to grow in grace and in love for God, one another and the world. Let us ensure that our mission of healing and transformation is holistic, embracing all the imperatives for mission. Let us participate in God's mission in ways that are appropriate to our local contexts and in partnership with the wider church and community. Let us celebrate our diversity and the gifts God has given to each of us; support each other; challenge each other and pray for each other' – *Charter of the Mission Congress of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa* adopted in Mthatha, November 2004.

18. 'We believe in the Church, the community that confesses Jesus Christ as Lord, the covenant people of God made new in Christ, the Body of Christ called together by the Holy Spirit through the Word.

    God calls the Church to express its life in the unity and fellowship of the Spirit; in worship through the preaching of the Word, observance of the sacraments, and ministry in His name; by obedience to Christ, holy living, and mutual accountability.

    The mission of the Church in the world is to share in the redemptive and reconciling ministry of Christ in the power of the Spirit. The Church fulfils its mission by making disciples through evangelism, education, showing compassion, working for justice, and bearing witness to the kingdom of God.

    The Church is a historical reality that organizes itself in culturally conditioned forms, exists both as local congregations and as a universal body, and also sets apart persons called of God for specific ministries. God calls the Church to live under His rule in anticipation of the consummation at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ' – Church of the Nazarene, Articles of Faith, Art. XI, par 11 (2013).

19. 'To promote fellowship and co-operation among Churches and related Christian organisations by creating opportunities for Christians of different traditions to pray, plan and act together in fulfilment of their common calling to witness in word and deed to justice, truth and love' – Preamble 4.2 of the *South African Council of Churches Constitution adopted at the SACC National Conference*, 17 July 2007 (Constitution of the SACC n.d.).

20. 'The church exists both as an inclusive fellowship and as local congregations gathered for worship and Christian service. Congregations find their fulfilment in the universal community of the Church, and the universal Church exists in and through congregations. This church, therefore, derives its character and powers both from the sanction and representation of its congregations and from its inherent nature

> as an expression of the broader fellowship of the faithful' – *Evangelical Lutheran Churches in America*, Constitution Chapter 3, par. 3.03 (2016).

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Most, if not all the Christian confessions are in agreement that the church is a united community. Throughout the ages and throughout the world, the church is one community under one Head, knit together by the Holy Spirit. *For there is one body and one Spirit. (Eph. 4:4).* Its church members are in communion because they are in communion with one Spirit.

> The Church is a temple in which God lives by his Spirit, the believers being joined together like stones in a building (Smeaton & Owen 1998:51).

The day has arrived when communion ecclesiology should permeate Christian faith and the world is appalled at it. We lament the fact that the *imago Dei* we carry is marred by the lack of *koinonia* in the eyes of non-believers. It is not inspiring that there is now Dutch Reformed Church and the Uniting Reformed Church, instead of having one *communion* made up of the three previously racially divided churches. The fact that there is still the Baptist Union and Baptist Convention makes communion ecclesiology in South Africa a stench in the world. There can never be joy when there is still Assemblies of God – three circles inside one big circle; or as a three-legged pot. There is joy that there is now a Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa. There is an encouragement that there is now Apostolic Faith Mission International. There is an *eschatological* journey and it's a long one! The goal is THAT WE MAY BE ONE!

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List of Abbreviations

ABRECSA: Alliance of Black Reformed Christians in Southern Africa

ACSV: Afrikaanse Christelike Studente Vereeniging

AFM: Apostolic Faith Mission

AGS: Apostoliese Geloofsending

AIC: African Independent Churches (African Initiated Churches, African Indigenous Churches)

ANC: African National Congress

AOG: Assemblies of God

ARCIC: Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission

BCSA: Baptist Convention of South Africa

BUSA: Baptist Union of South Africa

CE: Concerned Evangelicals

CSA: Christelike Studente Assosiasie

DRC: Dutch Reformed Church

EFSA: Evangelical Fellowship of South Africa

EWISA: Evangelical Witness in South Africa

FGC: Full Gospel Church (of God)

FPC: Fellowship of Pentecostal Churches

GK: Gereformeerde Kerk

HCF: Hospital Christian Fellowship

IPC: International Pentecostal Church

NGK: Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk

NGKA: Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika

NGSK: Nederduits Gereformeerde Snding Kerk

NHK: Nederduits Hervormde Kerk

OMC: Ordained Ministers Council

SACBC: South African Catholic Bishops Conference

SACC: South African Council of Churches

SACEL: South African Conference of Evangelical Leaders

SACLA: South African Christian Leadership Assembly

SCA: Student Christian Association

SCM: Student Christian Movement

SCO: Student Christian Organisation

TEASA: The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa

UCA: United Christian Action

UCSA: United Christian Students Association

URCSA: Uniting Reformed Church of South Africa

WCC: World Council of Churches

ZCC: Zion Christian Church

Index

Communion Ecclesionlogy by Dr. K.T. Resane explores the concept of a communion ecclesiology in South Africa. The book provides the reader with a comprehensive overview of the concept in the Bible, in history and in different church traditions including the African Initiated Churches. The book also focuses on the different cultural groups in South Africa as they were organised within theological traditions.

- **Prof. S.D. Snyman**
University of the Free State

The use of *ubuntu* to advance his argument for communion ecclesiology is a fascinating way to broaden the theological thinking of the readers of this book.

- **Prof. Leepo Modise**
University of South Africa

Resane argues wisely, forcefully and persuasively that in a racially polarised South Africa, the mutual communal affirmation as enshrined in *ubuntu* has a significant role to play. In the context of *ubuntu*, therefore, communion ecclesiology expresses compassion, justice, reciprocity, dignity, harmony and humanity – important elements of nation building. This is indeed a must read!!

- **Dr Elijah Mahlangu**
University of Pretoria

Dr Resane touches on the evils of the past South African government that divided people, including the church. The church should not compromise in order to rise above the current odds. This monograph is a must read for better equipping of students for ministry!

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