

**1305 Church, Ministry and Mission**

**Week 1 Contemporary Trends and Issues**



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## A: Foundational Matters

### 1. All Perspective is Situational

- a. neutrality or objectivity as an Enlightenment/modernist goal is neither possible nor desirable in relation to all discussions concerning the church
- b. this is not because the postmodern critique of foundationalism is adequate, but because of the nature of the subject under discussion
- c. the church, whether conceived as the people of God, body of Christ, temple of the Spirit, eschatological covenant community or any other description, is constituted by God's own involvement in his creation
- d. whilst this is true of the story of the people of God from creation on, it takes on new dimensions through the Incarnation, for by the Spirit the Son of the Father himself becomes part of the narrative of the community of faith
- e. this means that the only true perspective to be had concerning the nature of the church, including "contemporary issues", derives from Christ
- f. there are a number of angles from which this perspective could be derived, the most basic however being the unique mediatorship of Jesus (1 Tim 2:5)
- g. Jesus alone can reveal the divine/heavenly and human/earthly dimensions of the church
- h. the only guard against the pendulum swing between transcendence and immanence, world- detachment and worldliness, is the Word made flesh (John 1:14)
- i. this should not be thought of as a matter of "balance", but abiding in the reality of Christ

### 2. The Prophetic Critique of the People of God

- a. according to Jesus, prophecy began with Abel (Matt 23:35), it is not recorded that he spoke to Cain concerning his attitude to God, indicated by the sacrifice he offered, but Hebrews indicates Abel bore witness (12:1) concerning divine God
- b. if prophecy is essentially testimony e.g. Rev 1:9; 19:10 then Abel prophesied to his brother through the witness of his life
- c. prophets possess authority because their lives embody the divine pathos concerning the state of the people of God

- d. it is a matter of the consciousness – impressions, thoughts, feelings – of the prophet reflecting what is happening inside of God. The prophet does not find God in his mind as object, but finds himself an object in God’s mind.
- e. prophecy is highly passionate, its anthropopathic nature puts the church in touch with the “humanity of God”, distance is overcome
- f. the prophet is a person filled with divine pathos, a “man of the spirit”, (Hos 9:7). His interior life is formed by the pathos of God, it is *theomorphic*.
- g. unlike in enthusiasm, the divine is not identified with the human, there is no striving for personal exaltation
- h. in particular, manifestations of the displeasure of God (Heb 12:5- 11, Rev 2 – 3 etc.) are signs of the depths of his concern
- i. the prophet (and all who hear him/her) come to experience God as a subject and not as an object. “To the prophet the supremely real is not his experience, but that which is given *to* his experience, that which surpasses his power of experience. To him, God is not an object, but a subject, and his perceiving of the event matters less than God’s uttering of His word. He is not the agent, the moving force; he stands within the event, not above it.  
No perception is as plain, direct, and infallible as eating food. What we see or remains outside us, what we consume becomes a part of us. “Thy words were found, and I ate them...” (Jer 15:16). His was not an experience of God, but an experience of a divine experience. (Heschel)
- j. in New Testament terms, this means that we have access to “the mind of Christ” (1 Cor 2:16) and the “deep things of God” (1 Cor 2:10)
- k. prophecy is a reminder that what obtains between God and humanity is not a contract but a covenant, this is why the prophet represents the *unconditional* demand of God
- l. however critical the prophets may be of the state of the people of God, “your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite.” (Ezek 16:3); “there I began to hate them” (Hos 9:15)“But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”” (Mark 8:33); “I will spit you out of my mouth” (Rev 3:16) this is not their final word
- m. the prophetic order is always to finish with a word of hope e.g. Amos 9; Rev 21-22

### 3. The priority of the Kingdom of God

- a. the kingdom of God is his rule which effects his plan.
- b. the Old Testament prophets are guardians of the divine rule (theocracy)
  - (i) the theocracy is mediated by covenant.
  - (ii) the greatest Old Testament prophet is Moses, who mediated and guarded the covenant. (Num 12:8)
  - (iii) the prophet Samuel is the instrument who enacts Yahweh's will to grant the people a human king. (1 Sam 8)
  - (iv) the prophets from Samuel on bring God's ruling word to the monarch (1 Sam 15:22-23; 16:6ff; 2 Sam 12:1ff; 1 King 11:29-40; 16:1-4; Jer 22:18-19; Amos 7:9 etc)
  - (v) the prophets oppose false prophecy ie a deviant plan (1 King 18; 22:5-28; Isa 9:15; Jer 23:11, 15; Amos 2:12; Micah 3:11ff)
- c. John the Baptist proclaims the Kingdom of God.  
(Matt 3:2)
- d. Jesus proclaims the Kingdom of God, he does not preach the church.  
(Matt 4:17, 23; 12:28; Mark 1:15; Luke 4:43; 8:1, 9:11 etc)
- e. Jesus taught that the kingdom of God was the means by which the church grows (Matt 16:16ff.)
- f. the gospel proclamation is the testimony of the church to the King in his kingdom.  
(Acts 1:3, 6-8; 8:12; 19:8; 28:23; Rom 14:17; 1 Cor 4:20; 6:10 etc)
- g. this is what it means to bear witness to the new covenant reality which has come in Christ.

#### B: Prevailing Problems in the Contemporary Church

- a. church centred rather than Christ centred - ecclesiolatry
- b. hierarchical vs egalitarian - clericalism, priestly mediatorship
- c. control vs liberty – extrinsic positional or charismatic authority  
dualistic vs holistic – sacred/secular, inside/outside, a club exists for its paid up members. “The church, instead of the temple of God, becomes the temple of man – a *country club*, or perhaps a *night club*, depending on their specialty. We pay membership fees – tithes and offerings, for club privileges, and we expect service. (D. Orton)
- d. attractational vs missional – lack of a Christian world view, “meeting centred”

- e. pragmatism vs truth – “what works”, closed to the essentially new cf. predictable extension of the present
- f. market driven vs Spirit directed - “how to”, success, growth, idolatry of managerial approach, “the machine”, McDonaldisation of the church
- g. performance orientation vs grace – achievement, numbers, dollars
- h. growth vs health – size, visible status
- i. monocultural vs multicultural – tendency to gravitate towards one “church – type” e.g. mega church, house church
- j. imitation vs creativity – “cloning”, non - transferability
- k. individualistic vs communitarian – focus on the individual
- l. experience vs relationship - primacy of the experiencing subject, emotionalism
- m. experience vs truth – dominance of feeling over reason
- n. materialistic vs faithful – prosperity as wealth
- o. biblically ignorant vs biblically literate – decline in Bible reading and exposition, ignorance over the plan of God
- p. worldly vs holy – sexualised, non – sacrificial
- q. feminised vs true unity of genders – music in a feminine key, fear of confrontation
- r. masculinised vs true unity of genders – senior positions are dominated by men, rational structures preferred over relational structures
- s. style vs substance – appearance is primary
- t. therapy vs repentance

### C: Prevailing Problems and Post Modern Culture

- a. the people of God are always in danger of mirroring the mainstream (popular) culture: *vox populi vox dei*
- b. post modern culture is characterised by many of the features outlined above:

Post-modern preferences

<u>Modern</u>	<u>Post Modern</u>
content	technique
substance	style
words	images
action	spectacle
exposition	entertainment
truth	feeling



- d. I also need to fellowship with my fellow Christians. So I go to my local church to attend a programmed version of community that provides a surface-level contact with people around some form of activity at my convenience. If I need more fellowship, I go to a small group, usually focused on the dynamic personality of the small group leader or on the subject matter I feel I need to better my life. But again, this is at my convenience and fairly optional if my schedule becomes too demanding.
- e. I need discipleship and Christian growth. So I go to my local church to attend Sunday services, Bible studies and small groups where someone opens the Bible and tells me what it says and how it should apply to my life. I also have the option of learning "practical" topics such as how to be a good spouse, parent, employee, leader, steward, etc.
- f. I need to serve. So I go to my local church and participate in a program where I use my time and skills in a fairly convenient manner to help others. For the most part, it's fairly safe. And if I'm a volunteer, my participation is completely based on my schedule.
- g. I need to be engaged in mission. So I go to my local church to connect to their evangelistic ministry and their missions program. Every so often I might volunteer to hand out sodas or serve coffee in a convenient and semi-relational form of "reaching people" for Christ. I might also give money to local missionaries the church supports and maybe participate in a weekend mission trip.
- h. I need a children's program to educate my kids. So I go to my local church to place my children in the care of Sunday school teachers and youth pastors who will provide the spiritual and moral foundation for their Christian growth via an age-relevant program.
- i. I need purpose for my life. So I go to my local church, hoping to find a leader with a vision big enough to inspire me. Then I sacrifice my time, energy, and money to become involved in the leader's vision so I can build something big for God with him. New programs. New buildings. New projects. New groups. New services. New converts. New church plants. New missions. More and more and more vision to give my life a reason to exist.
- j. the suggestion is that cultural forms of the organised church have replaced a personal relationship with the triune God
- k. (spiritual) reality is now mediated through organised religion
- l. one needs to move away from "being churched" to being the church, as with all addictions, this requires a period of withdrawal, with attendant symptoms

#### F: The Church and Identity Formation

- a. the above analysis is that, whilst largely accurate, works at the level of observation
- b. we need to ask about the unseen spiritual dynamics affecting the present church, "we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the

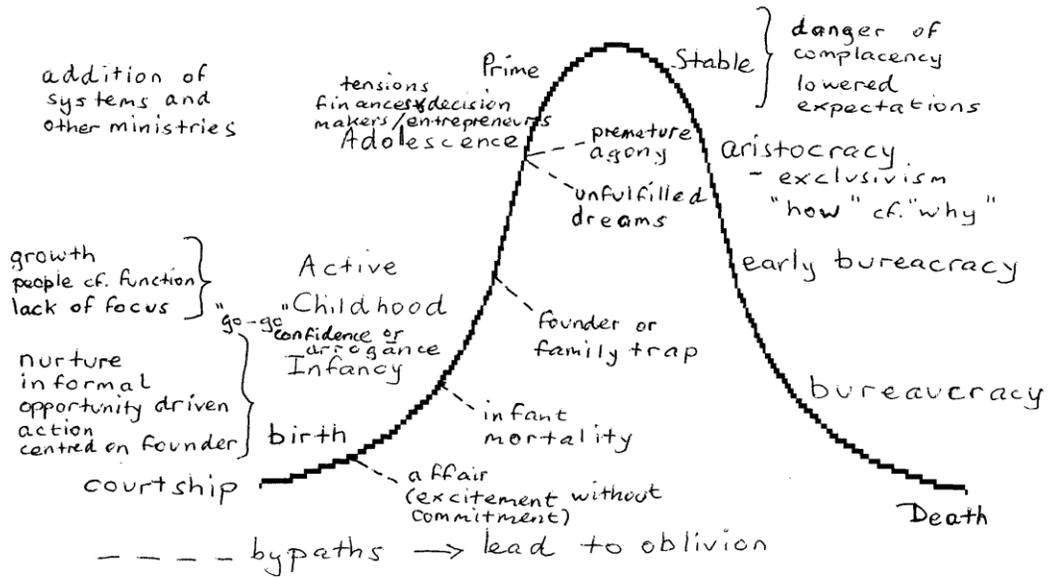
things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.” (2 Cor 4:18)

- c. the dominance of the self, conceived of in individualistic terms, can only be true phenomenologically. That is, the self – as –experienced is not equivalent to the self –as - it - is (ontologically).
- d. if God’s own triune identity is mutual and reflexive, the Father, Son and Spirit only exist in and for one another, then this must be true of their image in man
- e. from an existential perspective, considered apart from Christ, the human person is essentially insecure, because they stand under the sentence of death (Gen 2:17; Rom 1:32; 6:23; Eph 2:1, 5 etc.)
- f. this is mediated through the inner experience of shame, considered as a loss of glory or true God -likeness(Gen 2:24; Rom 3:23)
- g. human beings instinctively try to deal with shame by some form of “covering” that imparts an alternative sense of personal honour or well being (Gen 3:7)
- h. this can be any number of things, but must include religious systems
- i. in scripture, the very structures God gave were used to fiercely oppose him, classically, this involved the temple (Jer 7:1- 44) and religious personnel, false priests (2 Chron 13:9; 36:14; Lam 2:6; Hos 4:4) and prophets (1 Ki 22:11 -12; Jer 23:17; 28:1 – 17)
- j. similarly, Jesus chief opponents were the interpreters of the law, and the guardians of the temple (Matt 16:21; 26:57; 27:41; Mark 14:43 etc.)
- k. he was crucified as a threat to the integrity of the religious system (Matt 26:61; Mark 14:58; John 11:48); it was intolerable that Jesus could claim, “something greater than the temple is here” (Matt 12:6)
- l. this theme of religious persecution continues in the rest of the New Testament (Acts 7; 14:2ff, 19ff; 17:5ff; 1 Thess 2:14; Rev 2:9; 3:9 etc.); by the time of the book of Revelation, the major persecuting power is associated with the emperor cult (13:4, 15 -17; 14:9; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4)
- m. the essential change brought in by Jesus, recognized by all the writers of the New Testament, but especially in Hebrews, is that the instrumentalities of worship are no longer of “this creation” (Heb 9:11)
- n. new sacrifice (Rom 12:1; Heb 13:15), new priesthood (Heb 7 -9 esp. 8:4), worship leader (Heb 8:2), new temple (John 2:21; 1 Cor 3:16 – 17; 6:19 – 20; Eph 2:19 – 22; 1 Peter 2:5) because a new covenant (Heb 8:8, 13; 9:15; 12:24)

- o. the people of God are now constituted by a heavenly reality (Gal 4:26; Heb 12:18 – 24)
- p. in Paul's terms this involves a new creation (2 Cor 5:17) and a heavenly reference point (Col 3:1ff) etc.
- q. for John, it is "heavenly things" (John 3:12) that are paramount, and true believers are "those who dwell in heaven" (Rev 13:6).
- r. the New Testament's heavenly and eternal perspective on the church is built on the history of Jesus, it is a consequence of Christology
- s. the identity of the church, as humanity gathered to God, or the eschatological covenant community, can only be understood in terms of the identity formation of Jesus the heavenly mediator (1 Tim 2:5)
- t. Jesus' own identity formation (since he is the temple, priest, sacrifice, prophet, true worshipper etc.), is one that only realised ("made perfect") through death (Heb 2:10; 5:9; 7:28) and return to the eternal glory of God (John 17:5). The truth of what a human being *is* (Phil 3:21; 1 John 3:2) is now located in the raised second Adam, at the right hand of God, the bridegroom of the church etc.
- u. when this framework is lost, or marginalised, something must be substituted in its place, this is a matter of fundamental human existence
- v. if idols exist to pacify human guilt, then the most powerful force that exists to pacify guilt in history must be religion. This logic leads to the inevitable conclusion that "Christianity – as - a - religious system", or, the church- as – an – idol, is the most resistant force to the power of the Spirit in human history.
- w. in many ways, the foundational ecclesiastical problem is substituting the church for Jesus e.g. focus on leadership, gifts, buildings
- x. consider for example the old saying about the Roman Catholic compared to Protestant view: the Church puts us into Christ, Christ puts us into the Church (cf. the papal coat of arms, a three layered tiara and 2 keys of the kingdom of heaven illustrates this)
- y. we must all die to the church, not just in its gross organisational forms, but to all the hopes, aspirations and dreams we project upon it from the depths of our struggling subconscious. Only when our hope for the reformation *in* the church is crucified will there ever be hope of a reformation *from* God
- z. until the cross goes through the heart of the church, there will be no long term spiritual renewal in Australia

G: Institutional Life Cycles and Organisational Western Christianity

LIFE CYCLE OF AN ORGANISATION



## 1305 Church, Ministry and Mission

### Week 2 Trinitarian framework

#### A: Introduction to Methodology

##### 1. Note on Method

- a. The common method in approaching the doctrine of the church by Protestants is as a separate item from the doctrine of God and Christology. (In some ways this is a reaction to the Roman Catholic habit of identifying a visible institution as the extension of the incarnation, so that outside of its boundaries there could be no salvation.)
- b. This method implies that the essential nature of the church is in some way disconnected from the reality of God and the incarnation.
- c. The result is that analogies for the church or sought in this worldly entities, like the state as an institution, or an army.
- d. The necessary result of this is hierarchicalism, individualism and fragmentation in Christian circles.
- e. An alternative approach is to begin with the reality of the trinity. This follows the biblical order in Genesis one (and elsewhere) where humanity as the people of God reflects at its own level the kind of being that God is at his level.
- f. Christology and soteriology then become integral to ecclesiology as they fill out the analogy of relationship between God and his people which is restored in the person and work of the Son of God and applied by the Holy Spirit.
- g. Since there are many models of the trinity, the implicit or explicit doctrine of the Godhead with which one operates will always determine one's functional image of the church.
- h. The model of the trinity adopted in this unit is a social model of God. God is a community of Persons – in – relation. The characteristics of the trinity can briefly be described as follows.

##### 2. Trinitarian Ecclesiology

- a. The nature of the Persons is such that their very being is constituted by their communion. The Father *is* the Father of the Son, the Son *is* the Son of the Father, the Spirit *is* the Spirit of the Father and the Son. The Persons do not exist outside of their relationships. The relationships as such are absolute.

- b. To be a Person is to be entirely inclusive. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit completely interpenetrate each other, they possess exhaustive relational knowledge in this communion of perfect love. Each of the Persons exists *in* the other Persons.
- c. This interpenetration is distinct for each of the Persons, they do not relate in identical ways but in the manner of who they are as Father, Son and Spirit.
- d. The entirety or complex of the relations makes up “God”.
- e. Jesus came that we may share in his relationship with the Father (sonship) in the Spirit (John 20:17,21 – 22).
- f. Incarnation and atonement are inclusive acts whereby through being “ in Christ “ we are one with God and partakers of the divine nature (John 15:1ff; 17:20 –23; 2 Peter 1:4).
- g. The essential nature of the Church is therefore relational - communion of the most inclusive possible kind, the one new humanity in Christ (Eph 2:15) is a new and corporate person. As such the church must be by nature as one, holy and catholic (complete) as God , a reality communicated through the apostolic gospel.
- h. This has a number of profound implications as to the form or shape of the church:
- i. Church Types
  - a. the *Church of the Father* with its specific focus on creation, the work/s of the heavenly Father.
    - (i) a focus lends itself to neglect the salvation “effected by Christ” e.g. liberalism.
 

“Its positive emphasis upon the value of man is not matched by the complementary truth of his deep need of forgiveness by the death of Christ.” (Adam 1986:8)
    - (ii) civil religion falls into this category. In the American case God is the source of life and of inalienable rights, as well as being the guide of national history. Cf. the alliance between church and state in South Africa (Afrikaans), and in Serbia.
  - b. the *Church of the Son*, which concentrates on the Son who is the Saviour, and neglects the Father and the Spirit. Such theology of a saving God is reflected,
 

“in open admission of sin and guilt, and acceptance of God’s judgement and His highest standards, in the sure knowledge of forgiveness in Christ. Just as the Church of the Father’s neglect of salvation leads to the forgetting of judgement and grace, so also the Church of the Son may go to the other extreme and enforce a strict moral code on its members, and

treat people as sinners rather than as people in God's image." (Adam 1986:9). Viz. conservatism. This functional emphasis on the Redeemer (Jesusolatry) tends to neglect nature and history.

- c. the *Church of the Spirit*, which concentrates on the empowerment to minister. The emphasis is on the power and gifts of the Spirit. While the Church of the Father looks at creation, and the Church of the Son looks at the church since Christ's birth, the Church of the Spirit however is concerned with the work of God today, with little or no emphasis on the tension involved in waiting for the return of the Son i.e. triumphalism.  
"Whereas the Church of the Father tends to forget that God's promises of salvation have been fulfilled in Christ, the Church of the Spirit is in danger of expecting too much fulfilment in this present age." (Adam 1986:11)  
Emphasis on the Spirit tends to neglect the testing of spirits, and community formation.

(Adam. P. 1986. *Living the Trinity*. Bramcote: Grove.)

j. Trinity, Church and Society

- a. disintegrated understanding of the 3 Divine Persons leads to a disunited society without integrated expression
- b. in colonial and agrarian societies the father has knowledge and power; paternalism. People are objects of help. God is represented as almighty Father, supreme Judge and absolute Lord of life and death. There is no real room for the Son and the Spirit in communion with the Father. With the Father as dominant the relationship is vertical with believers as servants and not sons, e.g. Spain, Latin America.
- c. in modern and democratic environments the leader is part of a political party or social movement, he/she has reached this position through personal endeavour or by charismatic personality. The extreme expressions are the "duce", "Führer", "caudillo". This person is the big brother, guide or companion. Jesus is the "Brother" or "Chief". This leads to emotional or juvenile piety and enthusiasm for the "leader" Jesus. The religion of the Son is dominated by horizontal relationship.
- d. in charismatic groups, subjectivity and personal creativity predominate. Individuality is expressed in terms of "witnessing", "God enlightened me", "the Spirit led me" etc. In the religion of the Spirit alone the main relationship is with the inner self.
- e. in disintegrated societies relationships in their three dimensions are juxtaposed and not cohesive:  
Verticality: Father (God) as oppressive, mystery, unpredictable, hidden (oppression)

Horizontal: Son, self sufficiency, authoritarianism (domination by leaders)

Interiority: Spirit, anarchism, lack of concern (insensitivity)

- f. to be integrated a society needs an upward reference point and memory of origins (Father); sideways relationships and solidarity (Son), and a personal dimension and inner life of creativity and dreams (Spirit).
  - g. without community and participation society is pathological. Upwards, outwards and inwards must coexist.
  - h. “The Trinity is our true social program.”  
(L. Boff 1988, *Trinity and Society* .Maryknoll: Orbis)
  - i. This trinitarian reality is communicated by the dominant images of the church in the New Testament: the church as the household of God, the bride of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit (see later).
- k. Church as Community
- a. Communal rather than individualistic. The church is part of the essence of the Christian life. The church is not an assembly of isolated congregations but one community bound together in Christ, reflecting the life of God. Persons exist in relationship within this community.
  - b. Ecumenical rather than isolated. The church must express its organic nature in a practical way, not by seeking institutional unity but a relational oneness of love which respects unity in diversity.
  - c. Egalitarian rather than hierarchical. The hierarchies imposed on many churches reflect a non – social model of the trinity. A functioning trinitarian ecclesiology encourages the full participation of all members of the church as an expression of their joint share in the life of God.
  - d. Non sexist. The full equality of the Persons of the trinity encourages the full participation of men and women in the life of the church according to the gifts which God bestows. Based on the principle of the interpenetration of Persons and their inclusivity, and the observation that in the economy of the incarnation the roles of the Spirit and the Son appear reversible, no person within the body of Christ is in a permanent structure of subordination. Relationships of ‘subordination’ and ‘superordination’ will change according to the operation of the gifts and graces which the Spirit continuously supplies.
- (K. Giles, *What on Earth Is the Church?* Dove 1995)

3. The Church and the Fullness of God
  - a. An approach to the theology of the church based on the trinity points in the direction of the church as sharing in the fullness of God (Eph 1:22 –23; 4:10; Col 2:9 –10)
  - b. The nature of the church cannot therefore be comprehended in relation to any one of the three Persons of the Trinity alone. The people/household/building/flock of God, the body/bride of Christ and the temple of the Spirit are not separate or divergent realities but cohere in terms of the purpose of the church to image the totality of the divine nature. Since the divine nature exists in the perfect complementarity of the diverse properties of the three Persons expressed in love, the love of God (God) cannot be expressed on the earth as it is in heaven (eschatologically) other than by these distinct realities.
  - c. This means that where any of the three relations is neglected or expressed in a manner which does not include the others, the revelation of God, which is the content of the gospel of salvation, will be impaired.
  - d. Only by living faithfully as the children of God, the brothers/body/bride of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit can each of the three Persons be imaged: the fullness of Father (Eph 3:19), Son (Eph 1:23; 4:10, 13; Col 2:9 –10) and Holy Spirit (Acts 2:11; 4:31; Eph 5:18- 19).

B: The Dimensions of the Church

1. Recognising the Church

- a. this question has forced itself upon the church since earliest times; the epistles abound with references to “false apostles” (2 Cor 11:13), “false brothers” (2 Cor 11:26; Gal 2:4), false teachers” (2 Pet 2:1), those who have “gone out” (1 John 2:19) and so on.
- b. the classic Protestant approach is that of Luther: the church is found where there is a proper preaching of the gospel and a proper administration of the sacraments.
- c. the classic Roman Catholic position is that of the 4 notes of the church in the Nicene Creed: the church is “one, holy, catholic and apostolic”.
- d. the 2 positions can be combined in terms of the presence of Christ in the Word:
  - a. Jesus gathers the church to himself through the spoken word and the gospel sacraments/ordinances.
  - b. The church is holy because through the gospel it is one with the holiness of Christ and will be presented holy and blameless before him (John 13:10; 15:3; 1 Cor 1:30; 6:11; Eph 5:25 – 26; Col 1:22; 1 Thess 3:13).
  - c. The church is catholic because it proclaims the saving message for all humanity which knows no boundaries of race, gender, class etc. (Rom 1:15-16; Gal 3:28) and the gospel is eternal (Rev 14:6).
  - d. The church is apostolic because it is built on the foundation of the gospel revealed and proclaimed by apostles and prophets (Rom 1:1ff; 15:16ff; 1 Cor 1:17; 15:1ff; Gal 2:7; Eph 2:20 etc.).
  - e. The classical approach to this question is in terms of the visible and invisible church:
    1. This distinction is introduced in order to emphasise that the church is not identical with any visible organisation, such as the Roman Catholic Church. Traditional Catholicism saw the true church as identical to those who were in tangible communion with the Pope.
    2. The invisible or spiritual dimension of the church refers to the church’s relationship with God through Christ in the Spirit. Here it is completely one. There is a mystery about this element of the church’s life. This can be related to the invisible (except to faith) eschatological destiny of the church as the new creation.
    3. The visible aspect is the church as it is open to human investigation. This could be put in terms of the church as a sociological reality.
    4. The two aspects are not identical, but this does not imply that there are “two churches”.

5. The emphasis on the distinction is to keep in mind that not all those which claim to be part of the true church are so.
  - a. Jesus examines the church as well as individuals (1Thess 2:4; Rev 2:23)
  - b. there may be those inside the assembly who do not really belong to it (1 Cor 5:13; 2 Tim 2:20; 1 John 2:19). This may be so in terms of faith and conduct.
6. There may be unrecognized true believers (1 Ki 19:18).
7. There are degrees of purity in the church.
8. The tension between the theological reality of the church and its manifest life cannot be resolved in this age by reorganisation or discipline; it will remain until the time when God makes all things new.

## 2. The Oneness of the Church

### 1. The unity of the church is grounded in the oneness of God as trinity

- a. that there can only be one God is a basic element of biblical teaching  
(Deut 6:4; 1 Cor 8:6 etc.)
- b. as such there can only be one people, one bride, one body, one temple, one flock and so on
- c. the language of the New Testament affirms that the church is essentially one; a unity which has been created by the work of Christ  
(Eph 2: 11 – 22; 4:4 –6 cf. Jer 32:39; Ezek 11:18;37:15 – 24)
- d. to believe that the church can be essentially divided is to be that Christ is divided  
(1 Cor 1:13)
- e. the church is one because Jesus is one and he is the content of the gospel  
(Rom 1:3 – 4; 15:19; 1 Cor 9:12; 15:3 – 8; 2 Cor 2:12; 9:13; 10:14 etc.).
- f. in terms of the prayers of Jesus, what is imparted to the church is a share in the relational unity of the Father and the Son; the oneness of the church is of the same essential order as that between the Father and the Son as God  
(John 17:20 –23 cf. 11:41 - 42)
- g. Paul correlates the unity of the church to common possession of the Holy Spirit  
(Rom 15:30; Eph 4:3,6)
- h. the Spirit creates unity not by imposing uniformity but uniting through the sovereign distribution of diverse gifts. This is a participation in the nature of the life of God, as the Spirit has always lived as the common bond between the Father and the Son in their mutual complementarity.
- i. appeals to Christian unity therefore cannot be to create but to realise and express an existing reality  
(Rom 15:5 – 7; 1 Cor 1:10; 2 Cor 13: 11; Eph 4:3; Phil 1:27; 4:2; Col 2:2; 1 Pet 3:8)

### 2. Implications of a trinitarian perspective on Christian unity

- a. in terms of sharing in the unity of God the unity of the church is a unity of indwelling; God dwells in his people and they dwell in him  
(John 14:23; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; Eph 2:22; 3:17; Col 1:27; 3:2; 1 John 4:16)
- b. Christian unity is interpersonal not organisational, doctrinal or tradition based but relational

- c. Christian unity is characterised by continuous cooperation in relation to common goals which have to do with the salvation of the world; this in itself is a participation in the work of God viz. God's own work *as* Father, Son and Holy Spirit  
(Cf. Rom 5:8; 2 Cor 5:19)
  - d. Christian unity preserves intact our personal identities and properties. Oneness does not entail confusion of identity any more than does the oneness of the persons of the trinity.
  - e. Christian unity involves mutual interdependence whereby identity is given by positive relationships  
  
(Cf. John 5:17,19 – 23)
  - f. Christian unity involves mutual self giving  
  
(John 5:19; 13:14 – 15; 1 Cor 9:19f; 2 Cor 4:5; Phil 2: 5 – 8)
  - g. Christian unity involves suffering, this is a sharing in the unity between humanity and God  
forged in the passion of Christ  
(2 Cor 1 :5; Eph 3:13; Col 1:24)
  - h. this suffering is contingent upon and creative of humility where the concerns of others are elevated above our own; this is a sharing of the sufferings of Christ  
(Phil 2: 1 – 11; 3: 10)
3. The importance of Manifest Unity
- a. the essential oneness of the church increases the importance of visible unity
  - b. this is clear by the strength and frequency of the injunctions listed above and the positive tone to displays of unity in the New Testament  
(Acts 2:44, 46 ; 4:32 – 37; 1 Thess 4:9 – 10 etc.)
  - c. failure to display unity has had the most serious consequences for the history of the development of western civilisation: Enlightenment thinkers e.g. Descartes, Locke, Kant wrote against the background of religious wars and sought a new foundation for peace and progress in rationality, prosperity or morality.
  - d. this can be understood in terms of spiritual warfare: the universal Fatherhood of God (Eph 4:6) is practically denied by the manifest disunion of the church. Thus the eternal wisdom of God in reconciling all to himself is not made plain to the principalities and powers in the heavenly realms (Eph 3:10). They are therefore

strengthened in their rebellion against his authority as their only true Father (Eph 3:14-15).

- e. the progress of the gospel is hindered because unbelievers are less able to see the reflected glory of Christ in his church, which is his image. The blinding of the minds of the lost by the devil continues (1 Cor 3: 21 – 23; 11:7; 2 Cor 4:4).
- f. since the attack of the spirits is upon humans, and most especially those who bear the name of Christ and accept the gospel, this conflict ultimately relates to the question of the identity of Jesus, is he the Son of the Father who has objectively reconciled the world to himself?
- g. the recognition of Jesus as sent by the Father is correlated to the manifest unity = visible reconciliation of his people (John 17: 21 –23)

### 3. One Church Gathered around Christ

- a. Jesus taught that he would gather the flock of God to himself (John 10:16)
- b. this is Paul's perspective in Ephesians and Colossians (see above), it is also that of the letter to the Hebrews (Heb 12:18 – 24)
- c. the Apocalypse conceives of a heavenly assembly around the exalted Lamb (Rev 5; 7:9ff; 14:1 –5)
- d. these teach us that the unity of the church is not a property it possesses in its own right but is something which is realised through the saving relationship which she enjoys with Jesus. He is the origin and reality of her oneness.
- e. since the whole Jesus meets with each local assembly (Matt 18:20), the fullness of what it means to be the one church is present in every place

### 4. Divisions in the Church

- a. as noted above, the only basis in the New Testament for the differentiation between churches is locality
- b. grounds of ethnicity, culture, class, age, education etc. are nowhere regarded as reasons for Christian gatherings
- c. to make these a basis for unity would be to deny the reconciliation and the new humanity which has been effected in Christ (Eph 2:14ff)

- d. the unity which the church enjoys is one of participation in Christ's relationship with the Father, as such it is an eschatological unity of the new creation (2 Cor 5:17) where all divisive elements have been taken away
- e. the universal church does not constitute a structure over and above the local churches, nor does the presence of house churches in a city imply separation in a locality, the distinct meetings are only for purposes of practicality, the gathering of the whole church images and actualises the communion of all Christians in a city
- f. it is impossible to conceive of the bride of Christ, the body of Christ, the temple of God and so on in the plural

#### 5. Grounds for Separation in the Church?

- a. this is to be distinguished from cases involving individual people which arise in the circumstances of church discipline
- b. the only grounds for organised group separation in the New Testament would seem to be when the central truth of the gospel is denied (Gal 1: 6 – 10; 1 John 2: 18 – 19)
- c. such bodies would in fact not be true churches at all, so are not examples of separation or division from the church
- d. the existence of rival Christian "churches" does not appear until the second century. The Church Father Irenaeus put forth the prevailing principle; "No reformation able to be effected by them will be of great enough importance to compensate for the damage arising from their schism."

#### 6. Denominations

- 1. There are arguments for the view that denominations should be accepted as regular forms of "church"
  - a. The Spirit is free to raise up structures as he wills.
  - b. The differences between denominations are not matters of indifference. Christians must be free to worship according to their conscience as shaped by the Bible.
  - c. The origin of denominations is a godly response to sin in preexisting church institutions. Denominations are not sects but by their very name "denomination" indicated that the true church of God was wider than themselves.
  - d. Since no church has a complete grasp of divine truth, the true church of Christ cannot

be fully represented by any single ecclesiastical institution.

- e. The history of denominations shows that they can be an effective sign of Christ's presence.
  - f. The denominations provide a vehicle whereby Christians divided by location, language and other differences may cooperate.
  - g. Paul can speak of "the churches of the Gentiles" (Rom 16:4; cf. 16:16; 1 Cor 14:33). This wider usage makes it possible to speak, by analogy, of Christians united together by a common heritage and doctrinal confession as a distinct Christian community, that is a church.
  - h. Even if we do not find something corresponding to denominations in the New Testament, we find supra-congregational links, like that between Paul and his congregations, the work of Timothy and Titus, and the council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) as precursors of such structures.
  - i. Differences of opinion regarding the outward form of the church are inevitable. We cannot hope for complete reconciliation within the church until the time of eschatological fulfillment.
2. There are reasons to dispute the above arguments.
- a. In scripture, any sort of division is regarded negatively (1 Cor 1: 10ff.; Eph 4:4-6; cf. 1 Cor 3:3-4; Gal 5:19-20; Jude 19).
  - b. There are no examples in the New Testament of true believers separating on the grounds of doctrine; heretics are excluded as they do not belong to the body at all, and relational ruptures within a congregation are to be dealt with by discipline.
  - c. Christians are always exhorted to manifest the maximum cooperation and unity (Eph 4:1,3; Phil 2:1f.).
  - d. This is based on the grounds of the very nature of the gospel and of Christ himself: Paul's ultimate retort runs "is Christ divided?" (1 Cor 1:13). The image conveyed by denominations is that the church is divided, if so, then Jesus cannot be persuasively communicated as the one sent by the Father (John 17:20-23). The call to manifest Christian unity is not a tactical maneuver but part of the salvation-history plan of God.
  - e. If the church by its essential nature partakes of the heavenly and eschatological reality of the reconciliation and new creation of all things in Christ (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 3:28; Eph 1:20; 2:11-22 etc.) then it is called upon to image something of the End in the present. That is full and complete unity.

- f. The oneness of the church is unrelated to any structure or ecclesiastical organisation as such, the “one world church” already exists and is a reality in its *communion* with Christ. The basis of oneness can not be external but mutual participation in the life of God.
- g. The local churches of the New Testament cooperate and help one another (Acts 11:28 – 30; Rom 15:25- 29; 16:1; 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Cor 8:1 – 14; 13:13; Phil 4:22; 1 Thess 2:14). The council of Jerusalem is not a precedent for denominations but a matter which had to be dealt with at Jerusalem because the false teaching arose there (Acts 15:2, 24) and threatened the whole mission and express identity of the church.
- h. There can only be one bride, one body, one temple one flock and so on. No one would seriously speak of many brides etc but by misuse the expression “churches” has become acceptable !!

## 7. The Church in the City

- a. that there is such a church is true to the New Testament description of the church in the cities of that time  
(Acts 8:1; 11:22; 13:1; Rom 16:1; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:2; Rev 2 – 3 ,etc.)
- b. this finds support from the imagery of the single lampstand for each city in Revelation (Rev 2 – 3)
- c. city churches appear to have a single administrative or governing body  
(Acts 14:23; 20: 17; Tit 1:5)
- d. the typological association between a city and the kingdom of God is strong throughout scripture
- e. Babel represents a city in rebellion  
(Gen 11)
- f. Jerusalem is an elect city inhabited by God  
(1 Chron 23:25; Pss 9:11; 76:2; 132:13 – 14; Joel 3: 17, 21; Zech 8:3; etc.)
- g. God’s presence and reign in Jerusalem will be complete eschatologically  
(Isa 24:13; 35:10; 64:10; 65:18; Jer 3:17; Zech 8:3)
- h. in the New Testament this eschatology can be vertical as well as future: there seems to be an intimate association between the present heavenly Jerusalem and its temple and the church on earth  
(Gal 4:26; Heb 12:22; Rev 3:12; 13:6)

- i. the coming heavenly Jerusalem which represents the perfection of the church cannot be discontinuous with its state upon the earth; both then and now the church is the bride of Christ , the temple of God and so on  
(1 Cor 3:16; 6:18; Eph 2:21 – 22; 5:26 – 27; Rev 19:8; 21:22)
- j. the builder of the city whose foundations are Christ is God  
(1 Cor3: 10 - 11 ; Eph 2:20; Heb 11:10, 16; Rev 21:14)
- k. the one communion of the saints in the Spirit must embrace present and future, heaven and earth
- l. as the glory of the nations will flow into the new Jerusalem so the glory of each nation should flow into the church in the city (Rev 21:26)
- m. as the church gathers in unity in each city it manifests God's ultimate and eternal purpose for all creation symbolised by the new Jerusalem; it is the city set on the hill which cannot be hidden, it is the light of the world radiating Christ in the midst of the darkness etc.
- n. this is a powerful demonstration to the forces of darkness that that time of rule is coming to an end and a welcoming invitation to God to ever more intense take up habitation in the city where each church dwells

### 3. The Holiness of the Church

#### 1. The Holiness of the Church is Grounded in the Holiness of God

- a. this is explicit in the Bible  
(Lev 11:44; 1 Pet 1:16)
- b. each of the persons of the trinity is holy  
Father (68x in O.T. ; John 17:11)  
Son ( Mark 1:24; Acts 3:14)  
Holy Spirit (by definition)
- c. this holiness is a feature of the relationships between the persons, as are all the attributes of God
- d. since the root meaning of 'holy' is to be cut off or separated out, the holiness of God may be understood as totality, permanency and exclusivity of relationship. Holiness relates to the interpenetrative power of the divine relationships, or intimacy.
- e. holiness therefore is a matter of great beauty as it attributes unique worth to its object  
(1 Chron 16:29; Pss 29:2; 96:9)
- f. for the church to be holy is to be called into an exclusive love relationship with God; this is embodied in covenant
- g. this holiness cannot be considered to be a property of sinful human beings as such, but only by virtue of their participation in the holiness of Christ  
(Heb 7:26; 1 Cor 1:30)
- h. the cross is the place where this objectively takes place, for here humanity is cleansed from all defilement by judgement  
(John 17:17 – 19; Rom 3:23 – 26)
- i. eschatologically the church will be revealed as perfectly holy  
(1 Cor 1:8; Phil 1:10; Col 1:22; 1 Thess 3:13; 5:23; Rev 19:6 – 8; 21:2)

#### 2. The Church is Called to Practical Holiness

- a. this is based on its essential identity as a holy people  
(1 Cor 3:16 – 17; 2 Cor 1:1; Col 3: 1 – 3; 12; 1 Pet 2:9 – 10; 1 John 3:1- 3)
- b. its ultimate motivation is to effect the indwelling of God amongst his people  
(Lev 26:12; Jer 32:38; Ezek 37:27; 1 Cor 3:16 – 17; 2 Cor 6:16 – 7:1; Col 3:12, 16; Heb 12: 9- 10; 14)

- c. that is, the imperative and motivation for holiness in the life of the church is not moralistic but relational intimacy, holiness effects union
- d. to compromise with the world is to commit spiritual adultery  
(Judges 2:17; 8:27; 1 Chron 5:25; Ps 106 :39; Ezek 6:9; 16; 23; Hos; 1 Cor 10:22; James 4:4)
- e. the people of God are therefore to come out of the world (in terms of their behaviour)  
(Ezek 20:34,41; 2 Cor 6:17; 7:1; Rev 18:4)
- f. for the church to be manifestly holy is to be separated out from the world in such a way that the final destiny of humanity in relation to God is made clear  
(Eph 5:8 – 14; Phil 2:15; Rev 22:11)
- g. for the church to live like this, as the epistles show (especially 1 and 2 Peter and Revelation) will involve great suffering i.e. deepening participation in the holiness of Christ

### 3. The Problem of Unholy People

- a. there are various ways in which the church has sought to solve this problem which seems to contradict its essential nature
- b. the first way is to exert rigorous discipline to purify the body. This approach invariably generates legalism and hypocrisy and is lacking in love
- c. the second approach is to say that the church is holy but its members are not. This traditional Catholic solution makes an artificial distinction between the body of Christ and its members.
- d. another solution is to say that part of the Christian is holy and another part is unholy. This neglects that the whole person is in relation to God.
- e. the manner of approach of the New Testament is to recognise that the people of God share a holy status which is to be expressed in an ongoing manner.
- f. This is simply to say that the best manner of promoting holiness in the church is to preach the gospel

#### 4. The Church is Catholic

##### 1. The Meaning of ‘Catholic’

- a. the English word “catholic” derives from the Greek *katholikos* meaning “ directed towards/embracing the whole”
- b. “catholic” therefore means universal or inclusive
- c. it does not describe any particular church group, such as the Roman Catholic Church
- d. the term does not appear in the New Testament in relation to the church
- e. historically, the term appears in the early second century as a designation of the whole church (Ignatius, *Smyrnaens* 8.2)
- f. increasingly, the description “catholic” was identified with the one orthodox church in opposition to the numerous heretical groups (Gnostics, Montanists, Marcionites, Arians etc.)
- g. the concept was employed polemically in later times to “unchurch” groups which claimed to be orthodox but failed to meet certain ecclesiastical criteria e.g. Augustine versus the Donatists, the Counter –Reformation versus Protestantism

##### 2. Catholicity and Heresy

- a. the word *haireisis* (heresy) simply means choice
- b. as a specific content given to choice the word came to refer to deviation from the truth (Gal 5:20; Tit 3:8ff; 2 Pet 2:1)
- c. heresy is departure from the apostolic gospel concerning salvation (2 Cor 11:4; Gal 1:6)
- d. heresy leads to a loss of the faith (1 Tim 1:9; 6:10; 2 Tim 2:18; Tit 1:16)
- e. the decisive norm for recognising heresy is the person and work of Christ (which fills out the doctrine of God)
- f. heresy is the opposite of catholicity because it denies something about the fullness of salvation wrought in Christ e.g. Docetism denies the redemption of the material world, Arianism denies that humanity has been reconciled to God

### 3. Catholicity and the Trinity

- a. if the attributes of the church are derived from its relationship with God then catholicity cannot be defined by geographical extension, numerical quantity, cultural variety or temporal continuity
- b. a catholicity based on the trinity defines the church in such a way that it is not seen as either uniform or fragmented
- c. the mutual indwelling or reciprocal interiority of the persons of the trinity (perichoresis) means God is a totality which is neither uniform nor made up of parts but exists as a unity in diversity (John 7:16; 10:38; 14: 9 – 11; 17: 21)
- d. each divine person carries within itself each of the other divine persons, this is an essential element of their personhood
- e. such comprehensive mutual inclusion is the essence of catholicity cf. 2 Pet 1:4
- f. a share in this wholeness of God is granted to the church in the following way:
  1. the Spirit who is given to all Christians and who indwells them as the temple of God opens up believers to one another, to the world and to the Father and the Son. This is an extension of the eternal identity of the Spirit who has always connected the Father and the Son.
  2. the Spirit in the New Testament is predominantly the Spirit of Christ, he communicates Christ to the church. Only by being in the communion of Jesus can the church share in the inclusivity of God (John 14:20; 17:21,23,26). The incarnation is the structure which enables the impartation of the completeness of God to the church.
    - a. Christ has always been the basis for the totality/unity of creation (John 1:3; Col 1:16 –17)
    - b. the fullness of God came to dwell bodily in Jesus (John 1:14; Col 1:19; 2:9); this happens through the gift of the Spirit (Luke 4:1; John 3:34)
    - c. the church has come to fullness in Christ (John 1:16; Eph 1:23 ; Col 2:10)
    - d. the church is the means or medium by which Christ fills all things with himself (Eph 3: 18 – 19; 4: 10 –13)
    - e. this is a historical process that can only be completed eschatologically. As the church becomes increasingly open to all things in God it more deeply enters the trinitarian fellowship and so becomes increasingly catholic

- f. when the church reaches its eschatological goal (in Christ) God will be all in all (Hab 2:14; 1 Cor 15:58; Rev 21: 3,11,22,23)
  - g. catholicity is a property of every congregation because the whole Christ is present in every church
4. Catholicity and the Mission of the Church
- a. the topic of the mission of the church will be taken up fully in a later section (see also the notes on election)
  - b. that Israel had a catholic mission to the nations is taught throughout the Old Testament (Gen 35:11;49:10; Ex 19: 5 – 6; 1 Ki 10: 24; Ezek 36: 22 – 36; Isa 2:1 – 4; 19:22 -25)
  - c. this comes to be concentrated in Messiah (Isa 42: 1,6)
  - d. the mission of Jesus is catholic, in the sense that it is designed to bring salvation to the entire world (John 1:29; 3 :16 – 17; 8:12; 1 Cor 15: 27 – 28; 2 Cor 5:19; Eph 1:10; Col 1:15 –20)
  - e. the mission of the church is co – extensive with the salvation Jesus has wrought. It is commissioned to bring the good news to every creature, all nations and to the ends of the earth. (Matt 24:14; 28: 18 – 20; (Mark 16:16); Luke 24: 46 –47; Acts 1:8; Col 1:23)
  - f. it is through the church that all nations will at the End be gathered together to worship God (Rev 5:9 – 10; 7:9 ; 21: 22 – 26)
  - g. the form of this mission must conform to its content, this means that the basis for a triumphant theology of the church is not a theology of glory but a theology of the cross (Col 1:19 –24)
5. Implications of Catholicity
- a. to belong to the catholic church is to be part of a network of relationships which transcends all exclusivity
  - b. this means that the identity of the church cannot be defined by class, race, language, caste, gender, wealth, education or any other ground of division that isolates human beings, for God shows no partiality (Rom 2:11; 10: 12,28,35; Gal 2:6; 3:28; Eph 6:9; Col 3:11,25; James 2:1; 1 Pet 1:7)

- c. the only basis of distinction in the New Testament is the neutral one of geography
- d. this does not however provide a basis for separatism on the grounds of territory e.g one must belong to the nearest local church
- e. openness to all other churches is a necessary expression of catholicity. (The criteria for which groups are actual churches involves faithfulness to the apostolic tradition. This will be developed later.)
- f. division compromises the visibility of the catholic nature of the church and diminishes its spiritual authority
- g. if each church is catholic it must contain within itself all the ministries and charismata needed for salvation
- h. as the nations will bring their wealth and glory into the new Jerusalem (the church – Rev 21: 24,26), so the church on earth must remain open for the entire natural and cultural wealth of humanity
- i. any attempt to conform the church to one particular form or cultural expression must be rejected as demonic and Babylonian
- j. catholicity is a call to both the individual and the church as a community to live a fully relational life. This entails a call to renewal. Only in this way can the mission of the church exhibit the structure of the message of salvation.

## 5. The Church is Apostolic

### 1. Apostolicity and the Trinity

- a. the English word “apostle” is derived from the Greek *apostello* meaning “to send”
- b. within the life of the trinity is an eternal movement of other - centredness which engulfs the three persons as one
- b. these are known as the trinitarian processions; the Father gives of his essence to the Son (who is “begotten”) the Father and the Son give of themselves to the Spirit (“spiration”) and the Spirit gives his life in bonding together the other divine persons
- d. the direction of these relationships flow out into the creation which is the outward expression of the inner communicative life of God
- e. the sending of the Word and the Spirit (divine missions) throughout the scripture correlates to their eternal communication of the glory of the Father
- f. this becomes explicit in the New Testament where the coming of the Word to be enfleshed means the gift of God’s own life to humanity (John 1: 14 – 16; 1 John 1: 1 –3)
- g. the Son of God is defined by virtue of his having been sent by the Father (John 3:34; 4:34; 5:23 etc., Gal 4:4; 1 John 4:9, 10, 14)
- h. the Spirit is likewise sent by the Father and the Son (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7; Acts 2:33; 1 Pet 1:12 etc.)
- i. those who are first taken up into the mission of the Godhead through the Father’s sending of the Son and the Spirit are the apostles (Matt 10:5; Mark 3:14; Luke 9:2)
- j. they continue the momentum of the Godhead into the world by being sent out in the *same manner* as Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit (John 17:17 –18; 20:21 – 22; Acts 1 – 2 etc.)

### 2. Apostolicity and Authority

- a. the normative authority of the apostles derives from their association with the person of Jesus
- b. they possess the authority of eyewitnesses (Acts 1:21ff; 2 Pet 1:16f; 1 John 1:1 – 3)

- c. because of the nature of their identification with Christ, to reject their authoritative word is to reject him  
(1 Cor 4:1; 2 Cor 5:20; 1 Thess 4:8)
- d. there is a correspondence between the exercise of apostolic authority and what is decreed in heaven  
(Matt 16:19; 18:18; John 20:23)
- e. the church is apostolic because it submits to apostolic authority. “ ‘Apostolic’ means in the discipleship, in the school, under the normative authority; instruction and direction of the apostles, in agreement with them, because listening to them and accepting their message.” (Barth)
- f. what is submitted to is not the humanity of the apostles as such, but their custodianship of the gospel which contains within it the whole saving message of Christ  
(Mark 1:1; Rom 1:1,9,15; 1 Cor 1:17; 4:15; Gal 1:6ff; Eph 1:13 etc.)
- g. the gospel message is the criterion for judging the difference between true and false belief: this is a judgement concerning the relationship of persons to Christ, who is the truth  
(2 Cor 11:13ff; Gal 1:8 – 9; 1 John 4:1ff; Rev 2:2; John 1:14; 14: 6; 15:26; 1 John 5:7)
- h. since the historical position of the apostles is unique, they remain for all time foundational to the life of the church  
(Matt 16:13-20; Eph 2:20; Rev 21:24)

### 3. Apostolicity and the Mission of the Church

This material will be dealt with fully in the section on the mission of the church.

### 4. Apostolic Succession

- a. this has been defined by episcopal churches as a linear historical succession dependent upon physical continuity
- b. continuity with the apostles is assured by the laying on of hands in ordination by a bishop in a succession that can be traced back to the first apostles
- c. this does not operate automatically but presumes an intention to act in concert with the whole church (Hence the Roman Catholic rejection of Anglican ministries.)
- d. this understanding of succession can degenerate into a ritualistic and institutionalised form which overlooks the sovereign and free grace of the Holy Spirit

- e. the infallibility of the church is not secured by the visible or historical but by the faithfulness of God  
(Rom 3:2f; Phil 1:6)
  - f. succession is recognised through the confession of the church
5. Apostolic Confession
- a. this takes place when the witness of the church is in fundamental agreement with the testimony of the apostles as embodied in scripture
  - b. such a confession may be embodied in creeds, preaching, prayer, evangelism etc.
  - c. this is not to be construed as merely formulaic but an expression of the innermost being  
(Luke 6:45; Rom 10: 9 –10; Col 3: 16)
  - d. the same Word which indwelled the apostles and overflowed in their testimony now indwells the members of the church and finds expression in their verbal witness
  - e. it is the presence of the indwelling Christ who produces the essential continuity between the apostles and those who have believed because of their word  
(John 17:20)
  - f. this confession is evoked by the power of the Holy Spirit  
(Acts 1:8; 2:4; 4:8; 1 Cor 12:3; Eph 5:18 - 19 etc.)
  - g. it is a confession that has to do with the name of Jesus
    - 1. gathering in his name (Matt 18:20)
    - 2. proclaiming his name (Acts 5:28)
    - 3. calling upon his name (Rom 10:13)
    - 4. baptism in his name (Acts 2:38)
  - h. it is therefore concentrated in the confession that “Jesus is Lord”  
(Acts 2:36; 9:28; 10:36; 16:31; 28:31; Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3)
  - i. it is focussed on the apostolic gospel concerning the death and resurrection of Jesus  
(1 Cor 2:2; 15: 1 – 5; Gal 6:14; 1 Pet 2:6)
  - j. this involves conformity to the apostolic insistence that salvation is by grace alone  
(Rom 3:24; Gal 2:15ff; Eph 2:8 – 9; Tit 3:7 etc.)

k. the public and pluriform confession of faith is the constitutive mark of the church, as it is the means by which the church is formed

6. Apostolicity and Suffering

a. the call to be an apostle cannot be separated from a call to suffer for Christ  
(John 20:18 –20; Acts 5:18,40; 9:16; 20: 23 etc., 1 Pet 4:1ff, 12ff)

b. this involves an identification with the person of Christ and his sufferings  
(Phil 3:10)

c. the willingness of the church to suffer for the cause of Christ will be evidence of its faithfulness to the apostolic gospel  
(Rev 2 –3)

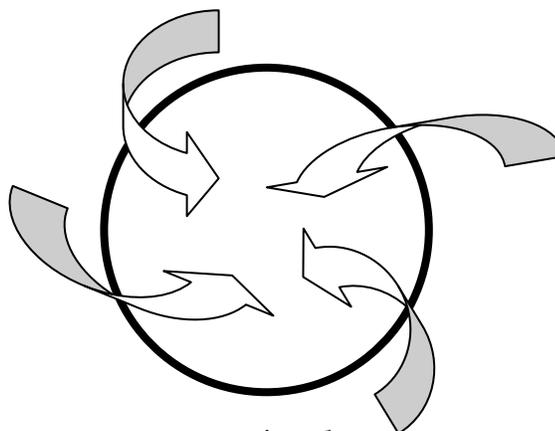
## 1305 Church, Ministry and Mission Week 3 - 4: The Nature of The Church :Trinity, Incarnation, Spirit : Covenant, Community and Mission

1. The Contemporary Context
1. Historical Problems in the Western Church.
  - a. ecclesiocentrism
    - » clericalism
    - » sacramentalism
    - » maintenance
    - » church as gathering
    - » dualism of secular and sacred

“Yes, individual ministry is encouraged, but the powerful name ‘church’ is reserved only for those activities directly sponsored by pastors and elders of local congregations. Leaders will at times preach the importance of the saints’ work. But most of what is said and done in preaching, planning and resource allocation by leaders indicates to all and sundry where the action really is and where the future really lies. This arrangement ensures that most of the momentum for ministry (and thus Christian maturity) ends up travelling towards the buildings, the meetings and the programs of the local church. The end results of the Greek infiltration is that we are kept in the crusade, tied to the nest and are unable to fly very far into the creation before we are drawn back to support the pillar....

We have failed to make the connection between the congregation context and the spheres of the created order around us so we have had to make the congregation a whole world in and of itself. The outcome is that the church has become something that is disconnected from the world and dislocated from the very life and work of the saints themselves. The consequences are taking their toll on leaders and laity. The leaders are losing their hold on the people of God and the people of God are being deprived of the necessary resources and affirmation they need to make it through their daily struggle in life and work. The sad irony is that each holds the key to the other’s life and calling.(Thwaites 1999: 181, 190)

- » the church as an alternative answer to the world.
- » a centripetal church



b. individualism

- » societal fragmentation
  - family break down
  - mobility
  - working hours
- » church as solution to *my* spiritual needs
- » centrality of individual self-realisation, rights and freedoms
- » a centripetal church is a projection of a centripetal and individualistic culture

c. theological confusion

- » the separation of soteriology and missiology
- » the separation of ecclesiology and missiology
- » the confusion of ecclesial identity with service-in-the-world.

“When I’m around church people I always check whether they are misled by the modern secular vision. Have they substituted the vision of service for the only thing that will make people whole-community? Are they service peddlers or community builders? Peddling services is unchristian-even if you’re hellbent on helping people. Peddling services instead of building communities is the one way you can be sure not to help... Service systems teach people that their value lies in their deficiencies. They are built on “inadequacies” called illiteracy, visual deficit, and teenage pregnancy. But communities are built on the *capacities* of drop-out, illiterate, bad-scene, teenage-pregnant, battered women... If the church is about community – not service – it’s about capacity not deficiency. (J. McKnight 1989:38,40 cited in vanEngen and Tiersma 1994:246-247)

- » church as ‘external, expert superstar’ (J.V. Taylor)

2. Historical Factors Influencing an Emerging Consensus.

a. the deChristianisation of the West.

“The more the Christian West disintegrates culturally and geographically, the more the church will find its self-understanding in the context of the whole world.”

(Moltmann 1977:9)

b. the growth of a religiously pluralistic world

c. the ecumenical movement

d. the formation of global networks

e. the explosion of the church in the two-thirds world

- f. the crisis of faith in the West actualises the realisation of the true situation of the church in the world, “between the times”.

“the church has always needed apparent failure and suffering in order to become fully alive to its real nature and mission”

(Kraemer 1947:26 cited in Bosch 1991:2)

3. Seeking a Paradigm: The Identity and Mission of the Church are Intercontained.

- a. “the church exist by mission as fire exists by burning” (E. Brunner)

- b. this is not to be construed in instrumental terms.

“Mission...is seen as a movement from God to the world; the Church is viewed as an instrument for that mission. There is a church because there is mission, not vice versa.”

(Aagaard 1974:423 cited in Johnstone 1998:23)

- c. if mission is viewed as instrumental it remains

- external
- obligatory
- optional
- defined in terms of its addressees, not in terms of its nature.

- d. mission in internal to the nature of the church

Volf (5/5/01) asserts “The identity and mission of the church are the same.” “The identity of the church is the face of its mission turned inward, the mission of the church is the face its identity turned outward.”

- e. the church as missionary community is covenantally constituted by its inclusion in the self communication of God in Christ by the power of the Spirit.

- f. “we have to distinguish between *mission* (singular) and *missions* (plural). The first refers primarily to the *missio Dei* (God’s mission), that is, God’s self-revelation as the One who loves the world, God’s involvement in and with the world, the nature and activity of God, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church is privileged to participate. *Mission Dei* enunciates the good news that God is a God-for-people. *Missions* (the *missiones ecclesiae*: the missionary ventures of the church), refer to particular forms, related to specific times, places, or needs, of participation in the *mission Dei* (Davies 1966:33; cf Hoekendijk 1967a:346; Rutti 1972:232).”

(Bosch 1991:10)

- g. this suggests that the doctrine of God provides the interpretative key for the relationship between church, covenant, community and mission

### 3. Trinity and Mission: The Trinitarian Approach to Ecclesiology

#### 1. Methodological Considerations

- a. it is a methodological confusion to consider the doctrine of the church as an item in itself, not only subsequent to but in some sense distinct from the doctrine of God and Christology.
- b. “The church is grounded in the being and life of God, and rooted in the eternal purpose of the Father to send his Son, Jesus Christ, to be the Head and Saviour of all things. The church does not exist by and for itself, and therefore cannot be known or interpreted out of itself. Both the source and the goal of the church are in the eternal love of God which has overflowed in the creation and redemption of the world. God has not willed to live alone, but to create and seek others distinct from himself upon whom to pour out his Spirit, that he might share with them his divine life and glory, and as Father, Son and Holy Spirit dwell in their midst forever. God will not be without his Church; the Church is nothing without God. But in God the church exists as the supreme object of divine grace, and in the Church God is pleased to live his divine life and manifest his divine glory. That is the mystery and destiny of the Church, hidden from the foundation of the world, but revealed and fulfilled in the Incarnation of the Son of God and in his glorious work of redemption, for in Jesus Christ the Church as the redeemed people of God is the crown of creation living in praise and gratitude to the Creator and reflecting with all things, visible and invisible, the glory of the eternal God.  
(Torrance 1979:199)
- c. the proper foundation for an understanding of the nature of the church is consideration of the nature of God, this is an exercise in trinitarian theology.

#### 2. The Ex-centric Nature of the Divine Community.

- a. the three Persons of the trinity indwell one another.  
(John 14:10-11; 17:21-23 cf. 15:10)
- b. this exhaustive indwelling means that the Godhead is absolutely inclusive.
- c. this is an other-centred dynamic  
(John 1:1; 10:37-38; 14:10 Father-Son; Matt 10:20; John 15:26 Spirit of Father; John 1:33; 3:34 Spirit in Son)
- d. this means that each of the Persons, and the whole Godhead, exists in ex-centricity.
- e. this is the dynamic of love (1 John 4:8,16) which constitutes the essence of God as the living God (1 Sam 17:26,36; Dan 6:26; John 6:57; 7:38-39; Acts 14:15; 2 Cor 3:3; 6:16; 1 Thess 1:9; 1 Tim 3:15 etc)

#### 3. The trinitarian Nature of the Church is Found “in Christ”

- a. Jesus is sent into the world by the Father.  
(Matt 15:24; 21:37; Mark 12:6; Luke 4:43; John 3:17, 34 etc., Acts 3:26; 7:37; Gal 4:4)

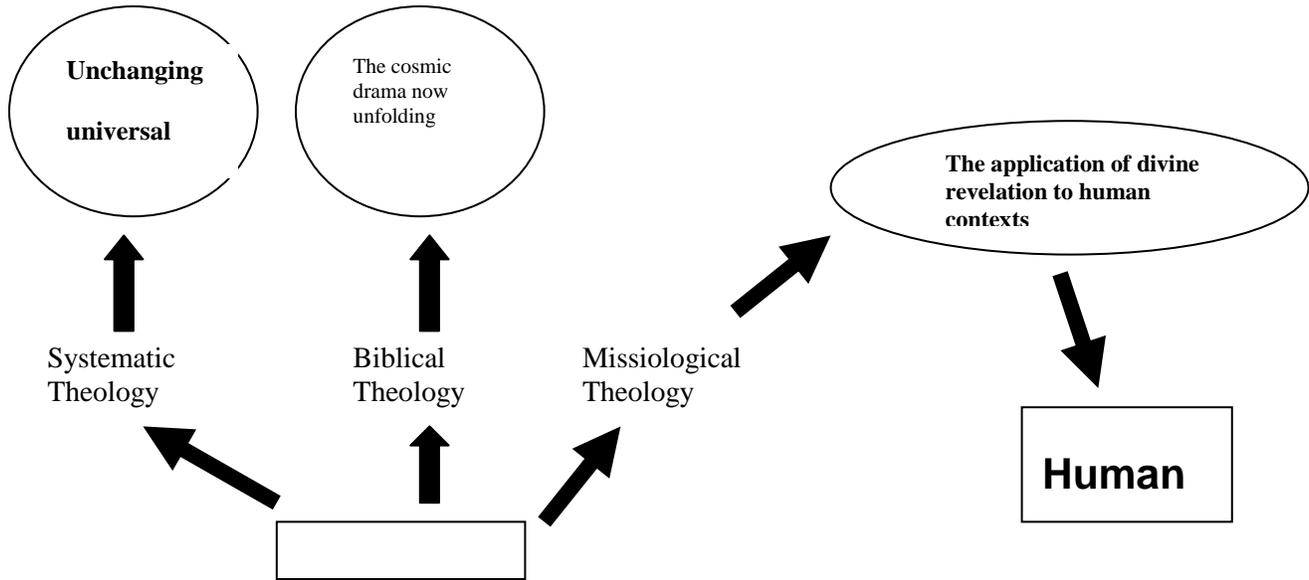
- b. Jesus comes in the Spirit  
(Matt 1:20; Luke 1:3 cf. Mark 1:12; Luke 4:18)
  - c. the result is his subsistence as a human being  
(John 1:14)
  - d. the fullness of God dynamically subsists in a human person  
(Col 1:19; 2:9)
  - e. this means that the reconciliation which is effected in Christ unites humanity to God.  
(2 Cor 5:19; John 17:21,23)
  - f. the sending of the Son by the Father, the mission of God, effects God indwelling us by grace as he has indwelt Christ by the Spirit.  
(John 15:10; 17:21-23; Rom 8:16; Gal 4:6; Eph 3:17; Col 2:10; 3:16; 2 Tim 1:14)
  - g. this means participation in the divine nature  
(2 Peter 1:4)
  - h. the final reality is the mutual indwelling of God and his people.  
(Rev 13:6; 21:2-3,15-16 : – the new Jerusalem is the glorified church, a supradimensional holy of holies inhabited by God; Rev 21:22-26: – the temple is God and the Lamb, in which the holy of holies, the people, are found)
4. The Spirit Co-Constitutes the Church
- a. the Holy Spirit is the personal bond of love between the Father and Son, he is the Spirit of unity.
  - b. as such the fellowship of the trinity is in the Holy Spirit.  
(2 Cor 13:13)
  - c. as both Son and Spirit proceed from the Father they are inseparable.
  - d. the Spirit is particularly the Spirit of the risen and ascended Lord.
  - e. the Spirit is therefore the anticipation of the Eschaton.(Rom 8:23; 2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:14) and it's consummated community
  - f. to receive the Spirit is to be baptised into the relationship between the Father and Son, to become sons in the Son of the Father within the trinitarian community.  
(John 17:26; Rom 8:14-17; Gal 4:4-6)
  - g. this constitutes us brothers and sisters in Christ  
(Rom 8:29; Heb 2:12-44 cf. John 17:6)
  - h. “Seen from the human side the ecclesial *koinonia* is none other than the fraternity of the disciples of Christ Jesus but in so far as it is caught up, seized by the Spirit who inserts it in the relation of the Father and the Son.”

(Tillard 1984:373 cited in Grenz 1994:630)

- i. even if it is the eschatological gift of the Spirit (Acts 2:17) which constitutes the church, it is the Spirit as given by the Son (Matt 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; Acts 2:33)
  - j. the Spirit constitutes the church as the body of *Christ*
  - k. the Spirit and the Word therefore co-constitute the church, as witnesses (John 14:26; Heb 2:12) (cf Christ who institutes, Spirit who constitutes)
  - l. testimony borne to Jesus is the criterion of the activity of the Spirit, and so of the location of the church.  
(Acts 1:8; 1 Cor 12:3; 1 John 4:2)
  - m. the church exists in the Spirit as a witnessing community, and so is essentially missionary.
5. The Trinitarian Nature of the Church is an Open Expansive Community
- a. this follows from its participation in the openness of the trinity to the world.
  - b. this means that the church by nature shares in the mission of God.
  - c. the aim of the church can not be to communicate itself, or make itself great, but to bring glory to the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit.
  - d. the horizon of the church is therefore the consummation of all things in God.  
(Acts 3:21; 1 Cor 15:28; Eph 1:10,23; 4:10)
  - e. as God is a community, only a community of persons can correspond to the trinity.
  - f. the relationships between the many in the church must reflect the mutual love of the divine persons.
  - g. in this way the church is the image of God : the mirror of the divine reality.
6. Covenant Communicates the Divine Nature and Creates another Self-Communicating Community.
- a. the church is not immediately created but is formed out of the dynamic of God's love with his people.
  - b. covenant is the means by which God gathers a people to himself.
  - c. salvation history is the history of God's gracious covenantal dealings with humanity which extends from the Old Testament saints to the eschatological new creation.
  - d. the mighty acts of grace work out God's purpose of love, which is the communication of the divine nature.
  - e. these mighty acts are peaks of trinitarian disclosure.

7. A Trinitarian Ecclesiology is Missiological.

- a. the history of theological reflection on the relationship between the church and mission has suffered from separation between various disciplines.
- b. this can be represented diagrammatically.



(Hiebert 2000: 241)

- c. this can lead to the isolation of systematic and biblical theology from missiology, so that they become abstract, or the inundation of missiological theology by particular cultural contexts.
  - d. a trinitarian approach to church and mission seeks to reunite these distinct disciplines by understanding salvation history (biblical theology) as the unfolding revelation of the eternal trinitarian life (systematic theology) in a range of specific space-time contexts (mission theology).
  - e. all of theology is therefore understood as missiological in nature and direction.
8. The Nature of the Church as a Missional Community is known by Participation.
- a. if the nature of the church is determined by its relationship to the Father, Son and Spirit, it is only by participation in the life of God can this nature be *known*.
  - b. this means that involvement in the concrete body of the church preceded all epistemological and conceptual discussions. ‘the life of the community is prior to all possible methodological distillations’  
(Yoder 1994:82, cited in Huebner 2000: 483)
  - c. to operate otherwise is to attempt to disengage oneself from the community created by the *missio Dei*, the Father’s sending of the Son and the Spirit to communicate the divine life cf. 1 Peter 1:4.

- d. a genuine theology of the church, taking its character from the outreach of God, must be praxeological. The church finds itself as it participates in God's mission whose object is the world in all its cultural geographic, national, global and historical elements.
- e. "Mission theology is the praxis of Jesus Christ through the presence of the Holy Spirit reaching out to the church through the arms of those whose humanity needs healing and whose hearts need hope... If mission theology is to be integrated with church theology, let there be an authentic orthopraxy, let it dare to submit its concerns and its agenda for the healing and hope of humanity to the One who is the Advocate, the Leitourgos, and the redeemer of all humanity... If there be an authentic church, let it be found where Christ has his praxis and his pathos – let it pay the price of its orthodoxy in its true ministry and so be empowered by Christ himself."

(Anderson 1991:126 cited in van Engen 1994:244)

#### 4: Creation, Covenant and Community.

##### 1. Creation as Trinitarian Revelation.

a. the creation account in Genesis 1 is implicitly trinitarian.

- (1) it is God who creates 1:1
- (2) his Spirit protects and perfects 1:2
- (3) he creates by his Word 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26

b. this is confirmed and filled out by the rest of the Bible.

- (1) the Father is the direct agent of creation.  
(1 Cor 8:6; Rev 4:11)
- (2) the Son is the mediatorial agent of creation.  
(John 1:1-3; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16-17)
- (3) the Spirit effects order in creation.  
(Job 26:13; 33:4; Ps 104:30)

c. the picture is of God as a dynamic unity or community.

##### 2. The Image of God as Community

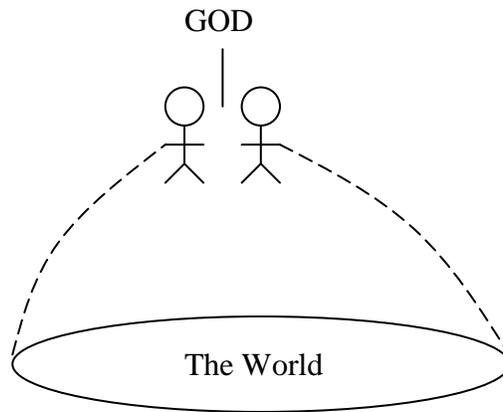
a. the meaning of the image of God.

- (1) this is to be found within Genesis 1.
- (2) the “let us” of Genesis 1:26, against the cooperation of Spirit and Word in God’s creating, points to the image as unity in diversity.
- (3) male and female interpret the image of God (Genesis 1:26b,c) in mutual complementarity (Gen 2:18)
- (4) the community of Adam and Eve, plurality in oneness.
- (5) this image is the original church.

b. the “cultural mandate”

- (1) Genesis 1:28 with 2:15,24 indicates that to be human-in-community involves.
  - \* marriage as oneness
  - \* reproduction of the likeness of God cf Gen 5:3
  - \* expansiveness to the whole earth
  - \* priesthood in creation (work, government, worship)

- (2) this mandate committed to the image of God/people of God would, if faithfully discharged, fill the whole creation with the likeness and glory of God.



### 3. Creation as the Context for Covenant

#### a. creation is the external basis of the covenant.

- (1) creation is the presupposition of the history of the relationship between God and humanity.
- (2) creation is “the theatre of the glory of God” (Calvin), the framework for God’s self communication.

#### b. covenant is the internal basis of creation.

- (1) the meaning of creation is not found in itself, but in God the creator.
- (2) God’s free loving relationship with humanity is the inner meaning of creation.

#### c. God initiates covenant relation with Adam and Eve.

- (1) he revealed himself to them by creating them and speaking his Word of blessing to them.

(Gen 1:28-30)

- (2) Adam and Eve enjoyed communion with God.

(Gen 3:8)

- (3) the elements of a covenant are present.

\* the unconditional and gracious initiative of God

\* the promise of life is implicit in the call to obedience

(Lev 18:5; Ezek 20:11, 13, 20; Luke 10:8; Rom 7:10; 10:5; Gal 3:12)

\* a condition for enjoying the covenantal blessing; this is obedience to the divine prohibition in relation to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Gen 2:17)

\* a penalty for covenant violation; this is death.

(4) this is supported by:

\* the parallel between Adam and Christ (Rom 5:12-21) implies Adam was the head of a covenant.

\* Hosea 6:7 may read "... like Adam, they broke covenant..."

5: The Fall: Covenant Violation Disintegrates Community and Necessitates New Form for Mission.

1. The Fall involves Rejection of the Divine Nature.

a. the Fall results from believing in a lie concerning God's providential character.

(Gen 3:4-5)

b. the Fall results from the desire to be sovereign and autonomous.

(Gen 3:5)

c. this was a denial of filial status and its consequent dependence upon God and his blessing.

(Luke 3:38)

2. The Result of the Fall is Community Disintegration

a. Adam and Eve are separated from God.

(Gen 3:7 ff)

b. Adam and Eve are separated from one another.

(Gen 3:7, 12)

c. Adam and Eve become subordinated to the secondary source of their life, the ground and the man, deprived from the immediacy and fullness of God's blessing.

(Gen 3:16-19)

d. humanity is in conflict with evil powers.

(Gen 3:15; Rev 12:7)

e. the earth is subject to futility.

(Gen 3:18; Rom 8:22)

f. physical and spiritual death becomes universal.

(1) the whole race falls in Adam (Rom 5:12)

(2) separation of soul from body means self-disintegration.

(3) eternal death is the ultimate penalty.

(Rom 6:23)

3. The Fall Necessitates New Form for Mission.

- a. the whole church fell in the sin of Adam.
- b. God's vocation for the church remains unchanged.

(Rom 11:29)

"It fell not as a divine institution but in its constituent members, and therefore the church upheld by the eternal will of God took on at once a new form under the saving acts of history." (Torrance 1979:201)

- c. this is indicated by the *proto-evangelium*.

"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel."

(Gen 3:15 cf. Rom 16:20; Rev 12:7)

- d. men and women still move out across the earth from Eden, but now communicate separation rather than oneness with God.
- e. for the earth to be filled with the blessing of God, humanity and all that fell with it must be redeemed.

## 6: The Noachic Covenant and the Tower of Babel

### 1. The Growth of Humanity Increases Wickedness

- a. Abel kills Cain and lives in terror, Lamech boasts of his killing and vows to multiply vengeance beyond God's decree.

(Gen 4:1-23)

- b. the "multiplication" of people leads to unnatural unions which somehow threatens the reproduction of God's image.

(Gen 6:1-4)

- c. the impact on God's heart causes extreme pain, because the earth is "filled" with violence ie. the opposite of the harmonious community created by God in the beginning.

(Gen 6:4c, 11-13)

### 2. The Flood Brings Judgement and Grace.

- a. the judgement is designed to cleanse the world of evil.

(Gen 6:13, 7:4)

- b. God's choice of Noah is on the basis of unconditional election.

(Gen 6:8)

- c. the promise to enter into covenant with Noah and his family comes through sovereign grace

(Gen 6:18)

- d. the response to the promised covenant is faith.

(1 Pet 3:21)

### 3. The Covenant with Noah is a Rebirth of Creation.

- a. the covenant is universal.

(Gen 9:10, 15)

- b. the covenant is everlasting

(Gen 9:10,15)

- c. the covenant repeats the original blessing

(Gen 9:1,7)

- d. the covenant amplifies the cultural mandate.

marriage      Gen 9:1 cf. 1:28

work            Gen 9:3 cf. 1:28

government    Gen 9:2 cf. 1:29

e. the covenant promise is that the threat of human extinction, which would annul the divine plan, is revoked.

(Gen 9:11,15-16)

f. the covenant is a triumph of mercy over judgement.

(James 2:13)

4. The Tower of Babel

a. the context of the Babel incident is the table of the nations.

(Gen 10:1-31)

b. these peoples seemed to have exhibited diversity and were spreading abroad.

(Gen 10:5, 20, 31-32)

c. this is not seen as sinful, as it fulfils the primal commandment of Genesis 1:28.

d. at Babel, linguistic unity becomes the foundation for a titanic attempt to idolatrously exalt human culture to divine proportions by self-centredness.

(Gen 11:1-5)

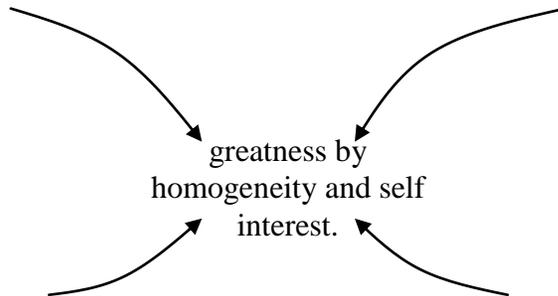
e. the will to resist scattering across the earth is in direct violation of the primal command. (Gen 11:4)

f. resistance to God's benediction upon humanity to fill the earth with the divine image and presence leads to personal intervention and judgement. (Gen 11:5-9)

g. God scatters them by confusion of languages, this leads to the filling of the earth through a cultural diversity preventing evil unity against God, and so his own image.

h. God is not the author of division but of diversity.

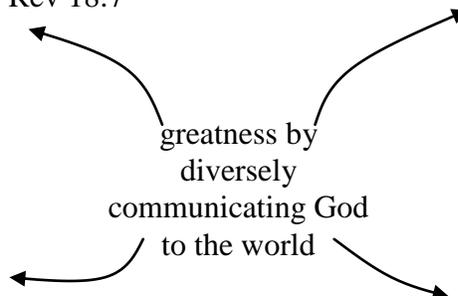
i. Babelism



this principle is repeated throughout human history

Isa 47:8; Zeph 2:15; Rev 18:7

j. the plan of God



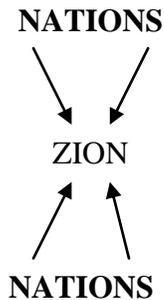
## 7: Election and Covenant: Community and Mission

### 1. Abraham

- a. the background to Abram's call is the sinfulness of the nations epitomised by Babel.
- b. the election of Abram is unconditional, he is called as a pagan and ungodly person.  
(Gen 11:27-12:1; Rom 4:5)
- c. this involves a *going out* from his homeland to wherever God shall choose.  
(Gen 12:1)
- d. election is in the context of promise
  - (1) a multitude of descendants
  - (2) a land for them to live in
  - (3) a special relationship with God.  
(Gen 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:11-16, 12-21; 17:1-8, 17-19; 22:15-18)
- e. this is in the sphere of blessing  
(Gen 12:2; 17:16, 20, 22:17)
- f. the blessing will be imparted to all peoples.  
(Gen 12:3 cf. 27:29)
- g. these elements: election, multiplication, habitation, fellowship with God and universality, represent the completion of the original promises in creation.  
(Gen 1:26-28)
- i. the *seed* of Abraham is the means by which this will be accomplished; the New Testament understands this as Jesus.  
(Gen 12:3; 13:15; Acts 3:25; Gal 3:16)
- j. the new community created by the Abrahamic covenant will fulfil the mission of God to fill the whole world with his glory.
- k. the New Testament sees the promise to Abraham as
  - (1) a gospel promise (Gal 3:8)
  - (2) the inheritance of the world (Rom 4:13)
  - (3) fulfilled by the gift of the Spirit (Gal 3:14)
- l. in Abraham the church is now separated out from the nations as the appointed sphere for the outworking of salvation history.

2. Israel and the Exodus
  - a. the patriarchal period and the period of sojourn in Egypt shows how the multitude of Abraham's descendants comes to arise.
  - b. the action of God to deliver Israel from Egypt is a response to the Abrahamic covenant.  
(Ex 2:24)
  - c. the Exodus marks the election of Israel as a nation under God-the covenant at Sinai constitutes the people as a redeemed community.
  - d. the giving of the Law is dependent upon the Exodus as the Exodus is dependent upon the Abrahamic covenant, the Sinai covenant is therefore one of grace.  
(Ex 20:1-2)
3. The Purpose of the Law
  - a. the cultural mandate is filled out in detail in relation to:
    - (1) the land
    - (2) property
    - (3) the marginalised
    - (4) social relations
  - b. the cult provides a way of maintaining the covenant fellowship with God.
  - c. the *shalom* life of Israel has meaning in a broader world context.
4. Israel and the Nations
  - a. the particularism of election is the context of the world.  
(Ex 19:5)
  - b. what Adam was intended to be for the earth, and priests are for people, Israel is to be for the nations.  
(Ex 19:6; Ps 67)
  - c. the holiness of Israel meant a call to be *like God*, to be his image.  
(Ex 22:31; Lev 11:44; 19:2)
  - d. this would entail a history of:
    - (1) conflict with other nations, both politically and in terms of religious syncretism.
    - (2) suffering and judgement as God sought to keep the nation pure and blameless.
    - (3) exile and return, a type of national death and resurrection cf. Ezek 37.

- e. explicit expectations that the nations would see God's light through Israel and gather to Zion.



(Ps 2; 22:27-29; Isa 2:2-4; 9:6-7; 40:1-11; 49:1-6; 55:4-7; 56:7; 60:22; 61:1f; Jer 12:14-16; Mic 4:1-4; Zech 2:11)

- f. this will be effected through a purified remnant.  
(Ezra 9:8; Isa 4:3; 6:13; 7:3; 11:1; Amos 3:12, 4:11; 9:9; Mic 5:7)
- g. this finds concentration within Israel in a single individual who became known as Messiah. There are three major Messianic models in the Old Testament.

(1) the Son of David

- » this individual is the heir of God's covenant with David.

(2 Sam 7:12-16; Ps 89)

- » he will exercise a perfect rule of righteousness, completely imaging God's nature.

(Isa 9:1-7; Mic 4:1-4)

(2) the Servant of the Lord

- » this individual, who is true Israel, will bring justice and salvation to the ends of the earth and be a light to the nations.

(Isa 42:1-9; 49:1-6)

- » the servant through vicarious suffering will bring salvation to many

(Isa 52:13 – 53:12)

- » suffering is an essential element in mission, bearing witness to a rebellious world

(3) the Son of Man

- » this is an apocalyptic figure who exercises universal dominion over the nations.

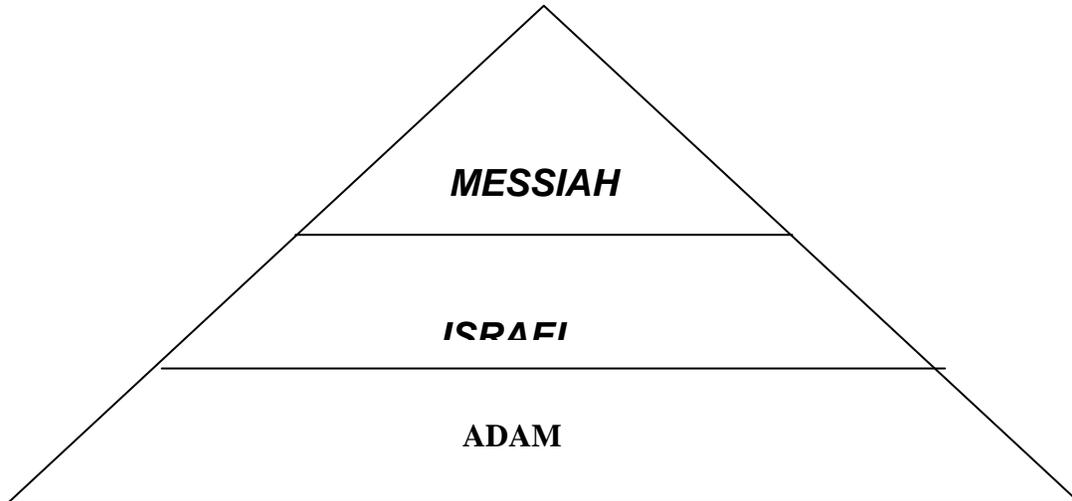
(Dan 7:13,14)

- » this prerogative is shared with the holy remnant who resists the power of evil.(Dan 7:18,22)

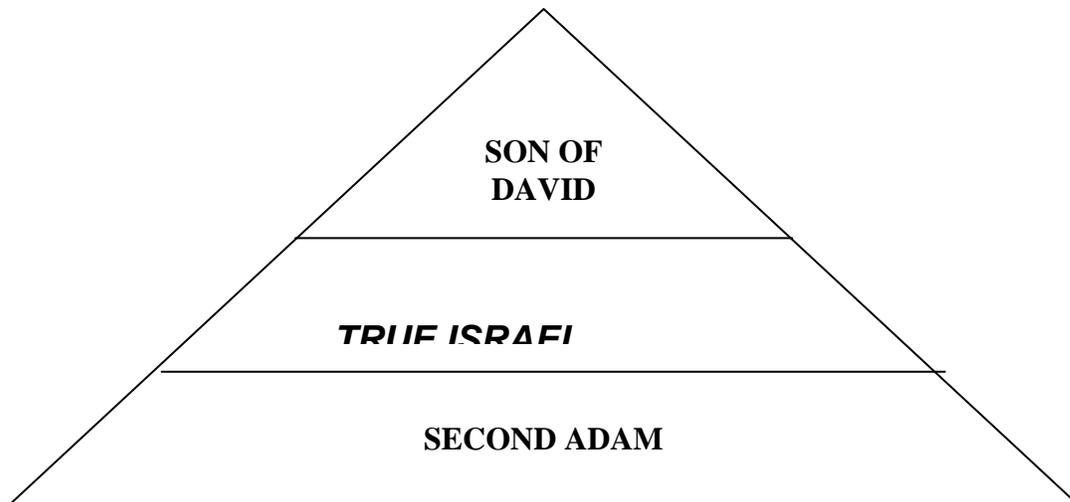
Conclusion as to the Old Testament Period.

1. The Covenant and the Election it involves can be Summed Up Diagrammatically.

(1) the concentration of election



(2) Messiah sums up all of God's purposes



2. The Old Testament Expectation is of Mission by means of Centripetal Attraction.

8. Jesus, The Kingdom and the Church.

1. Jesus Brings In the Kingdom.

a. Jesus did not preach the church but the kingdom of God.

(Mark 1:15)

b. this is the presence of God's ruling power, both in the present (Matt 11:2-26; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:21; 17:20) and future (Luke 21:31)

c. it establishes God's rule over humans, evil powers and nature.

(Matt 12:28-29; 21:31-32; Mark 3:5; 4:39; 9:47; Luke 7:18-23)

d. this is concentrated in forgiveness

(Mark 2:5; Luke 7:47-48; John 3:17-18; 5:14; 8:11)

e. Jesus himself is the supreme mystery and sign of the kingdom.

(1) as the sign opposed by many and the stone rejected.

(Matt 21:42; Luke 2:34)

(2) as the teacher of the secrets of the kingdom.

(Matt 13:11,19)

(3) as the presence of the kingdom in the midst of people.

(Matt 18:20; Luke 17:21)

(4) as the King

(Matt 25:34; Luke 1:33)

f. Jesus' kingdom actions reverse the power of the Fall by:

(1) healing relationship with God

(2) healing relationships between people

(3) healing bodies

(4) restoring humanity's dominion over nature

g. as the King come in power of the kingdom, Jesus is:

(1) the restorer of the original blessing

(Matt 5:3-11; 11:6; 13:16; 16:17; Mark 10:16; Luke 1:42,45,48; 11:28; 24:50; John 20:29)

(2) the image of God

(John 1:14, 18, 5:19; 14:10)

h. in his kingly action of the cross he fulfils the original command to be fruitful and multiply.

(Matt 27:11,29,37,42; Luke 19:14-15; 23:3; John 1:49; 12:24; 18:37)

2. Jesus Enacts the Covenant.

a. by his identification with sinners.

- (1) becoming flesh  
(John 1:14)
- (2) baptised in union with those under judgement  
(Matt 3:13-17)
- (3) undergoing temptation  
(Matt 4:1-11)
- (4) living under the law  
(Matt 5:17; Luke 2:21,27; Gal 4:4)
- (5) in every stage of human life and death  
(Luke 2:40,52, 3:23 etc)

b. by his sacrificial death

(Matt 26:20; Ex 24:6-8)

c. as the Servant who is the reality of the covenant

(Isa 42:6; 49:8; Matt 12:18-20; Mark 1:11; 10:45; 14:24; Luke 4:18-21)

d. by being the Father's witness

(John 3:11, 32; 8:14; 18:36)

3. Jesus and the Church

a. Israel was central to God's rule under the old covenant

(2 Chron 13:8)

b. this kingdom would one day extend to all nations

(Zech 14:9,16; see before)

c. the gathering of the twelve around Jesus

- (1) is the expression of his Messianic and kingly authority.
- (2) is the hub of the action of the kingdom of God, for example, in the sending out of the twelve and the seventy.

(Luke 9:10)

- (3) signifies the election of a new Israel, the eschatological people of God.

d. Jesus recapitulates the history of Israel, and reconstitutes the new covenant community.

- (1) journey into Egypt and return

(Matt 2:13-15)

- (2) temptations in the wilderness  
(Matt 4:1-11)
  - (3) giving of a new law  
(Matt 5-7)
  - (4) inaugurating a new Exodus  
(Luke 9:31)
  - (5) opening up a new inheritance  
(John 14:1-3)
- e. the church inheres in the life of Jesus.
- (1) Messiah, as the second Adam, is a corporate person
  - (2) the new eschatological community centred on Jesus is moulded into a structured reality by its relationship to himself.
  - (3) this call is a call to take up the cross and die to self-centredness.
  - (4) by inhering in his death and resurrection, the old humanity is destroyed and reborn.
4. Jesus and the Mission to the Nations.
- a. Jesus' immediate mission is exclusively to Israel.  
(Matt 10:5-6; 15:24; John 1:11)
  - b. incidents in his ministry however impact some Gentiles.  
(Matt 8:5-13; 15:21ff; John 4:39ff)
  - c. his teaching anticipates the inclusion of the nations.  
(Matt 11:11, 21:33ff; 24:14; Luke 13:29)
  - d. his cleansing of the forecourt of the temple, reserved for the prayers of the Gentiles, is a prophetic act dignifying their incorporation into the covenant.  
(Matt 21:12-17; Mark 11:15-19; Luke 19:45-48)
  - e. the whole people of God are gathered into one through the cross.  
(John 11:52; 12:32 cf. John 10:16)
  - f. Jesus commands the universal proclamation of the gospel.  
(Matt 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:21-23; Acts 1:7-8)
  - g. the twelve are witnesses to the identity of Jesus' relationship with the Father.  
(Matt 10:18; Luke 21:13; 24:48; John 15:26-27; Acts 1:8)

5. Conclusion: The Mission of Jesus
  1. The Mission of Jesus is to build the Church.
    - a. this is explicit in Matthew 16:18 cf. 18:17
    - b. it is implied in the references to an ongoing community of believers who will gather in his name.  
(Matt 18:20; 28:19; Luke 24:17; John 14:14; 15:16; 16:23-26)
  2. This occurs through Participation in his Relationship with the Father
    - a. Jesus prays that the disciples may share in the unity of Father and Son.  
(John 17:20, 23)
    - b. this means participating in the life of the trinity.
    - c. it implies an essential, dynamic unity.
    - d. as one-in-love, the church's essential nature images the nature of God.
  3. Centrifugal witness is essential to the presence of God.
    - a. the presence of God in the Old Testament was regularly associated with commissioning to a task or fulfilment of a call.  
(Gen 26:3; 28:15; 48:21; Ex 4:11-12; Josh 1:5-6,9 etc)
    - b. this presence is directed to the fulfilment of the plan of God to undo the effects of the fall.
    - c. because of his obedience to the Father, the Father is always with Jesus  
(John 15:10; 16:32)
    - d. this is a presence in the Spirit.  
(Matt 3:16; Luke 4:18; John 2:33; 3:34 etc)
    - e. the same principle of presence-in-obedience applies to the apostolic commission to reach the nations with the gospel.  
(John 14:23; 15:10; Matt 28:18-20; Luke 24:48-49; John 20:21-22)
    - f. this presence of Father and Son is the Spirit.

9. The Spirit Regenerates the People of God as the Body of the Risen Christ.
  1. The Gift of the Spirit Regenerates Persons.
    - a. this was taught by Jesus.  
(John 3:5-8)
    - b. it means entry into the kingdom of God.  
(John 3:3,5; Rom 14:17)
    - c. it means incorporation into the life of the trinity.  
(John 14:20,23)
  2. The Pentecostal Gift effects the New Life of the People of God.
    - a. the outpouring of the Spirit unites the church with Christ's atoning work.
    - b. this is a spiritual renewing experience which
      - (1) imparts new life  
John 20:22 cf. Gen 2:7
      - (2) raises Israel from the dead  
cf. Ezek 37:9
      - (3) initiates the eschatological age at a community level  
(Acts 2:28-32; 1 Cor 10:11; Heb 6:5)
    - c. it effects reconciliation, reversing the enforced scattering at Babel.  
(Acts 2; cf. Gen 11)
    - d. it signifies that heaven and earth have been reunited.
    - e. it reconstitutes the image of God in the body of Christ as the bearer of the new humanity.  
(Eph 2:15; Col 3:10)
    - f. the church, the new humanity, is the only tangible consequence of the completed work of Christ.
  3. The Gift of the Spirit Releases the Power of the Kingdom.
    - a. this was the topic of Jesus' final conversation with the disciples.  
(Acts 1:2-3)
    - b. the universal rule of Jesus from heaven means
      - (1) the fulfilment of the prophecies concerning the reign of Messiah.  
(Ps 2:8; Acts 1:8; 2:36)
      - (2) the restoration of humanity's dominion over the earth.
    - c. the life of the church resembles the kingdom of God

- (1) by the quality of community life  
(Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-37)
  - (2) through the signs of the kingdom.  
(Acts 2:43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8 etc)
- d. this is proleptic of the healing of the whole created order; the church is the sign post of the glorification of the universe.  
(Rom 8:23; Eph 1:14; 4:30 cf. Dan 2:44)
- “The ecclesial communion as such is the prophetic sign to the world that God has organised all things around the one whom he has enthroned at his right hand. The church has cosmic significance, precisely in its anticipation of the appearance of that order. It is the community of the *recapitulation*.”  
(Farrow 1999:32-33)
4. The New People of God is Structured Apostolically as a Centrifugal Community.
- a. the Spirit is sent out into all the earth  
(Rev 5:6)
  - b. Jesus sends out the church in the same participatory manner as he was sent out in the Spirit.  
(Rev 20:21)
  - c. the Spirit is the moving power from the One to the many, from the centre in Christ to the nations of the world.
  - d. this relates to the essential nature of the church, not just instrumentally.
  - e. communication is a fruit of communion with the trinity. The gift of the Spirit means a share in the Father’s communication of the Son and the Son’s communication of the Father.
  - g. the Spirit opens up the church as witness to the entire creation.  
(Eph 3:10).
  - h. the church is the means by which Christ fills all things with his own life.  
(Eph 1:22-23; 4:10,13; Col 2:9-10)
  - i. the outward movement of the people of God into all the earth by the power of the Spirit unites Christ his people and creation at all levels through evangelism, social justice, prayer etc.
  - j. the goal of the missionary nature of the church is socio-cultural transformation.
  - k. this includes all patterns of human life and behaviour: marriage, family, work recreation, economics, science and technology etc.
  - l. in this way the church is involved in the transformation of the cosmos.  
(cf. Joel 2:28-32; Haggai 2:5-8; Acts 2:19-20; Heb 12:26-28)

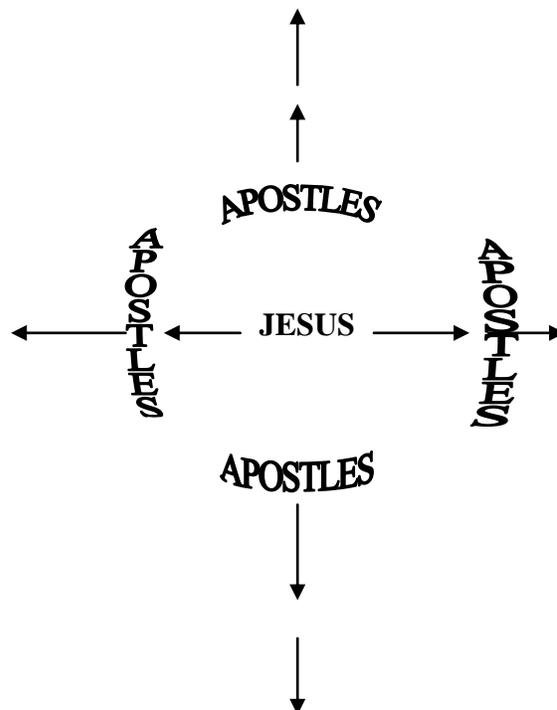
10: The Nature of the Church – Mission in Covenantal Community.

1. *Ekklesia* means Community

- a. *ekklesia* in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament translate *qahal*, this can mean both an act of assembly or the people of God.  
(Deut 4:10; 9:10; 18:16; 23:1-3; 3:30; Jud 20:2; 1 Chron 28:8 etc)
- b. the New Testament contains many references to *koinonia*, which means “participation” or “to share in”  
(2 Cor 1:7; Phil 3:10: suffering, Rom 15:26; 2 Cor 8:4, 9:13: giving; Phil 1:5: the gospel; 1 Cor 10:6: the body and blood of Christ etc)
- c. the most explicit ecclesiological contexts incorporate both a horizontal and vertical dimension.  
(1 John 1:2-3; 6-7)
- d. the *concept* of *koinonia* includes the Pauline union ‘in/with Christ’ material, Johannine ‘abiding’ imagery, the church as the body of Christ, believers ‘one’ with Christ and each other etc.
- e. other metaphors, such as the people of God, can be subsumed under this heading.

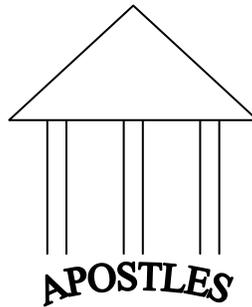
2. The Foundation of the Community is Apostolicity.

- a. there appear to be two types of texts which describe to the organic nature of the relationship between Christ, the church and the apostles.
- b. the first emphasises the sending out of the apostles by Jesus, the image here is linear and historical, they are the followers of Jesus.  
(Matt 4:19; 10:16,28; John 1:43; 20:21, 21:19, 22)



- c. the second pictures the apostles gathered around the Jesus, this image is structural, the apostolic college is the foundation of the church.

(Matt 16:13-20; Eph 2:20; Rev 21:24)



**APOSTLES**

- d. as the apostles gather around Jesus and are sent out by him with his presence they constitute the first church.

(cf. Mark 3:14; Matt 28:18-20; Luke 12:12)

- e. this means that the church is essentially bi-polar in its manifestation.

(1) in a concentrated form it gathers for worship (modality)

(2) in a dispersed form it scatters for service (sodality)

- f. since both of these are expressions of *ekklesia* as community, they are equally forms of “church”

- g. community formation, through the apostolic *kerygma* and *didache* (proclamation and teaching) is the conjoint goal of both.

- h. the world is saved, and judged, by the inclusive appeal of the gospel.

(John 3:16; Acts 2:21; 2 Cor 5:16-21; 1 Tim 4:10)

- i. all Christian ministry of Word, sacrament and service, in a means of inclusion in the body of Christ, and so the trinitarian communion.

### 3. The Identity of the Community as Body.

- a. this is a Pauline metaphor.

(1 Cor 10:17; 11:29; 12:12-27; Eph 1:22-23; 4:15-16; Col 1:18; 2:9)

- b. the local Christian community is the body of Christ in its entirety, for Christ is wholly present there by his Spirit.

(Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 12:13,27)

- c. through the distribution of the gifts of the Spirit, each member has a unique role to play, and is dependent upon everyone else.

(Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 12:14-21)

- d. the value of gifts and their contribution to the community cannot be evaluated on the basis of superficial, external observation, eg. tongues.  
(Rom 12:3; 1 Cor 12:22-25)
  - e. by nature, what impacts one member of the body affects the whole.  
(Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 12:26)
  - f. the unity of the body is dependent upon the variety of the various members' contributions.  
(Rom 12:6-9; 1 Cor 12:6-8,12)
  - g. the properties of the church as the body 'of' Christ and 'in' Christ (Rom 12:6) are wholly dependent on the person of Christ.
  - h. in Ephesians and Colossians 'the body' is the heavenly church not the local earthly gatherings.  
(Eph 1:22; 4:4; 4:15-16; 5:23; Col 1:18; 2:19)
  - i. as the universal body the oneness of Jew and Gentile is emphasised.  
(Eph 2:15-16)
  - j. Christ is 'the head of the body'.  
(Eph 1:22; 4:15; 5:23; Col 1:18; 2:19)
  - k. this signifies Jesus as Lord of the church, the centre of its life and unity.  
(cf. Col 2:9-10)
  - l. the Spirit establishes Christ's pre-eminence in the church and brings this life and unity into being.  
(Eph 2:18,22; 4:3-4)
  - m. the church as Christ's body should increasingly conform to him as it matures by 'speaking the truth in love'  
(Eph 4:12, 15-16)
4. The Identity of the Community is Family
- a. in the Old Testament Israel is the 'household' of God.  
(Jer 38:33; Amos 5:25)
  - b. occasionally fellow members are referred to as 'brothers'  
(Lev 10:4; 19:17; Deut 15:3)
  - c. Israel is not called *God's* family as such.
  - d. in the New Testament the church is 'the household of God'  
(Acts 15:7-11; 14-18; Rom 9:24-26; 2 Cor 6:14-7:1; Gal; 3:26-29; 6:10; Eph 1:3-7; 2:14-22; 1 Tim 3:15; Heb 3:6; 10:21; 1 Pet 2:5,9)

- e. this is because the head of the household is God the Father.  
(1 Thess 1:1,3; 3:1; 2 Thess 1:1-2; 2:16)
- f. it is through their union with Christ that believers are members of God's family.  
(Rom 8:14-17; Gal 4:4-6)
- g. this is the relationship of adult and maturing children to the Father.  
(Gal 4:4-6; Eph 4:13-16)
- h. it is a relationship of mutual indwelling.  
(2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:18, 22; Col 3:1ff)
- i. the term *adelphos*, 'brother', abounds in the New Testament.
  - (1) in relation to Jesus and believers.  
(Matt 12:49; 25:40; 28:10; John 20:17; Rom 8:29; Heb 2:11,12,17)
  - (2) in Christian relationships  
(Luke 22:32; John 21:23; Acts 6:3; 9:30; Rom 15:14; 1 Cor 15:58; Phil 3:1, 4:1; James 1:2; 1 Pet 1:22; Rev 6:11 etc)
- j. there are a host of other family related terms.
  - (1) fathers  
(1 Cor 4:15; 1 Thess 2:11; 1 John 2:13-14)
  - (2) mothers  
(Rom 16:13)
  - (3) sisters  
(Mark 10:29; Rom 16:11; 1 Tim 5:2; Phm 2; James 2:15)
  - (4) sons  
(1 Cor 4:17; Phil 2:22; Phm 10)
- k. these terms embody a certain quality of relationship which was expected of the church.
- l. this included all the fruit of the Spirit and many other attitudes.
- m. 'love' is the principal fruit  
(Rom 12:9-10; 1 Cor 13:4-8a; Gal 5:6,14,22; 1 Thess 3:12; 1 Pet 1:22 etc)
- n. in numerous texts, which call for care, consolation, service, compassion, affection etc. the motivating force is love.  
(Rom 15:1-2,5-6; 1 Cor 12:25-26; Gal 6:2; Eph 4:32-5:2; Phil 2:1-4; Col 3:12-14 etc)

- o. these acts involve an empathetic identification which passes into substitution, hence the power of Christian love is sacrifice which draws its reality from the sacrifice of Christ.

(Eph 4:32-5:2; Phil 2:17; 4:8; 1 Thess 1:3)

## 5. The Growth and Expansion of the Community

### 1. Call to oneness

↓  
(Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 1:10; 10:17; 12-13,20; 2 Cor 13:11; Eph 2:16; 4:3-4; Phil 1:27; Col 3:15)

### 2. Expressed in diversity

↓  
(Rom 12:4-8; 1 Cor 12:24-26; Gal 3:28; Eph 2:14-15; 4:7-16; 1 Pet 4:10-11)

### 3. Empathetic relationships: participatory suffering, weakness, interdependence, joy etc in all of life.

↓  
(Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 12:16; Eph 4:25)

### 4. Weakness and conflict.

↓  
(1 Cor 11:18-19)

### 5. Confession and forgiveness at personal cost.

↓  
(James 5:16; 1 John 1:9; Luke 17:3; 2 Cor 2:7,10; Eph 4:32; Col 3:13)

### 6. Experience and expression of:

- (1) the reconciling power of the cross.  
(Eph 2:15-16; Col 1:22)
- (2) unconditional grace and love.  
(John 13:34; Gal 5:13-14; Eph 5:2; 1 Pet 4:10)
- (3) the power of the Holy Spirit.  
(Acts 9:3; Rom 8:2ff; 14:17; 15:13; 1 Cor 6:19 etc)

### 7. Oneness expressed in the new humanity.

↓  
(John 17:21, 23; Gal 6:15; Eph 2:15)

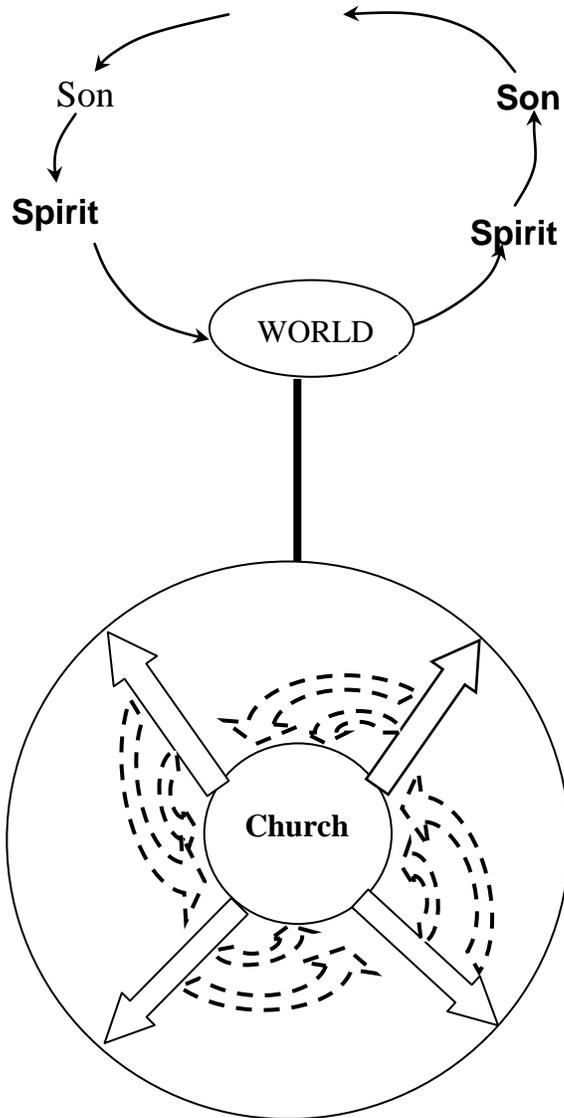
### 8. People added to the community.

↓  
(Acts 2:41,47; 5:14; 9:31; 16:5)

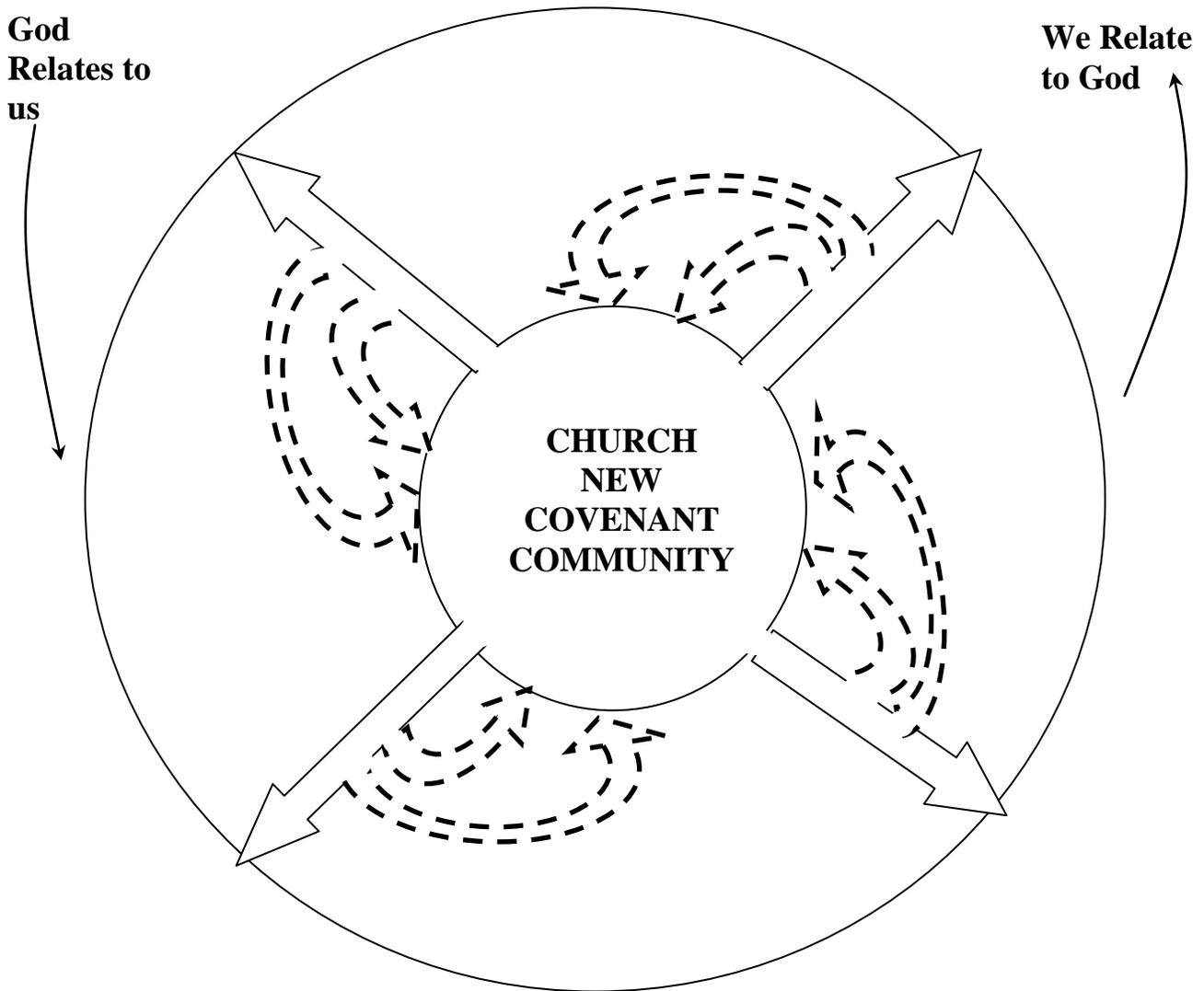
### 9. Multiplication and expansion through inclusion: the family grows and forms new communities.

(Gen 1:26-28; Acts 12:24-13:3ff; 19:20 etc)

God relates  
to us



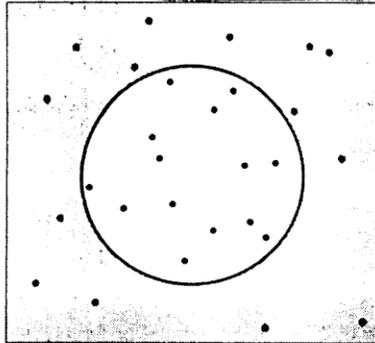
We relate to God



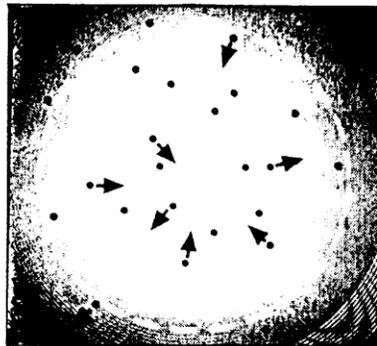
As the church penetrates the world in the power of the gospel of the kingdom of God, mission is actualised through the expanding image of God and the divine plan is realised.

“that God may be all in all” (1 Cor 15:28)

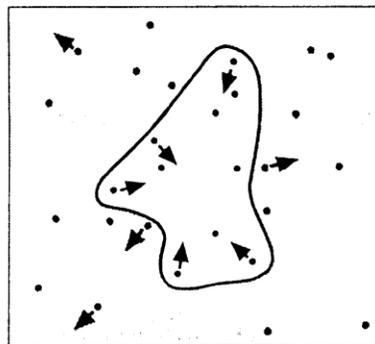
Confused attitudes to "church"



**Institutionalism:** Only the static boundary counts



**Spiritualism:** Only dynamic movement counts



**Bipolar position:** The direction shows where the boundary is.  
Schwarz (1999:40-43) adaptation of Hiebert (1979)



