

2. What is the Expression of the Church?

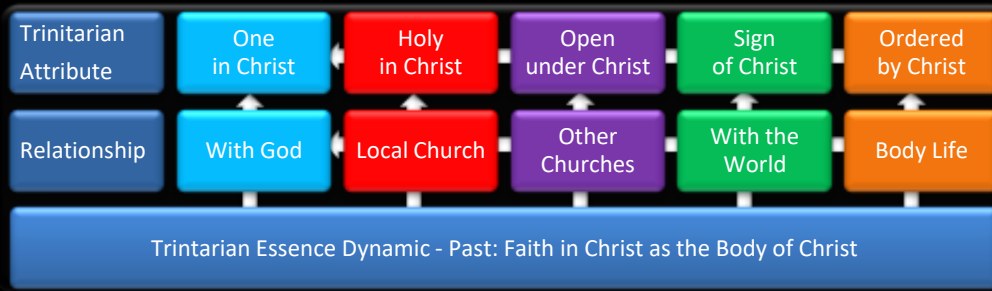


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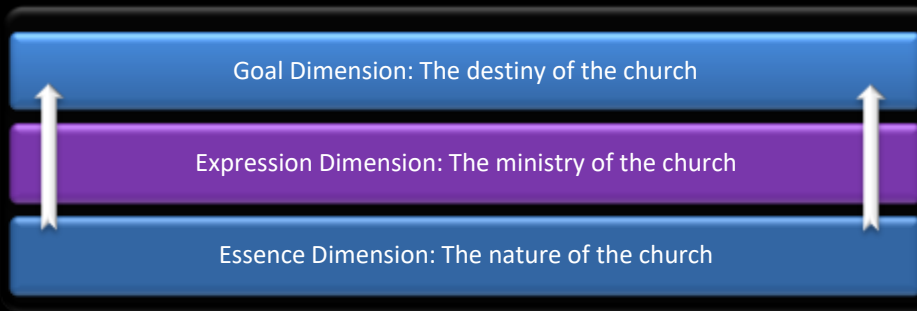
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References to PTE = Practical Theological Ecclesiology

The Essence Dimension



What is the Expression?



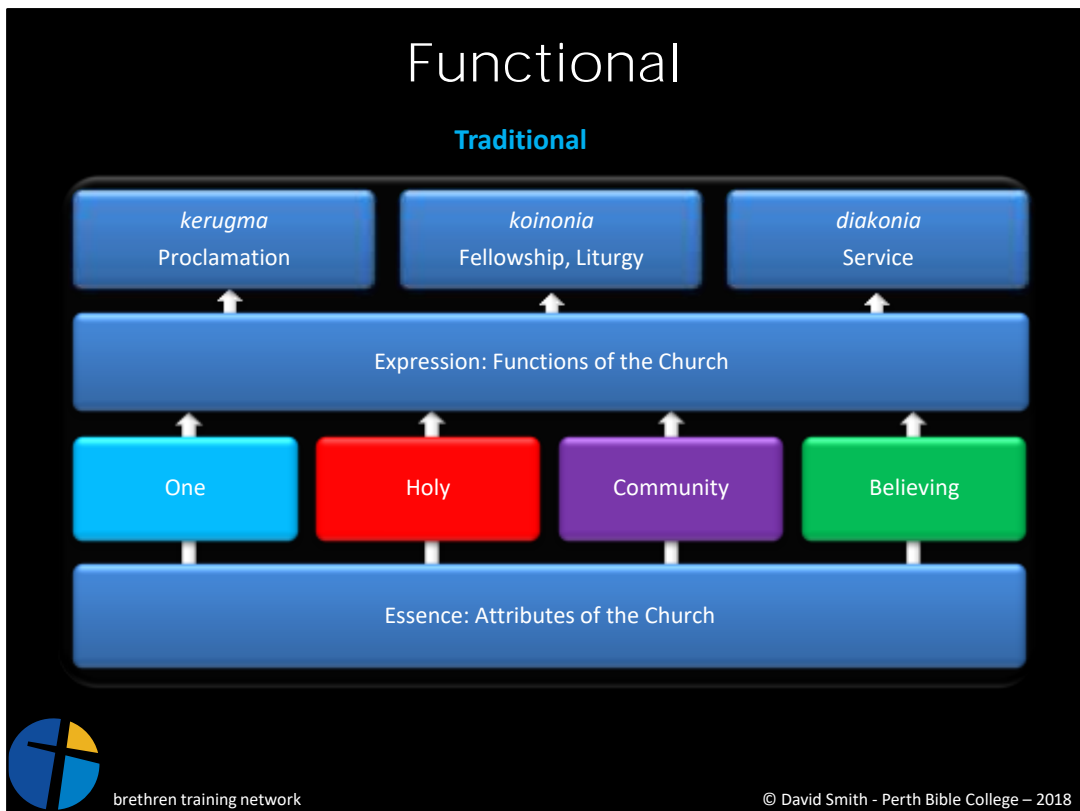
Expression Approaches

Functional
Dynamic
Trinitarian
Relational



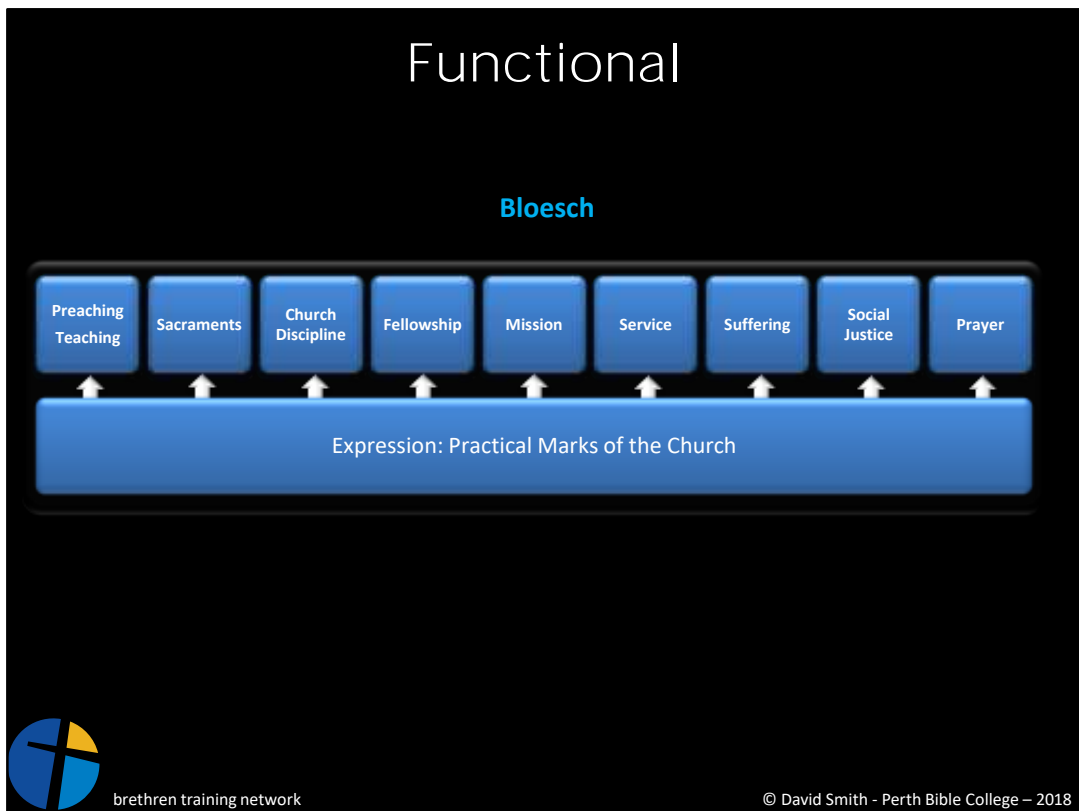
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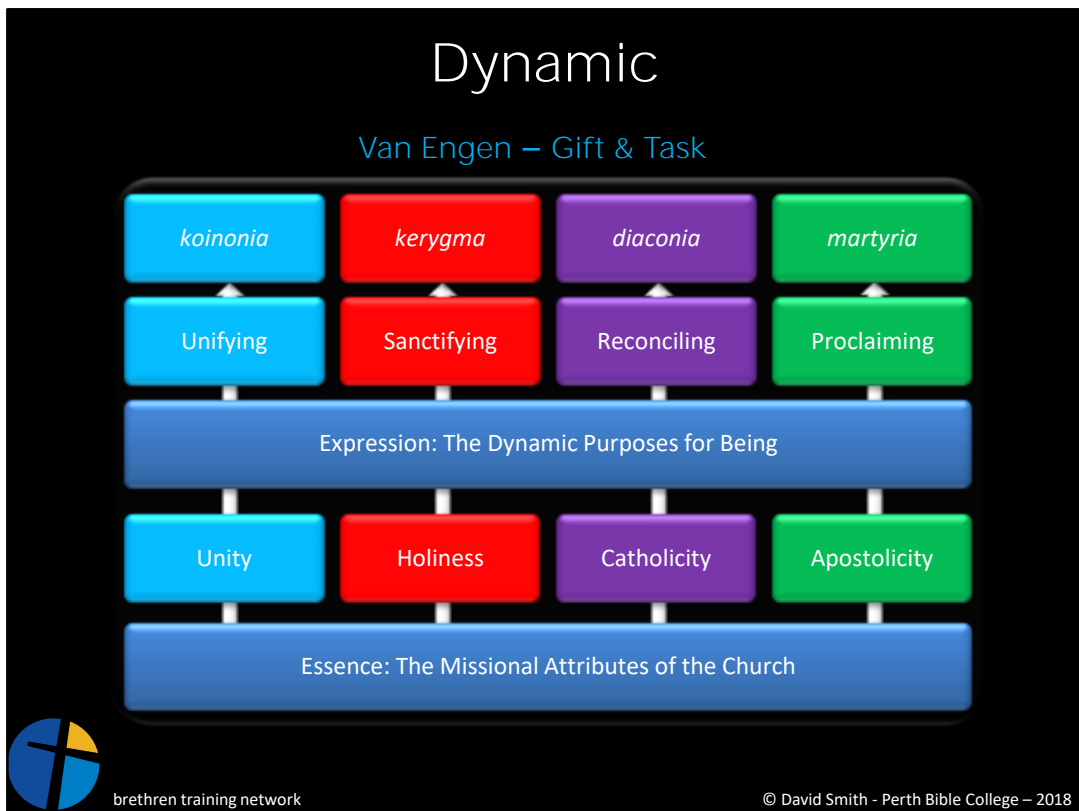
PTE (86)

Since then theologians have categorised the essential functions of the church under three Greek words “kerugma (proclamation), koinonia (fellowship, including liturgy) and diakonia or diaconal service” (Heyns and Pieterse 1990:57).



PTE (86)

Bloesch in his systematic treatment of the church expands on the traditional functions noted above (see Figure 28), providing a more detailed collection of practical marks of the church. In addition to preaching, and the sacraments, he adds in line with several reformers the mark of church discipline. From the pietistic and spiritual movements following the Reformation he adds fellowship, mission, and service as true marks of the church. From the Orthodox Church he adds educational teaching or catechesis. From the Anabaptist tradition he adds suffering concurring with Arnold that, “Part of the experience of true conversion is the willingness to suffer with Christ, the suffering One. I do not believe that true conversion is possible without this” (Bloesch 2006:106). From liberation theology he adds signs of social justice and personally adds prayer as a practical mark of the church (Bloesch 2006:103–7).



PTE (96-97)

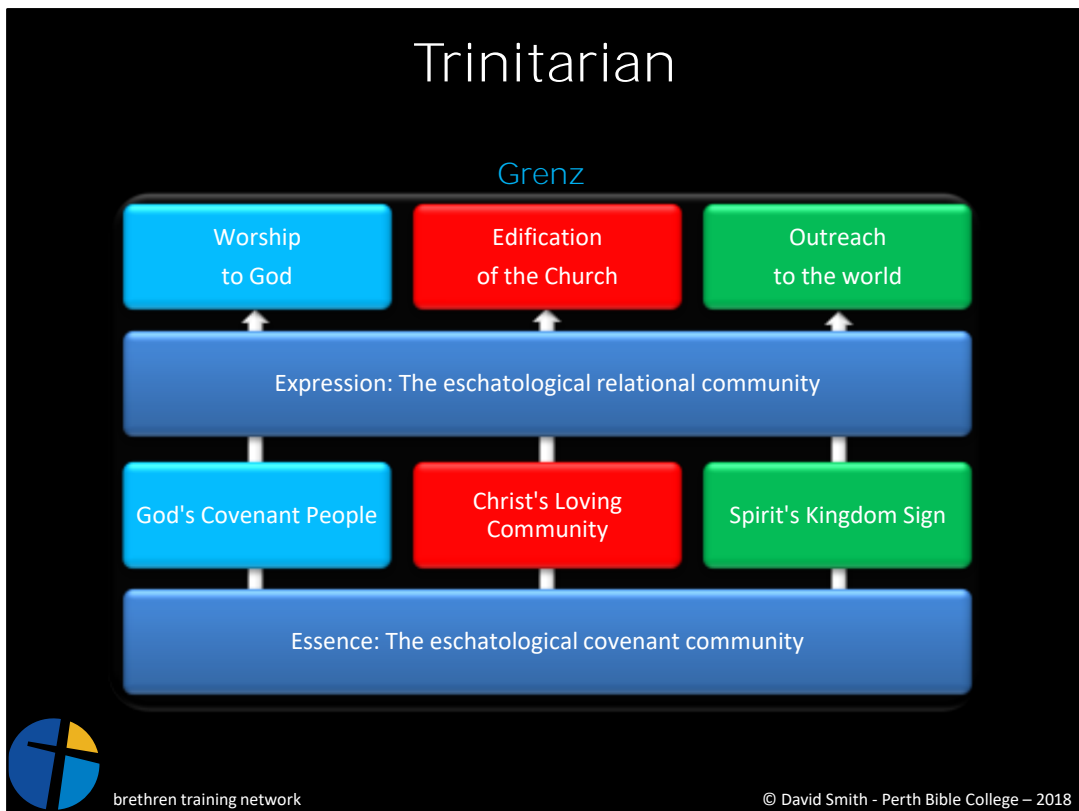
Rather than a static approach to the four traditional attributes, Van Engen views the attributes as being both gift and task. The attributes take on a dynamic nature by not only describing the essence of the church, the gift, but by embodying also the very tasks the church is called to take on as it emerges “toward the full manifestation of its true nature” (Van Engen 1991:65). According to Van Engen:

The *gift* that the Church’s nature is *one* embodies the *task* to strive toward unity, to live as one, to unite itself around its Lord. The *gift* that the Church’s nature is *holy* accompanies the *task* to strive toward holiness in its members, in its organisations, in its life in the world, in its reception and expression of the Word of God. The *gift* that the Church is *catholic* means that the Church’s *task* is to grow in its geographical, cultural, racial, spiritual, numerical, and temporal universality around the Lord of lords who speaks his Word to all creatures. The *gift* that the church is *apostolic* would itself be a *task* for applying the apostolic gospel, living in the apostolic way, and being sent as apostles to the world. (Van Engen 1991:65)

In this way, Van Engen believes the attributes relate closer to church reality rather than defining an abstract body which may or may not exist in such a designated way.

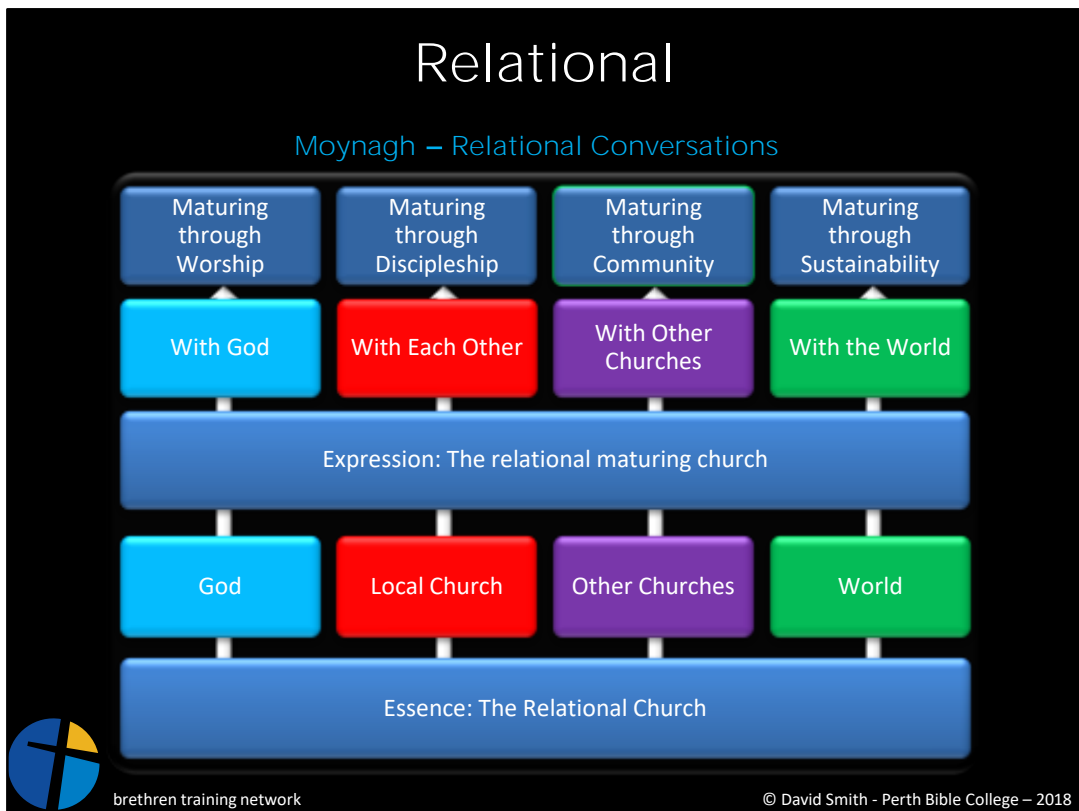
Such a concept of church “reaches beyond what *is* to what *could be* as we maintain more intimate contact with the essence of the Church’s nature” (Van Engen 1991:66). Van Engen goes further, not wanting to see these dynamic attributes just as tasks that the church does to itself to become essentially true to its gifted nature, he also wants them to be viewed as “four planetary orbits of the church’s missionary life in the world” (Van Engen 1991:68). As such “First, the one Church of Jesus Christ would be seen as a unifying force.... Second, the holy Church of Jesus Christ would be seen as a sanctifying force.... Third, the catholic Church of Jesus Christ would be seen as a reconciling force.... Fourth, the apostolic Church of Jesus Christ would be seen as a proclaiming force.... Viewed in this way the four ancient concepts are not only activities the Church does, but the totality of existence” (Van Engen 1991:68). If the attributes are viewed in this dynamic way then they not only speak to the nature of the church, nor merely influence the actions to be carried out, but according to van Engen they are the church’s “totality of existence” (Van Engen 1991:70).

For Van Engen, the purposes of the church are realised according to its fourfold nature “when its members participate in the Church’s being-in-the-world through *koinonia*, *kerygma*, *diakonia*, and *martyria*” (Van Engen 1991:89). These four expressions are closely connected to the active attributes. For Van Engen, the church as gift is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, and thereby it dynamically acts to unify, sanctify, reconcile and proclaim, through connected expressions of *koinonia*, *kerygma*, *diaconia*, and *martyria*, so that the church realises its “unique identity and purpose in the world as a *covenant community of the King*” (Van Engen 1991:104).



PTE (101-103)

Grenz' expression framework comes not from focussing on the actions themselves but on the focal points of the expression activities. For him the practical expressions of the church are worship, being those events which focus on God, edification, being those events which focus on the faith community, and outreach, being those events which focus on the world (Grenz 2000:490). The purpose of each expression for Grenz is for the church to bring glory to God, en route to the consummation of God's purposes, [through] mirroring the divine image" (Grenz 2000:489).



PTE (112-114)

For Moynagh, “If relationships are the essence of the church, practices are for the good of the church” (Moynagh 2012:109). The practices build on the four relationships and direct them toward maturity, and that maturity “will involve growth in Christ-likeness. This can be understood as movement toward the kingdom within each of the four interlocking sets of relationships that constitute the church – with the Trinity, the world, the living tradition, and with the gathering” (Moynagh 2012:329–30). Moynagh sees maturity from an eschatological missional perspective as imitating the self-giving nature of God in all relationships. It is a “movement into God’s reign, which is the *telos*, the goal of the church” (Moynagh 2012:330). He then identifies the relationally connected practices of the church as “four pathways to maturity – discipleship, worship, community, and sustainability” (Moynagh 2012:330). Under discipleship Moynagh places the actions of evangelism, initiation, and formation. The practice of worship is seen as essential in ensuring maturity in faith formation and ecclesial identity. Community seeks a mature alternative Spirit social life that includes “the practice of hospitality, solidarity expressed in mutual giving, dispersed leadership, a contextualised faith that can subvert the existing order and make a difference in life, and a willingness to negotiate differences in identity” (Moynagh 2012:404). Sustainability is about “the durability of the container within which discipleship, worship, community, and other ingredients of maturity are grown” (Moynagh 2012:405). It includes aspects of church foundation, leadership, dynamics, and reproduction; actions which provide a solid church framework and ensure its health, fruitfulness and longevity.

Expression Dynamics

Expressions

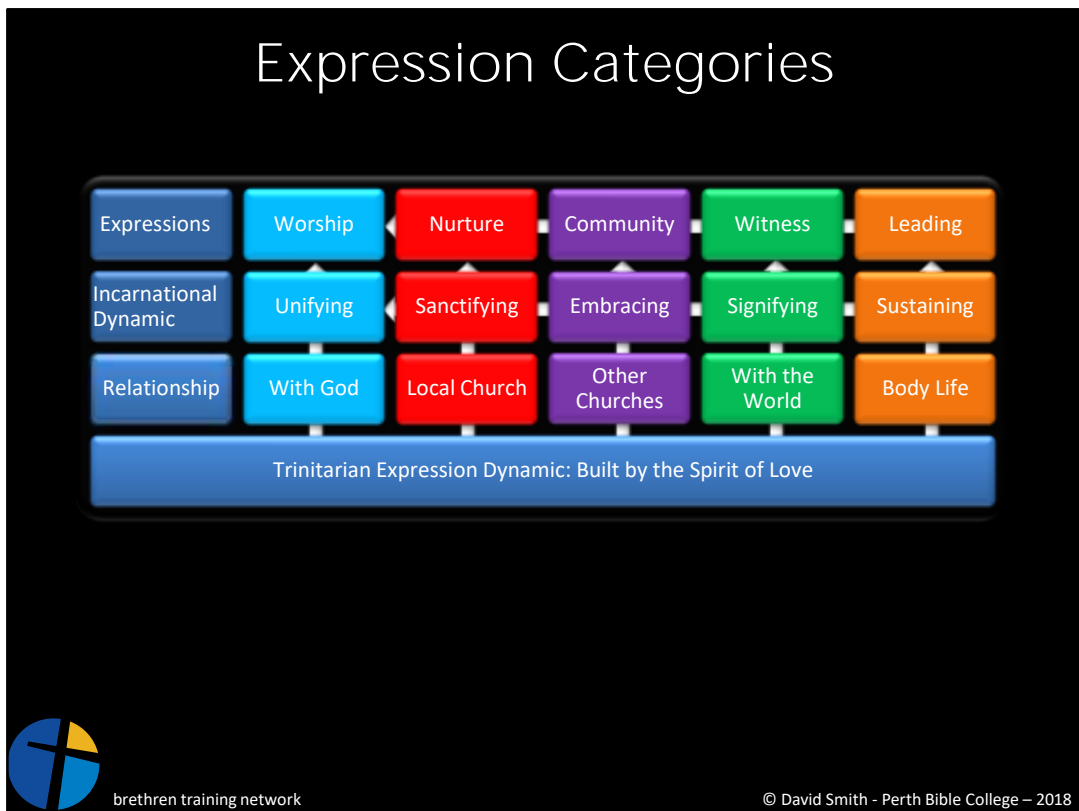
Incarnational Dynamic

Trinitarian Dynamic: Now - Built by the Spirit of Love



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PTE (151-153)

According to our model the theory of expression categories is held together by the guiding concept of being built by the Spirit along incarnational lines through active expressions. Thus the essence attribute categories of one, holy, open, sign and order, are dynamically brought to life through unifying, sanctifying, embracing, signifying, and sustaining expression events of worship, nurture, community, witness, and leading, aimed toward the maturing of relationships with God, with those within the local church, with other churches, with the world, and of itself as an organised social body. In the God directed relationship we seek oneness through unified worship. Within the church we seek holiness through sanctifying nurture. With other churches we seek openness as an embracing kingdom community. With the world we seek to be a sign through having a faithful witnessing presence. Within body life we seek to be ordered through sustaining leadership. Again across the entire model it is important to keep in mind that while there are vertical relational movements there are also horizontal holistic incarnational expressions which are to be connected and present across all relationships. Therefore, for example, while our relationship within the church may be marked specifically by holiness and this is fostered through sanctifying nurture it is equally to be marked by unifying worship, embracing community, signifying witness, and sustaining leadership. The same applies across each relational dynamic which is held together by the body life.

We turn now to consider the frame of reference for each expression category. Again it is not our desire to prescribe the content of each category but rather to give a content frame which while biblical and theological, can be filled out by each faith community according to their specific communal expression theology. The following provides a broad guide to the expression categories:

- Unifying Worship – “Without worship, there is no Church.... Worship is the fundamental act that incorporates and animates this community as a body” (Sherman 2015:75). Worship flows from, and forms, the oneness shared in Christ. We are concerned here with incorporating and communal declarations of worship. These include corporate gatherings, communal remembrances and representations of God’s story with his people. It also includes specific church family events such as baptism, dedication, communion, confirmation, commissioning, weddings and funerals. Therefore, the absence of unifying, corporate, “we are the people of God” focussed worship expression, in favour of an individualised and self-focussed expression, opposes unifying worship.
- Sanctifying Nurture – Flowing from the holiness of God we are concerned here with the call to Christlikeness, the formation and growth toward maturity of individual Christians as a joyful response to God. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind” guides personal formation. Events that serve to inform the head, shape the heart, and guide the hands are in view. Events of teaching, preaching, discipleship, pastoral care, counselling, equipping for service and faithful service are included here. Therefore, the absence of expressions which lead to a joyful deepening discipleship with Christ, in favour of legalistic compliance or the tolerance of worldliness, opposes the sanctifying nurture of the faith community.
- Embracing Community – Flowing from the open inclusive love of God we are concerned here with community formation marked by open and inclusive relationships of grace and forgiveness under Christ. “For the ancients, Christian community was unique, intriguing, and attractive primarily because it called for inclusion of all people. The Christian movement was the only place where women, children, and people of non-Jewish origin could all be together” (Halter and Smay 2008:70). “Love your neighbour as yourself” guides the relationships and community formation of the church. This involves the embrace of others out of grace despite differences, and the reconciling inclusion of all no matter what the diversity, based on our oneness in Christ. Events of love, fellowship, conversation, partnering, supporting and service are included here. Therefore, the absence of, forgiveness, acceptance, a relational focus, and the gracious loving inclusion of others, in favour of a defensive critical separatist posture,

opposes embracing community expressions.

- Signifying Witness – Flowing from the revelation of God toward the world in Christ, the church is to be a continuing active witnessing presence of God by the Spirit in the world. The kingdom prayer, “on earth as it is in heaven,” and the call to a “ministry of reconciliation,” guide the presence and action of the church in the world as a signifying witness of the kingdom here on earth. The church as the fellowship of believers is a relational social sign, first as a local congregation, secondly to other congregations, and thirdly to the world. In each social context the church is “ordained to be a sign of God’s will to save humanity, a sign of reconciliation with God and of the resultant renewal in intrahuman relations, a sign of the future fellowship of humanity in the kingdom of God” (Pannenberg 1998:432). Events of presence, justice, proclamation, confession, dialogue and mission are included here. Therefore, not being active, obvious, and Christ concerned as a reconciling presence in the world through word, deed, life and relationships, but rather being inactive, unconcerned and private, opposes the church expressing itself as a signifying witness.
- Sustaining Leadership – The church as a unity employs its diversity of gifts under Christ and through organised leadership in order to sustain and strengthen its members to be God’s kingdom life in the world. The aspects of governance, polity, leadership, decision making, gift utilisation, reflection, review and goal focus are included here. Therefore, without clear godly movement forward and empowered effective participation, the sustained and guided life of the faith community is compromised.

The Expression Categories

UNIFYING WORSHIP

– God focused corporate worship

SANCTIFYING NURTURE

– Maturing life and relationships

EMBRACING COMMUNITY

– Loving one another and embracing others

SIGNIFYING WITNESS

– Personal concern and proclamation

SUSTAINING LEADERSHIP

– Clear leadership that empowers gift participation



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One – John 17:22

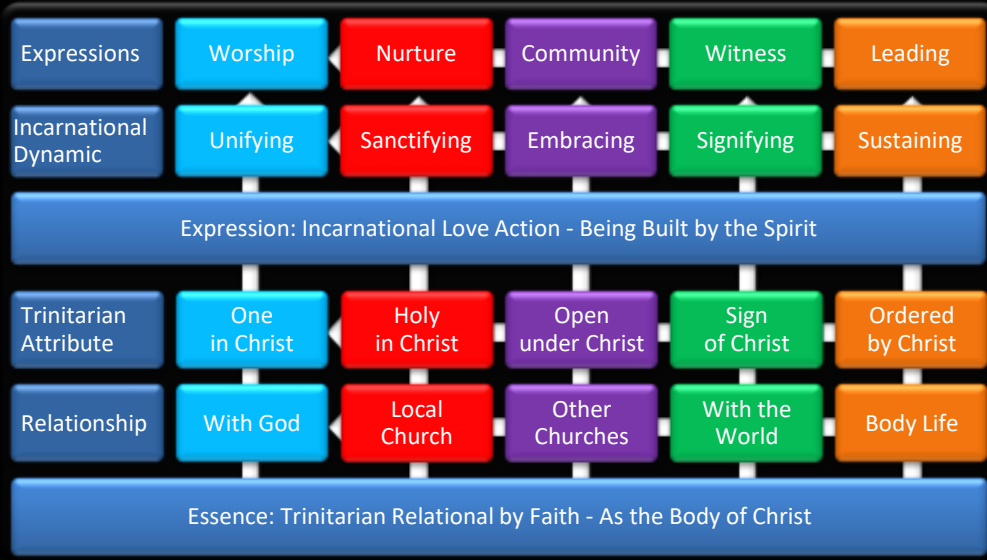
Holy – Be Holy as I am Holy - 1 Peter 1:16, Holy temple in the Lord - Eph 2:21

Open – John 13:34-35 Love one another

Sign – Be my Witnesses, 2 Cor 5:19-20

Body Life – Appointed to bring maturity – Eph 4:11-16

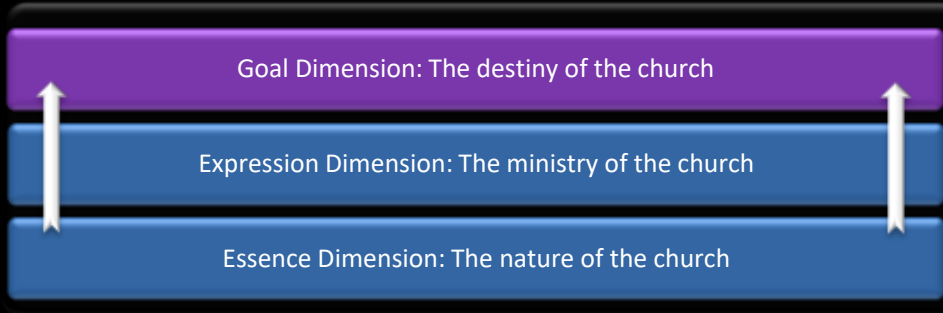
The Essence & Expression Dimensions



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What is the Goal?



What is the Goal?

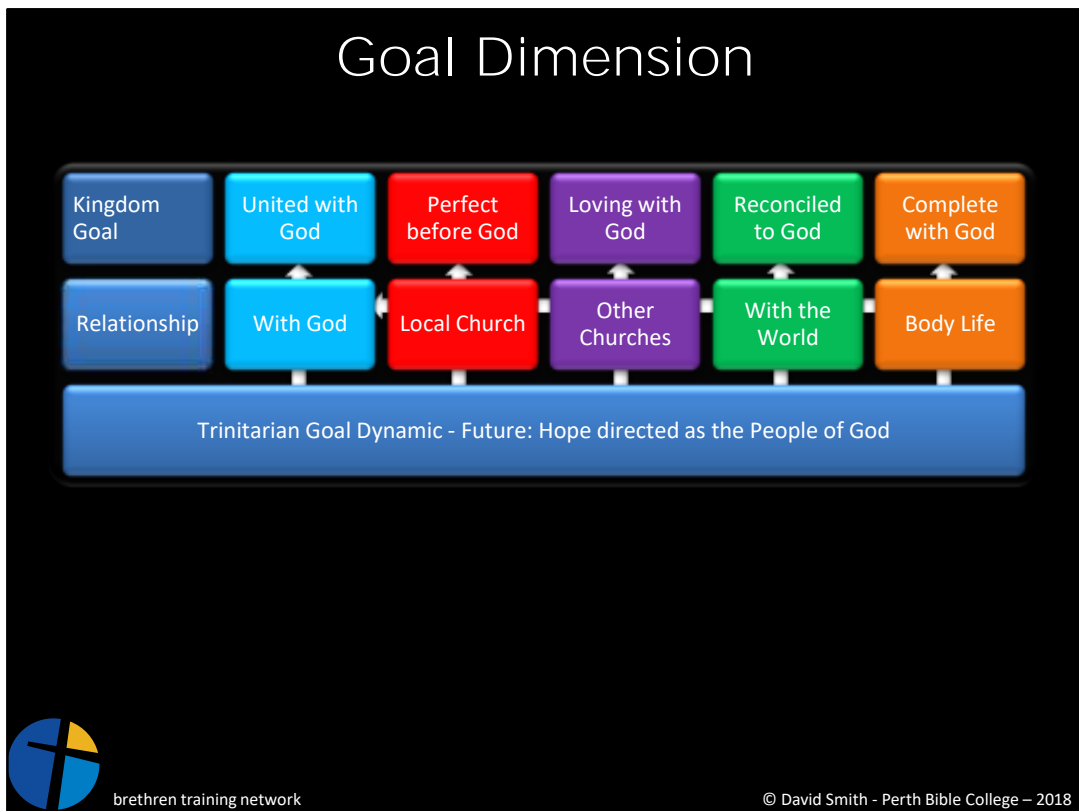
Eschatological Kingdom Goal

Trinitarian Dynamic: Future - Hope directed as the People of God



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PTE (154-155)

According to our model the theory of goal categories is held together by the guiding concept of the ecclesial praxis being hope directed and moving toward the eschatological kingdom goal. Wright believes that such an eschatological hope directed goal is essential to prevent the present being overrun by pragmatism in the now (Wright 2009:233). Being goal directed also highlights the dual nature of the church, that it is at one time historical and eschatological. It is present now in reality, in its essence and expression, in a fragmented form, and yet it is also in Christ perfect, and directed by the Spirit toward its future wholeness. The church cannot remain static. Therefore, any operational ecclesiology must be dynamic, existing in reality but always responding to the future call that resides within. Biblical “theological images of the church reflect the eschatological or ideal dimension of fulfilment to which the church is called. These theological ideals also correspond to the real presence of God as creator, Word, and Spirit at work in the church in history. The eschatological dimension holds out an ideal future and an effective presence in the historical church” (Haight 2008:88). The church now is the basis of the present eschatological activity of God.

Eschatological ecclesiology therefore provides the goal of the church and of practical

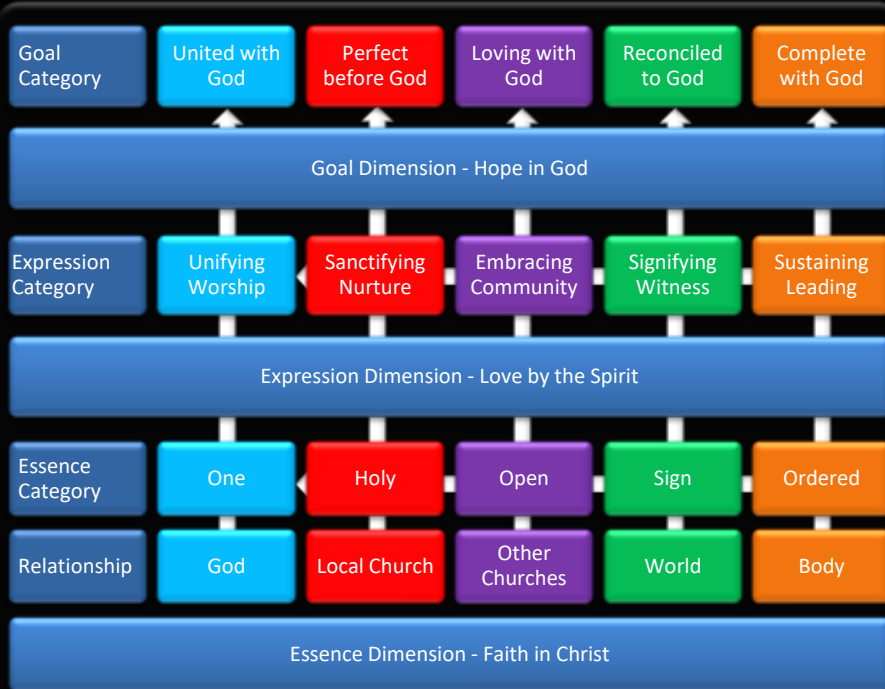
theological ecclesiology. This in Schleiermacher's terms is the ideal church. Historical, visible or praxis ecclesiology provides us with the concrete state of an operational ecclesiology in a specific context and time. Between the current context and that of the eschatological ideal or the "divine dimension of the church [which is] really present and operative but not visible" (Haight 2008:89), the divine is at work. It is in this "between" space that practical theological ecclesiology is located. And within this space practical theological ecclesiology is to articulate, call, and guide the ecclesial praxis into participation in the divine movement which is directed toward the future goal.

We stated previously that the goal of the present ecclesial praxis, which is itself anchored in the eschatological fulfilment, is to be a hope directed relational attributive eschatological kingdom sign. As such the eschatological goal is the fulfilment of the created, relational, and attributive essence of the church. Also, as noted previously, it is not our desire here to prescribe the content of each category but rather to give a content frame which while biblical and theological, can be filled out by each faith community according to their specific communal ecclesial goal theology. The broad goal categories are as follows:

- United with God: Following the "with God" relationship through the attribute of "oneness" the ecclesial praxis moves through expressions of "unifying worship" toward the eschatological goal of being fully "united with God."
- Perfect before God: Following the "within the church" relationship through the attribute of "holiness" the ecclesial praxis moves through expressions of "sanctifying nurture" toward the eschatological goal of being completely mature and "perfect before God."
- Loving with God: Following the "with other churches" relationship through the attribute of "openness" the ecclesial praxis moves through expressions of "embracing community" toward the eschatological goal of being perfectly "loving with God."
- Reconciled to God: Following the "with the world" relationship through the attribute of "sign" the ecclesial praxis moves through expressions of "signifying witness" toward the eschatological goal of being a reconciling community that is wholly "reconciled to God."
- Complete with God: Following the "body life" interrelationship through the attribute of "ordered" the ecclesial praxis moves through expressions of "sustaining leading" toward the eschatological goal of being mature and "complete with God."

Just as the expression is to be reflective and incarnational, so is the goal. The church is to “Be perfect as God is perfect.” This involves the ecclesial life of the faith community being directed by relating and “acting in a style or manner that God acts” (Forrester 2000:8) and relates.

The Church Model



Questions?



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