

1. What is the Essence of the Church?

David Smith @ International Training Consultation 2018

What is Ecclesiology?

Essence – The ministry of the church
Expression – The nature of the church

Theology

OT *dahbar* = Word = the way one should live
NT = faithaction
Theologia
Knowledge of divine things
Knowledge of God
Wisdom for Life

Theological Splintering

Theoretical
Practical

Theological Splintering

Essence
Expression

Blind Theory and Praxis

Blind Theory: Disconnected, Unreflected
Blind Praxis: Ungrounded, Unreflected

What Ecclesiology is used in your church?

Trinitarian
Missional
Sacramental
Herald
?

Various Ecclesiologies

Catholic = Mediating Sacramental
Orthodox = Icon Sacramental
Lutheran = Herald
Evangelical = Missional
Pentecostal = Spiritual Presence

Dimensions of Ecclesiology

Essence
Expression
Goal

What is the Essence?

The nature of the church



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Essence Approaches

Traditional
Reformed
Dynamic
Trinitarian
Relational

Traditional

Attributes: One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic

Traditional Attributes

A post Vatican II interpretation of the creedal attributes states:

- “The church is ONE because of the indwelling of the one Holy Spirit in all the baptised;
- it is HOLY because it is set apart by God’s graciousness for the reception of a mysterious love of predilection;
- it is CATHOLIC in the original sense of the word, meaning that it is whole and entire, possessing all the parts needed to make it integral;
- and it is APOSTOLIC because it remains in continuity in essentials with the original witnessing of the first-century apostles....”

(Fiorenza and Galvin 1991:43 - Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives – Volume 2.)

Reformational

Attributes: One, Holy, Community, Believing

Trinitarian

God, Christ, Spirit

Relational

God
Local Church
Other Churches
World

What is our Essence model?

Trinitarian Dynamic – Faith in Christ as the body of the church
Relational Dynamic
Trinitarian Attributes

Relational Dynamic

With God
Local Church
Other Churches
With the World
Body Life

Trinitarian Attributes



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One
Holy
Open
Sign
Ordered

The Trinitarian Essence Categories

ONE – The church is one because God is one.

John 17:22

HOLY – The church is holy because God is holy.

1 Peter 1:16, Eph 2:21

OPEN – The church embraces all because God is a God of mutual love, one for the other. John 13:34-35

SIGN – God is a self-revealing God, through Christ, the Spirit and the church. 2 Corinthians 5:19-20

ORDERED – The trinity exists as a specific dynamic of ordered relationships. Ephesians 4:11-16

The Essence Dimension

