

**THE CHURCH, A COMMUNITY OF GOD'S PEOPLE
FOR MUTUALISM AND POSITIVE CO-EXISTENCE:
A CHALLENGE TO CHRISTIANITY IN
THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY.
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ABSTRACT

Christianity continues to be one of if not the fastest growing religions in Africa. Its growth has translated into an increase in the number of churches especially those that fit the description of Newer Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches. The main challenge with this well documented growth of the church is that it is increasingly becoming more and more difficult to understand what it is exactly that rallies the church together as a one united church in Africa. In conversation with a number of leading scholars in Africa and beyond of the Christian faith in Africa, this paper argues that at all times there are two crucial aspects around which the unity of the church should be centred. First it is commitment to spreading the Good News about a saving God through Christ (evangelism) and second, commitment to the others as members of a community that is united in diversity.

Introduction

An African proverb in the Krobo language of the Ghanaian people reads, Ke i he hia a, l[[n] ko hu he hia, ne ke e sa mi je mi hi mi l[[n] ko hu esa le. E n[] he je] e sa w] tsuo kaa wa hi si sa mi nya yoo ng[tue mi j] mi mi kaa nyemi m[.W] tsuo wa tsa bo nya ne wa; ejakaa Mawu b] w] tsuo ng[e subai n] ne w] tsuo wa s] ng[e h[mi. Literally meaning, If I am important, others are also important, so if I should live, then let others also live, and if I must live, then, others must also live. We all should live together because God created us in His own image and we are all equal before Him.

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It is always good to belong and feel accepted among a people. Psalm 133 reads: “How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the beard, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron’s beard, down the collar of his robe. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the Lord bestows his blessings, even life forevermore (Ps133:1-3. NIV) .” It is as though the Psalmist had the above African proverbs in mind when he penned this extract. The words of both wisdom sayings from the Psalms and those of the African Proverb contain the spirit of brotherliness and concern for the other person. That other person is equally important as I am and therefore I must treat him or her with love and dignity. The creation story in the book of Genesis reveals the God of the universe as a wonderful architect who was at work making all things, including humanity (male and female) in His image, full of life and strength. Adam, the first human being was called out (of all the created things) by God to make and unmake (Genesis 1: 26-31). God has a reason for calling out humanity - a people, a community or a generation; it is to tell the wonderful acts of God who gave humanity His love and grace to be what he or she is. The apostle Peter emphasised this better by saying: “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light: which in the time past were no people, but are now people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now obtained mercy” (1 Peter 2: 9, 10 NIV).

Because the love of God has been distorted by sin in the world, God always call those who will obey him to rescue the world. According to Kung² and Henn,³ these called out people of God forms a new community. In the light of this, August,⁴ understands the church as the people called to participate in the (church) *ekklesia* that expresses the calling of people out from the broader community to become the community of God, for God’s⁵ redemptive purpose in the world. Thus, August understands the church as the people called to belong, because in the Greek word *ekklesia*, the church is the called out people from among the world who become God’s people

² Hans Kung. *The Church*.(London: Search Press. 1976), 84.

³ WHenn. “*Church the People of God*.”(New York: Burns & Oates. 2004), 24.

⁴ K Th August, *Equipping the Saints: God’s measure for Development*.(Bellville: The Print-Man. 2010), 44.

⁵ Ibid., 44-45

meant for the proclamation of God's redemptive act in the world through Jesus Christ. The church as a community is made manifest when the members express concern about the life of the other person. Le Bruyns⁶ states that the otherness is that amount of care and concern showed to the other person not out of pity but out of sorrow. The Krobos of Ghana have another proverb which reads "I ng[ejakaa wa ng[ne wa ng[ejakaa I ng]", literally meaning, I am because we are and we are because I am.

The church as a community can best be described as a forest; though thick from a distance, many individual trees and shrubs grow together to make it what it is. Some of the trees are short others are tall, some big others small, some hard others yet soft, some straight others crooked or curved but they all form a thick forest. Still getting closer to an 'African forest' one will find out that even the creeping plants and shrubs get to the top for sunlight through the tall trees. In the same way also, the shrubs protect the soil from becoming dry with their cover leaves on the ground. In this case the moisture content is maintained for growth and eventually all members benefit because of their mutuality. Living as a community is living symbiotically and not independently on one's selfishness only. Living should not be a struggle for oneself alone only 'to be', but making it possible for the other also 'to be' and this is very important for the Church of God in Africa.

As the Krobo proverb says, tso kake pe we hwe tso literally, one tree cannot make a forest, or no man is an island of his own; or better still a person is a person through other persons. According to Ackermann drawing from the philosophy of Mbiti, he sees humanity as part of a vast inter-related web. This web he says is "boundless and I acquire my humanity through this web and it comes to me as a gift"⁷. In this regard therefore he says; "my humanity is found, shaped and nurtured in and through the humanity of others so I can exercise my humanity only by being in the relationship of others devoid of which there is no growth, happiness or fullness of life for me"⁸. That is to

⁶ C Le Bruyns .“Religion and Economy?On Public Responsibility through Prophetic Intelligence Theology and Solidarity.”*Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 142.March (2012): 95.

⁷ D MACKERMANN.“Becoming fully human.An ethic of relationship in difference and otherness”.*Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*18 March (1998): 17-18.

⁸ Ackermann.“Becoming fully human.An ethic of relationship in difference and otherness”, 18.

say, I exist among a people and it is my people that give me my identity so if they are not there I cannot be there too. This means we are all mutual beings and we complement one another in so many ways. Mutuality or co-existence is important in any community life. For Ackermann, “Mutuality is the reciprocal interdependence of equals”. Here, he describes interdependence and equality as opposite to egocentrism which promotes the concern for the self at the expense of the other. He retorts that in community living, there is no self-promotion at the other’s expense, rather harmonious living and care for the other becomes a common practice in pursuit without fear or favour.

Living in isolation or loneliness is a curse in the African cosmology. That is why in Africa, people who are not blessed (at all) with children in life are considered as having an evil spirit, (Krobo; *ogbanje* or *mami* water) or those who for reasons beyond their control who live alone are mostly feared and considered to be witches and wizards. For this reason according to Ackermann, African leading theologians such as Mbiti and Tutu all reiterated that one belong to a people who therefore give him the impetus (credentials) to be, or live. So in the African thought and wisdom, such lonely people are not allowed to hold leadership positions or titles in the community as leaders nor are they considered worthy of emulation by others, let alone to be considered as ancestors after death. The idea of oneness and idleness (selfishness or greed) becomes equivocal and should not be encouraged. Invariably, Ngong reiterated that the Cameroonian

⁹ Ackermann. “Becoming fully human. An ethic of relationship in difference and otherness”, 19.

¹⁰ Ackermann. “Becoming fully human. An ethic of relationship in difference and otherness”, 19.

¹¹ Ackermann. “Becoming fully human. An ethic of relationship in difference and otherness”, 18.

¹² Mbiti is the father of African Theology. He thought at the University of Uganda, Harvard Divinity School and Princeton Theological Seminary. He was the Director of Ecumenical Institute of the World Council of Churches in Geneva.

¹³ Tutu is described by many as the father of South African Liberation Theology. He together with Nelson Mandela, Allan Boesak, Luthuli and others fought strongly against the Apartheid Regime in South Africa for freedom and equal rights.

these communities faith communities, and sees them as those who are marginalised and dehumanised together and so they [these communities] must also strive together towards the journey of their freedom and liberation.¹⁷

The church according to a Kenyan theologian Kahindi,¹⁸ is defined as a community of believers with Jesus Christ as a role model. Therefore it must continue to be concerned with crucial issues in any human relationships for it to be relevant in society. Evidently, the church due to love for God and the other should share the problems and joys of the members together.¹⁹ For this reason, in the book of Acts of the Apostles chapter 5, this new community of God's people shared their belongings together with the aim that no one should lack anything. The Bible mentions that they had all things (in common) together, and so, when Ananias and Sapphira decided to be greedy and became selfish on what they claimed to have belongs to them alone, the Holy Spirit of God destroyed them (Acts 5:1-11).

Boesak's²⁰ strong conviction of a community's wellbeing as expressed in

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Ela is a renowned Cameroon Theologian who fought seriously on behalf of the poor, needy and oppressed by living a practically deprived life to demonstrate what true liberation theology should be like. Excommunicated by the then Cameroonian government, Ela lived in exile and wrote numerous books including 'African Cry' and 'My Faith as an African'.

¹⁵ D T Ngong. "The Theologian as a Missionary: The Legacy of Jean-Marc Ela." *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* **136** March (2010), 10.

¹⁶ Jean Mark Ela. "Christianity and liberation in Africa." in *Paths of African theology*. ed. Gibellini, R. (Maryknoll New York: Orbis Books 1994).

¹⁷ Ngong. "The Theologian as a Missionary: The Legacy of Jean-Marc Ela," 10-2

¹⁸ L W Kahindi "The Role of African Churches in Democratization." In *Quest for Integrity in South Africa*, ed. G. Wamue and Mathew T (Kenya: African Publishers, 2003), 125-138.

¹⁹ Le Bruyns "Religion and Economy," 80-97.

²⁰ Allan A Boesak, *The Tenderness of Conscience: African Renaissance and the spirituality of Politics*. (Stellenbosch, South Africa: Sun Press 2005), 157-9.

the other person is clear on this. He states as we indicated earlier that, one is only human because of others, with others and for others. The other person is equally important as oneself and one must do everything to protect and (if for nothing at all) keep the dignity of the other, because the other person is equally important as one-self and so should not be ill-treated or dehumanised in any way. This understanding is also expressed in Le Bruyns as the “otherness” which is understood as the amount of love and concerns showed to the other person not out of pity but out of sorrow in

which both joy or happiness and sorrow or pain are shared together.²¹ The church according to Boesak a community of God must be faithful to the Gospel truth that calls for love and respect for [all] life, [all] humanity as an alternative community.²² Kahindi opines that the church which has often been challenged to practise basic Christian commands must love one another and be seriously and actively involved in all aspects of human life.²³

In this regard therefore Asante²⁴ challenges all Christians to have the mind of Christ, where he sees the mind of Christ as related to other-centeredness instead of self-centeredness. The Christian community according to him should be driven by love and this is very much inclusive of the other person or the other fellow human being.²⁵ Christians should endeavour to live with others and show them love because of the example of our Master Jesus.

It therefore means, the church as a community should live together in harmony in anticipation for his coming king and the New Jerusalem as promised by their Master and Lord. But this togetherness which is only expressed in love and care for the other person should move us to stand by

him or her in times of need. Many scholars such as, Le Bruyns call this solidarity because it makes one to stand with another person and is ready to go whichever mile with the other person until justice is done. Kahindi states “For the church to say and do nothing is tantamount to saying that the church is irrelevant in relation to the most important issue in human relationships”.²⁷ According to Bishop Desmond Tutu “a truly relevant

²¹ Le Bruyns, “Religion and Economy,” 85-90

²² Allan A Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence. A Social-Ethical Study of Black Theology and Black Power.* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1977), 119.

²³ Kahindi “The Role of African Churches in Democratization.” 125.

²⁴ E Asante, *Unity in Difference.* (Accra, Ghana. Methodist Book Depot. 2010), 55.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 55-56.

²⁶ Le Bruyns, “Religion and Economy,” 93-7.

²⁷ Kahindi “The Role of African Churches in Democratization,” 127.

theology was the one that addressed the issues of a particular community”²⁸. Since the church as a community (within the bigger community- the society) also has challenges, their theology must equally address [their] existential challenges otherwise the church is useless as Henn says .²⁹

The Mission Mandate of the Church and the beginning of the community of God

The church as a called out people of God must have an agenda by the one who initiated the call. There must be a reason why someone is called and this should definitely be the agenda of the caller to the called. As indicated above, the church is called out for the purpose of telling the wonderful acts of God and the church must not forget this. But what do we tell or proclaim? In 1 Peter 2:10, the church is called out to tell the world that God is good and perfect. Why? This is because God has made the “nobody” to become “somebody”, the “undeserved” to become “deserved” (receive mercy) and the “poor to be favoured”, the “unloved” to be “loved” and so on. This is the message and we must take it to the people wherever and whenever we find them. Okorocho states, “We can no longer sit and wait for them to come to the church; we must take the church to them in a way that meets their religious needs and aspirations. We must take a whole message to the whole people”.³⁰

Whenever the message of good news is taken to the people then evangelism takes place. The carrier of this good message becomes an ‘evangelist’ and the recipient of the good news becomes the ‘evangelised’. The whole process of doing this altogether is evangelism or evangelisation or mission. Mission therefore, becomes synonymous to evangelism because when the message of the good news is accepted then mission is said to have been accomplished but when the good news is rejected then mission is said not to have been accomplished. Okorocho views mission and evangelism as the supreme task given to the church by her risen Lord and the tool for this task he said is the Bible (the Good news of Jesus Christ) and the process is evangelism with the carrier of the good news as a missionary or evangelist.³¹

²⁸ Desmond Tutu. “Dark Days: Episcopal Ministry in times of Repression, 1976-1996”. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 118 March (2004), 32.

²⁹ Henn, *The Church*, 20.

³⁰ Okorocho, Cyril C. *The Mission of the Church in the 21st Century: A holistic Application* (Owerri, Nigeria: Transfiguration Press & Publishing House 2008), 4.

³¹ Ibid.,4.

He provides a working definition for evangelism and mission as follows “evangelism is the making or spreading of the good news of Jesus Christ to people. Mission is taking the message of good news of Jesus Christ to the people where they are”.³² But ‘where they are’ can be at workplace, home, market, schools, meetings or any other place where people live.³³ In his view, it is very difficult to define mission and evangelism separately or bring distinction between the two. Both terms rather, could be used interchangeably such that the mission of the church becomes God’s vehicle of the salvific plan and process, so every action of the church becomes mission. This is because the presence of the church is mission and mission is the activity of God.³⁴

According to Koegelenberg,³⁵ the church has its mandate by vitalizing and placing premium on the holistic meaning of the Gospel of salvation and as a result proclaims that the Gospel message intend not only to change people’s lives, but also their relationships and circumstances. The gospel message should be strong enough to change structures and if possible to change the whole world. But Bloesch³⁶ also in his understanding argues that, the church has as its mandate to be a worshipping community as well as a nurturing community, and this worshipping community is nurtured into maturity by doing mission work. In this view therefore, the church is seen as a teacher as well as a mother and at the same time it is given the charge to be a witnessing herald and channel of God’s grace accordingly.³⁷ In confirmation it is affirmed that Bosch was also more critical and argued about the way mission was and is currently done. Like Bosch, there was a suggestion of a paradigm shift from the old method because mission should rather be “a pluriverse of missiology in a universe of mission”. In this

³² Ibid., 4,6.

³³ Ibid., 5.

³⁴ Ibid., 6.

³⁵ For a discussion see R Koegelenberg, *The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). The role of Church, Civil Society and NGO’s*, a Report of the Third Church Development Conference.(Cape Town: EFSA.)3.

³⁶ D G Bloesch,*The Church. Sacraments, Worship, Ministry, Mission*. (Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 2002), 63.

³⁷ Bloesch, *The Church*, 57.

³⁸ J N J Kritzinger,&Saayman, W. (2011).*David Bosch Prophetic Intehrity, Cruciform Praxis*. (Dorpspruit, South Africa: Cluster Publications 2011), 112.

understanding, since mission is complex, it calls for diverse approaches so as to fulfil the intension of God for the whole of human race. For this reason³⁹ Kritzinger and Saayman suggests that the church also has to work in and with a “pluriverse of missiology”, which is a more plural and universal approach to mission. We have to recognize that we are dealing today with ‘a pluriverse of missiology in a universe of mission’ and Mission is still one, still *Missio Dei*, still the eternal outreach of Creator, Liberator and Sustained to the created cosmos in which we can participate - therefore ‘a universe of mission’. But missiology is so complexly incarnated in such diverse contexts, calling for such diverse approaches, that we can only⁴⁰ work in and with ‘a pluriverse of missiology’. According to them we must do mission which liberates the whole inhabited earth but within a context as Bosch advocates for an ecumenical paradigm, which is a mission as of the church-with-others and a mission as *Missio Dei*. According to Bosch:

It has become impossible to talking about the church without at the same time talking about mission....Because church and mission belongs together from the beginning, a church without a mission or a mission without a church is both contradictions; Such things do exist, but only as pseudo-structures.⁴¹

For him it is not the church which undertakes mission; it is the missio-Dei which constitutes the church. Therefore the mission of the church needs to⁴² be renewed and re-conceived. Thus, to do mission is not anything we can do better than God Himself, rather, it is always God who does mission through us, as a mandate because, God Himself is so actively involved in and with this mission activity⁴³ being done through the following channels. Thus, the church⁴³ is not itself the kingdom of God but a poignant sign and witness in breaking of the kingdom into human history. But Croft⁴⁴ stresses the fact that in the New Testament, when referring to “church” it is never about buildings but about a particular group of people. For this reason

³⁹ Ibid., 112.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 112.

⁴¹ David J Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm shift in Theology of Missions*. (Maryknol, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 372.

⁴² Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 519.

⁴³ Bloesch, *The Church*, 32.

⁴⁴ S Croft, *Transforming Communities: Re-imagining the Church for the 21st Century*. (Darton, London: Longman and Todd Ltd, 2002), 109.

Croft argues that the church is not simply a human organization or a society invented by the early Christians, but that it was God who called the church into being with a purpose and a mandate.⁴⁵

This purpose of God's calling,⁴⁶ from the very beginning, is clearly not just for the blessing of Abraham's descends, but in order for the called ones to be a community such that all the people on earth will be blessed through them. God says I will bless your descendants and the generations yet unborn (Genesis 22:17-18). Scholars like Boesak and Bloesch argue that part of the mandate of the church is to seek justice for the victims, to seek liberation for the oppressed, to seek reconciliation as her Lord has done and to be involved in works of mercy.⁴⁷⁴⁸

According to James,⁴⁹ the church, if properly functioning should be a

⁵⁰ carrier of information and values that would help stabilize and build the society in which she find herself. In other words, the church is basically "a life support system not only enabling its members to survive in a cruel and hostile world but also empowering them to prevail over the principalities and powers of this world". Essentially, Villa-Vicencio sees the church

playing a role that transcends seemingly impregnable barriers to enable people to reach towards what some regard as impossible dreams. The church in mission therefore is to fight on behalf of the people to bring them meaningful life which all in their lifetime has eluded them. According to Rieger,⁵² it is often overlooked that God is the one who locates Godself alongside the oppressed and against the oppressor and that God always take a preferential option for the poor and the marginalised as reiterated Boesak⁵³

⁴⁹ M M James, "The Church as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) in Development". In *Church and Development: An Interdisciplinary Approach. Perspectives from Southern Africa and Europe*, ed. Koegelenberg, N. (Bellville: EFSA, 1992), 81.

⁵⁰ Bloesch, *The Church*, 64.

⁵¹ Charles Villa-Vicencio, *A Theology of Reconstruction Nation-building and human rights*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992,) 31.

⁵² J Rieger, *No Rising Tide: Theology, Economics and the Future*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 160.

⁵³ Boesak, *If this is treason, I am guilty*, 53.

So, according to Kameeta, the main mandate and obligation of the church is that of being there for the poor, the needy, the oppressed and the marginalised in society as Jesus taught us in the gospel about the day of judgement:

I was hungry you gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and you gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and you took me not in: naked, and you clothed me not: sick and imprisoned, and you visited me not. Then they shall also answer him, saying Lord, when saw we thee hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick or in prison and did not minister unto thee.... I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these; you did not do for me (Mathew 25:42, 45).

To be precise, Jesus stood for justice and dignity on behalf of the poor and this should remain the yardstick for any human system, and the Church has no excuse than to act according to God's will and Jesus' example to bring about justice and dignity for God's creation and within the human society.

According to Croft, to participate in this 'God's mission' is an outworking of God's commandment of love to our neighbour as ourselves as well as to be good stewards of the whole of creation. In this God's mission and evangelism is the church called to be loyal and obedient and also a participant, otherwise the church becomes a disobedient church and does not qualify or have any reason to exist as the Archbishop of Canterbury sees it.⁵⁶

The Church and Salvation: A Visible Sign of God's saving Act

The church according to Bloesch, exists for others as the visible sign of God's saving work and so it is the visible sign of the presence of the Lord in a redemptive community.⁵⁷ Therefore, for some scholars the

⁵⁴ Z Kameeta, Church-State-Relations as an Ecumenical Issue. A contribution from Africa. (This was a paper presented to the 41st International Ecumenical Seminar at The Institute for Ecumenical Research at Strasbourg from July 4th-11th 2007. p 3).

⁵⁵ S Croft, *Transforming Communities: Re-imagining the Church for the 21st Century*. (Darton, London: Longman and Todd Ltd. 2002), 138.

⁵⁶ Okorocho, *The Mission of the Church in the 21st Century*, 6.

⁵⁷ Bloesch, *The Church*, 58.

church has no option than to aspire for liberation in any struggle for a more humane and just society as well as to testify in this world in order to make the saving work of God visible.⁵⁸ The best way for the church to demonstrate its salvific role and so as sign of God's presence, according to Webber,⁵⁹ is to cast its lot with the oppressed and the exploited in their struggle for a just society, even if it means being critical of itself and of its own economic security.

⁶⁰In the view of Bloesch the church plays an important role in directing sinners to Christ. But, Heyns argues that the church has a mission to spread the Gospel as spreading the Gospel does not mean merely to save people's souls, but also, to make it possible for the mercy of the God of creation to re-creatively permeate the whole of creation and leaven it or cause it spread to every part of human society.⁶¹ Bloesch in this respect argues that the church is the mouthpiece of Christ and by so doing communicates the salvific effects to its own people and to the world.⁶² The church should be seen as the carrier of the good news of Jesus Christ so whenever and wherever the church comes, the good news should follow. In that regard therefore⁶³ the church becomes "the custodian as well as the instrument of God's salvific work in the world". Veling therefore argues in favour of practical theology and so sees theory and practice as partners that belong together, and this gives meaning to Heyns' view as indicated above where the leaven affects all the others within the society,⁶⁴ and this should be the evidence of mutuality as oneness. For Okorochoa, those who claim to believe must learn to behave Christianity to show goodness as it will be the proof of goodness in the good news. The cry of those who suffer, need to be heard and if they are not heard by others,[Christians] then we are not able to grasp the work of God in the world as observed by the Catholic theologian Jung Mo Sung in Rieger's argument.⁶⁵ those who claim to believe must learn to behave

⁵⁸ R E Webber, *The Church in the World. Opposition, Tension, or Transformation?*(Grand Rapids: Zonervan Publishing House, 1986), 201.

⁵⁹ Ibid.,201.

⁶⁰ Bloesch, *The Church*, 58.

⁶¹ J A Heyns, *The Church*.(Goodwood: National Book Printers, 1980), 103.

⁶² Bloesch, *The Church*, 59.

⁶³ Okorochoa, *The Mission of the Church in the 21st Century*, 6-7.

⁶⁴ T A Veling, (2005).*Practical Theology. On Earth as it is in Heaven*. (New York: Orbis Books, 2005), 142.

⁶⁵ Okorochoa, *The Mission of the Church in the 21st Century*, 8.

behave Christianity to show goodness as it will be the proof of goodness in the good news. The cry of those who suffer, need to be heard and if they are not heard by others,[Christians] then we are not able to grasp the work of God in the world as observed by the Catholic theologian Jung Mo Sung in Rieger's argument.⁶⁶

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For this reason, Webber clearly understands the role of the church to be in terms of Gods visible saving act, which is a force that can resolve the conflict of the oppressed and the oppressor as the church naturally participates in the class struggle (in South Africa), seeking in the name of Jesus to release the poor and the oppressed, since this will bring hope to harmonize the human situation and move towards brotherhood and sisterhood and not Lord- hood and servant hood, nor master and slave relationship. People must be brought under the liberating rule of God, and liberate everything around them as liberated people knowing that the church is inclusive in this mission activity. In this regard therefore, then mission is the church's task according to Heyns.⁶⁸ Invariably, Tamez reiterates that the narratives of the Old Testament attributes every act of liberation to Yahweh and then the intervention of Yahweh is strongly described as so overpowering that it eliminates human evil and then makes the victory completely miraculous.⁶⁹ It could be therefore deduced from the views of scholars that in any given circumstance, the economic development or transformation of people should also be seen as part of God's saving act and this is facilitated by the church alone as it does mission with God. The church should remind us that the total development of a person is inclusive in salvation and any attempt to remove it from the mission mandate renders mission purposeless. Emphasis should rather be placed on the wholeness of the person rather than the 'part person'; the undignified, oppressed, poor, vulnerable and marginalised as it is today. The church must therefore stand for the unification of its members for this new community of the Lord. The church should eschew division of any kind and its members come together to live in harmony with one another as brethren sharing and complementing each other and living in peace by practising mutual co-existence. By so doing the idea of mutualisation becomes real and authentic.

⁶⁶ Rieger, *No Rising Tide*, 160.

⁶⁷ Webber, *The Church in the World*, 160.

⁶⁸ Heyns, *The Church*, 104.

⁶⁹ E Tamez, *Bible of the Oppressed*.(New York: Orbis Books, 1983), 61.

Conclusion

Division in the church among members is the main cause of splits from parent churches in Africa, resulting in the planting of many newer churches which have come to stay. There is the need for unity and oneness among the members of church as a people of God to bring to light the benefits of living together. The church should place emphasis on the promotion of mutuality for co-existence among Christians through love dignity and respect for the other. Mutualism is that quality that could be found in the expression of the other person which forms part of the [whole] body of Christ without which the [whole] body is never complete as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:4-30, Ephesians 4:2-8,11-13. Mission as a mandate to the people of God can only be achieved through mutualism irrespective of differences such as strengths and weaknesses, traditions, ethnicity etcetera of the other person.

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