

COMMUNITY OF THE BELIEVERS AS A WITNESS TO THE WORLD

by

WALLACE EZARA CHIKAKUDA

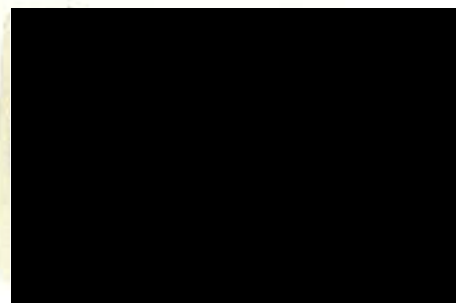
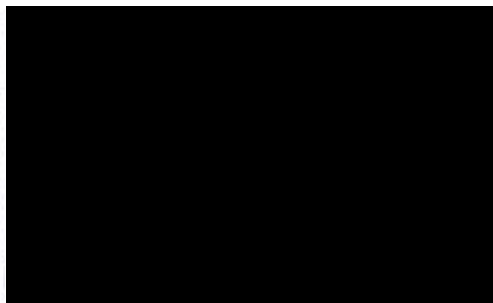
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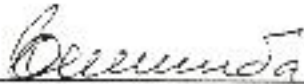


Dedicated to:

- my family

I declare that

COMMUNITY OF THE BELIEVERS AS A WITNESS TO THE WORLD is my own work both in planning and execution and that all sources I have consulted and quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete reference.



WALLACE EZARA CHIKAKUDA

SUMMARY OF DISSERTATION

TITLE: COMMUNITY OF THE BELIEVERS AS A WITNESS TO THE WORLD

CANDIDATE : WALLACE EZARA CHIKAKUDA

PROMOTER : PROF J C MARAIS

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The church as the community of the believers was instituted on earth by the Lord Jesus Christ. The church was established through the work of the Holy Spirit who came to continue the work of Christ. The church foundation lies in the call of God. He called it into existence through his Word, the word which became a human being. It is based upon this Word, and its witness should always be in accordance with the word. The purpose of the existence of the community of the believers is to witness to the acts of God which he performed through Jesus Christ. Thus the church's witness is about Him who died and rose for the salvation of the world. As the Head of the church, which is also called the body of Christ, He brought the Kingdom of God into the world.

The Lord Jesus Christ commissioned the church through the Holy Spirit to witness to him in the world for the salvation of the world. The Holy Spirit, who empowers the church, to be this witness in the world. The church witnesses through its response of faith to the call of God. By its life of repentance and worship of the Saviour of the world. The extend to which its life is reflecting the mind of Christ, its acts and the example which it sets through its existence, is a witness to the world. The whole life of the church has to witness to Christ. Through the witness of the church, the world is directed to Jesus Christ and to the Kingdom of God. The entry into this Kingdom is faith in

Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ came to convert the people to the Kingdom of God. Conversion means turning to God and to His Kingdom in order that his word becomes the deepest foundation on which man's life is based. All human values and actions should be confronted and transformed by it. The Kingdom of God which Christ brought into the world is waiting for its consummation. Therefore the church as an eschatological community is already pointing to that future. The Holy Spirit directs the church and the world to this consummation where God will be universally acknowledged by all people as King and Lord.

OPSOMMING VAN VERHANDELING

TITEL: DIE GEMEENSAP VAN DIE GELOWIGES AS 'N GETUIENIS IN
DIE WÊRELD

KANDIDAAT : WALLACE EZARA CHIKAKUDA
PROMOTER : PROF J C MARAIS
GRAAD : M.TH.
DEPARTEMENT : DOGMATIEK EN TECLOGIESE ETIEK

OPSOMMING:

Die kerk as die gemeenskap van die gelowiges het deur Jesus Christus tot stand gekom. Die kerk in die lewe geroep deur die werk van die Heilige Gees wat gestuur is om Christus se werk voort te sit. Die diepste basis van die kerk lê in God se roeping. Dit het tot stand gekom deur Sy woord, die woord wat mens geword het. Die kerk is gebou op die woord en sy lewe behoort in ooreenstemming daarmee te wees. Die doel van die gemeenskap van die gelowiges se bestaan is om in die wêreld te getuig van God se daad, wat in Jesus Christus, geopenbaar is. Daarom is die kerk se getuienis oor Hom wat gesterf en opgestaan het vir die heil van die wêreld. As die hoof van die kerk, wat ook die liggaam van Christus genoem word, het Hy die koninkryk van God in die wêreld gebring.

Die Here Jesus het aan die kerk die opdrag gegee om deur die Heilige Gees sy getuies in die wêreld te wees terwille van die wêreld se heil. Die Heilige Gees stel die kerk in staat om hierdie getuie in die wêreld te wees. Die kerk getuig deur in geloof op God se roeping te antwoord. Deur 'n lewe van skuldbelydenis en verheerliking van die Verlosser van die wêreld getuig die kerk. Die mate waarin dit die gesindheid van Christus vertoon, sy daad en die voorbeeld wat dit deur sy bestaan vertoon getuig dit in die wêreld. Die kerk se

hele lewe behoort 'n getuienis te wees. Die kerk se getuienis behoort die wêreld op Christus en sy koninkryk te rig. Toegang tot die koninkryk is deur die geloof in Christus. Jesus Christus het gekom om mense tot die koninkryk van God te bekeer. Bekering beteken dat 'n mens hom na God en sy koninkryk wend sodat sy woord die mees fundamentele basis van sy lewe word. Die woord moet alle waardes konfronteer en omvorm. Die koninkryk van God wat deur Christus in die wêreld gebring is, wag op sy finale openbaring. Die kerk is dus 'n eskatologiese gemeenskap wat alreeds dui op die finale openbaring van die koninkryk van God. Die Heilige Gees neem die kerk en die wêreld na die finale openbaring van die koninkryk waar almal sal erken dat God Koning en Here is.

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Finally I express my indebted and special gratitude to God for His grace granted to me in this work. To Him alone be glory and praise.

COMMUNITY OF THE BELIEVERS AS A WITNESS TO THE WORLD

CONTENTS	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	1
1. THE COMMUNITY	5
1.1 Community in general	6
1.2 Community of the believers	9
1.2.1 Community in the Old Testament	10
1.2.2 Community in the New Testament	11
1.3 Community and election	14
1.4 Community through the Word of God	19
1.4.1 The Word and the life of the Community	19
1.4.2 The Word and the social, economic and political structures	21
1.5 Community through conversion	24
1.5.1 Implications in conversion	24
1.5.2 Conversion to the future	28
1.6 Community through the Holy Spirit	31
1.6.1 The Holy Spirit and community's existence	31
1.6.2 Community in the power of the Holy Spirit	34
1.6.3 Community in relation to the Holy Spirit	39
1.6.3.1 Man's link with Jesus	39
1.6.3.2 Man's link with the Kingdom of God	40
1.6.3.3 Man's link with the Word	40
1.6.3.4 People's link with one another	41
1.6.3.5 Man's link with the world	43
1.6.3.6 Man's link with the future	44
1.7 Eschatological community	45
1.7.1 The Church	45
1.7.2 The Church and the Kingdom of God	49
1.7.3 The Church in the service of the Kingdom of God	52

(iii)

	PAGE
1.7.3.1 The reign of God as decisive, future and final event	52
1.7.3.2 The reign of God as an all-powerful act of God himself	53
1.7.3.3 The reign of God as a purely religious reign	54
1.7.3.4 The reign of God as a saving event for sinners	55
1.7.3.5 The reign of God requiring radical decision for God	56
2. COMMUNITY AS THE PEOPLE OF GOD	58
2.1 The people of God in the OT	58
2.1.1 The choice of Israel by Jahweh	60
2.1.2 The covenant between Jahweh and Israel	61
2.2 The People of God in the NT	64
2.2.1 NT Conception of the people of God	64
2.2.2 The covenant between God and his people	65
2.3 The people of God as the body of Christ	69
2.3.1 The body of Christ	70
2.3.2 Membership through baptism	76
2.3.2.1 Adult baptism	76
2.3.2.2 Infant baptism	80
2.3.3 The relationship between the Head and the body	81
2.3.3.1 The Saviour	84
2.3.3.2 The Head	85
2.3.3.3 The Mediator	85
2.3.3.4 The Perfecter	86

	PAGE
3. COMMUNITY AS THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS	87
3.1 COMMUNION through prayer	88
3.1.1 Prayer of praise	90
3.1.2 Prayer of gratitude	91
3.1.3 Prayer of penitence	92
3.1.4 Prayer of petition and intercession	94
3.2 COMMUNION through worship	98
3.2.1 Prayer	102
3.2.2 Singing	103
3.2.3 Confession of faith	104
3.2.4 Offering	105
3.2.5 The preaching of the Word	107
3.2.6 The Lord's Supper	109
3.2.6.1 The Lord's Supper indicating New Covenant	110
3.2.6.2 The Lord's Supper as communion of love	112
4. COMMUNITY AS A WITNESS	115
4.1 Witness	116
4.2 Witness through the Word	117
4.2.1 The character of God	119
4.2.2 The command and the Commission of Christ	119
4.2.3 The condition of humanity	122
4.2.3.1 The importance of the historical foundation of the Christian faith	125
4.2.3.2 The importance of Christian Witness in a questioning age	126
4.2.3.3 The importance of witness to convictions	128
4.2.3.4 The importance of integrity in Christian witness	130

	PAGE	
4.3	Witness through good works	132
4.3.1	Faith and good works	133
4.3.2	Good works as expression of gratitude to God	134
4.3.3	Good works as a witness	135
4.3.3.1	Good works and the gospel	135
4.3.3.2	Good works in general	138
4.3.3.3	Charity work among Mozambiquan refugees in Malawi	139
4.3.3.3.1	Influx of the refugees	140
4.3.3.3.2	Accommodation	140
4.3.3.3.3	Food and clothes	140
4.3.3.3.4	Medical Services	141
4.3.3.3.5	Water supply	141
4.3.3.3.6	Educational facilities	141
4.3.3.3.7	Skills training	141
4.3.3.3.8	Spiritual care	142
4.4	Witness through example	143
4.4.1	Witness through love	145
4.4.2	Witness through unity and fellowship	149
4.5	Conclusion	153
BIBLIOGRAPHY		156
ARTICLES		163

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation on "Community of the believers as a witness to the World" is a dogmatic study of the witness of the church. It will be argued that witness to Christ is the primary and the main task of the church in the world. As a matter of fact it will be argued that it is the main purpose of the existence of the church in the world. The basis of this witness is the relationship of the church with Christ who is the Head of the church.

In the first three chapters of the dissertation, it will be shown what the community of the believers is. Chapter one focusses on the community which is gathered by God. This community could be called God's creation. Without God's action, this community wouldn't exist. Man's response to God's initiative is only the second move in the creation of this community. In chapter two the community as the body of Christ will be discussed. Here once again God's initiative in creating the body of Christ is clear. First the people of God in the OT and then the people of God in the NT will be discussed. Chapter three is on the communion of the saints. Here the response of the community especially in the church service will be discussed. Throughout this discussion it will be clear that this response of the community is the result of the actions of the triune God. It will be shown

here that prayer is the fundamental response of the Christian community and that all other actions of the church flow from this life of prayer. The worship of the community leads to a life of self sacrifice in the world. Underlying this discussion of the church in these three chapters is the argument that the existence of the church, founded on the grace of God, and brought together as the body of Christ, is and should be a witness to Christ who is the foundation of this building.

Chapter four focusses on the witness of the church from the perspective of the community's actions. It will be argued that the witness of the church is directly related to the truth about God. This truth is the one which the eyewitnesses testified about and which we find in the Bible. The second section is about the church's witness through the proclamation of the Word. This shows that the Word of God is the basis of all witness and therefore it receives precedence in the discussion of the witness of the community. In the third section the role which actions i.e. good works of the community play and should play will be discussed. It will be shown that these actions of the community should be directed to the whole of God's creation. The broad view of church's actions should not prevent the church from focussing on the poor, the suffering and the neglected people. In the last section, the church's witness through its example will be

discussed. Though this is implicitly present in the whole of the first three chapters, attention will be focussed on it again. It will be shown that the Christian community witnesses through the manner in which it exists. What outsiders see when they look at the church, speaks to them and that is an important part of its witness. In a certain sense the faith of the church transpires through its existence.

In this dissertation the main focus of the community's witness falls on the origin of the church and its response to God, with only a lesser degree of emphasis on the actions of the community as a witness. This is done because it often happens that the focus, when we speak about the witness of the church, is mainly on man's actions. This then may easily become a work of merit or an assurance of man's faith. It also happens that Christians often preach to the world what the church itself is not prepared to do. Much more could have been said about the church's actions in the world, but the emphasis here is on its foundation and existence.

This research was undertaken as a result of personal interest in the task of the church in the world. The church today is challenged by many problems and situations in which the gospel of Jesus Christ is greatly needed. In these situations it is only Jesus Christ who is the hope of the

world. Jesus Christ brought the Kingdom of God into the world in order to direct the world to the Kingdom. Without the Kingdom of God, the world has no hope and no future. From this we can observe how important the task of the church is in the world.

The method which was used in this work was mainly book literary study. This research work was done in Malawi at Nkhoma Theological College Library, in South Africa at Stofberg Theological School Library which is part of the University of the North and at the Faculty of Theology Library of Stellenbosch University. In addition to this, I also made myself acquainted with some situations in Malawi which I thought were relevant for this work. This research will point out that the church has a tremendous task entrusted to it by the Lord Jesus Christ of which only signs of its fulfilment can be seen in the world.

THE COMMUNITY OF THE BELIEVERS AS A WITNESS TO THE WORLD**1. THE COMMUNITY**

In this chapter, communities will be discussed. It will be shown that a community exists because the people who form the community have specific things in common. The things which they have in common may be of a variety. For example a family is a community because of the family relationships. Theological consultation held in Chiang Mai Thailand (1977: 256) says, "We are all born into relationships with other people". This shows that our relationships start in our families.

This relationship extends outward to those around us in the village, or urban area. Vriezen (1966:215) also finds traces of a sense of community early in the Old Testament in the Paradise narrative. He says that when man was first created alone. He was not happy until God created a woman out of his flesh, who became his equal, and God gave her to him. Vriezen (1966:216) says, "According to the author of Gen 2f the creation of man was not complete until the fellowship between husband and wife, a relation considered as a family community, which implicitly includes the family, and therefore the children too."

Vriezen regards family as a primary unit of a community. A community has a fundamental basis for its existence, and attention will be given to the following aspects: Values, interests and ultimates which constitute a community.

1.1 Community in general

The word community is very common in secular, religious and Christian circles. K E Hendrick (1983:125) says, "The term community may refer to a geographical neighbourhood or any homogeneous group of people united by common bond". The concept of community is expressed in the NT by church, city and synagogue. Another concept which has about the same meaning according to Hendrick is Koinonia.

Koinonia, 'fellowship' conveys a sense of community. A community has that in it which is common to all in the community, at the same time it has that which distinguishes it from other communities". Hendrick mentions four things which are connected with community in general.

First, community is a geographical neighbourhood; here he is referring to a group of people who are staying together in a certain geographical location. By being in the same area, they are inter-dependent and so form a community.

Second, it is any group of people who are united by a common bond. The members of this community have something in common such as values, goals, ideals and interests. It is this something in common which binds them together and which distinguishes it from other communities. These two points are supported by Milson (1974:1-2).

Third, this concept of the community may also refer to church, city or synagogue. In this instance, the church, city or synagogue is a clearly defined group which is easy to be determined as who belongs to this community and who doesn't belong to it. The point he wants to make is that these are clearly definable communities, while there are others which cannot be defined so easily, like for example the youth.

Fourth, community may convey a sense of Koinonia which is fellowship. Here he is referring to the sense of belonging and sharing among members of a 'group' or community. It could be that he is referring to the social and physiological aspects of the communities in existence.

When one looks at these four things which Hendrick mentions concerning communities in general, it seems that point two mentioned above is the most fundamental of all. Without a common bond where people share the same interests, values and

goals, it would be very difficult to keep a group of people together in a community.

This point is stressed by Nürnberger when he discusses ultimates as a normative system. Nürnberger (1984:108-110) says that ultimates play a vital role in the existence of the individual, groups or nations. Ultimates are a system of authority which are always supported and made valid by certain fundamental beliefs or assumptions. The fundamental beliefs are taken for granted and are not negotiable. These fundamental beliefs are natural, and that is why they are not negotiable. By being non-negotiable, they play a very important role in drawing the line between those who are part of the group and those who are not part of it. This applies even to an ideology.

Ideology is community-based. Nürnberger (1984:125) says, "The word "ideology" is mostly used to cover a system of beliefs, values and norms common to a group of people". Ideological groups need cooperation if they want to achieve their goals. Groups need cooperation in order to have common purposes and commonly accepted procedures. That is why ideologies play very important role in society, because they have their own beliefs, values and norms as ultimates have.

Ultimates have power over man. They are the authorities which either question or confirm man's right of existence. And they do so according to their own set of values, norms and goals which are called a normative system. This clarifies what the influence of the ultimates is on a group of people. It seems that this is what Hendrick has in mind when he refers to the common bond which people have in common and binds them together.

In conclusion from the discussion above, both Hendrick and Nürnberger stress that people form a group or community because they share a common bond (Hendrick) or when they share the same ultimates (Nürnberger). These ultimates are so important that they constitute and control the community and give meaning to it and confirm or question its actions.

Later it will be made clear that this is true of the community of the believers where God's actions in the world through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are drawn and are the most basic values of this Christian community. These Christian values confirm or question the actions of the Christian community, as we see it in the next section on the community of the believers.

1.2 The community of the believers

In the first section, communities in general were discussed; but in the following, it will be shown that out of that community, the Christian community is gathered. The discussion will show in which manner and on what basis this Christian community is congregated. It will also be shown what its relevance is for the witness of the church.

1.2.1 Community in the Old Testament

The community of believers came into existence through the call of God when he called Abraham out of the nations. Kaiser says, "Under God's call to personal and world-wide blessing, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob became hall marks of a new phase in the accumulated divine blessing" (1978:84). The promise which God gave to Abraham was fulfilled in the formation of the community of the believers. When Abraham was called by God, it was very hard for him to cut ties which had bound him to his family and his people.

However, Abraham did not refuse to follow the Lord who promised him guidance, protection and a blessed future (Maclear 1967:28). From this call and Abraham's response, we observe that Abraham took this step of following God's instruction in faith. Abraham trusted and accepted what God

had said. His faith was demonstrated by his obedience even though he did not know what the future held for him.

In the Old Testament Hebrew we have the word "qahal" which comes from the root meaning 'to summon', used for the assembly or congregation of the people of Israel (D Watson 1982:67). D Watson further says the people of "Israel were God's 'called out' ones. God said of them 'When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son'". God released the people of Israel from physical bondage in Egypt, and they journeyed in the wilderness where there were dangers and deprivation; yet as they looked to God, He provided their every need as they travelled. We can see that the people of Israel went out and travelled in the wilderness through faith.

Watson (1982:70) says that Israel's calling was into a new community in which they were called together. He goes on to say that "they marched together facing enemies and trials together" (see also McKenzie 1974:144-146) together experienced God's miraculous power as God's children; and the New Testament continually refers to them as brothers and sisters in Christ. When the witness of the church will be discussed, the relevance of this community called by God and which responds in faith will be shown.

1.2.2 Community in the New Testament

The New Testament has the Greek word "ekklesia" which refers both to particular gatherings of God's people and to the continuing community of the believers in one area (Watson 1982:70). This community depends upon relationships between God and the community and between members of the community (Watson 1982:71). Watson (1982:68) also says, "The church is the called-out of God. It belongs to God, and owes every good gift that it enjoys to God. Without the love of God, without the initiative of God, the salvation of God, the revelation of God, there would be no church". The community of the believers has a divine origin; and it is by the sovereign act of God that the community members have been called to be a special people for God's own possession (Watson 1982:68-69). According to Watson, it is God who took the initiative for the community to come into existence. He calls the members to be his own.

This view is supported by Heyns. He (1980:15-16) states that the community of the believers has one calling. This calling is the calling of the community in Christ; and it is this common calling that binds the believers into an indissoluble community. Barth (1962:681) also supports this idea by saying that a believer is called into the living community of the living Lord Jesus Christ himself and other believers.

According to Watson, Heyns and Barth, the believer is called to have personal relationship with Jesus himself through personal faith and commitment to him because he is called as a person. When Jesus calls people, he unites them with one another and places them in his community.

Guthrie agrees with these three people on the call of the believers. He identifies the disciples of Jesus as the first NT believers. He says that this is a new community closely identified with the followers of Jesus Christ (Guthrie 1981:707). He continues to say that the disciples, particularly the twelve are a nucleus of the new community; and it is a fact that these men who had been with Jesus in a special way during his ministry should form the core of the coming community.

Robinson expresses the relationship of those who have been called by Jesus Christ. He says, "The Lord Jesus himself had taught his disciples that they were related to him as branches to the vine; the branches are thereby in an organic relationship with one another. The life which they received from Christ was the life they themselves shared" (1945:60). He further describes our relationship with Jesus Christ being believers as inseparable with him as well as with one another. Ladd has the same opinion when he says that the early Christians were conscious of being bound together

because they were together bound to Christ (1974:350; see also Schelkle 1974:179).

To conclude, members of the Christian community have one thing in common. Each of them has been called to become a member of the community. It is this call which binds the members together as a community. And faith on the side of the members is the basis of their membership in the community. This community has been called to witness for God in their relationship with Christ and with one another. In terms of what has been said about community in general, the "common bond" (Hendrick) or "ultimate" (Nürnberg) of the Christian community is a person, Jesus Christ. What binds this community together is a living relationship of faith with him. In Jesus Christ, this community finds meaning, purpose of life and the goal of its existence. Therefore the witness of this community to the world will finally and in a most profound manner be related to Him. There is no way for this community to be a witness or witness to Him without being intimately related to Him.

In the following chapter, community and election will be discussed.

1.3 Community and election

Community of the believers has been discussed in the previous chapter. This community has been elected by God. As the election of the Christian community will be discussed in this section, it will be shown that their election rests in God and in God's free decision according to his intentions.

Van Wyk says, "Election in simple language means that our salvation rests in God: before we were saved, God decided and acted on our behalf. The ground and reason for our salvation is wholly in the grace of God" (1984:83). This idea is supported by Barth (1960:142-143). This means that God in his free grace decided to save people while they were still sinners and he ordered the means for this salvation. The people who form the Christian community became part of it through the grace of God. Their being part of this community rests wholly in God and his free decision.

Election in the OT was not only for salvation as it is understood in the NT. But it was also for revelation, worship and service for the community: people outside Israel were also sometimes chosen in order to use them for punishing Israel because of disobedience. But here I am focusing on election as the people of God. Brown says that Israel is counted as God's chosen people because of God's free decision

(1975:540). What makes Israel the people of Jahweh is his election and grace, and not national or natural factors. The people of Israel as the people of God must confirm this grace by their faithfulness and obedience. But Israel constantly failed to obey God. However, this nation constantly experienced that God is faithful to his promises. The fact that the majority of these people have gone astray and for a time have become enemies of God and of his message, does not mean that God has abandoned his aim for these people to be His own. Brown continues to say that the interval during which Israel rejects God's purpose serves to extend the horizon of God's grace to the Gentiles. The Gentiles are the sphere of operation of God's elective activity. God's elective activity reaches its culmination in Christ who is God's Son. Brown has the idea that God's election initially started with the people of Israel. This initial start has to extend to all other nations until God's chosen people are identified in all the nations of the world through Christ.

God in Christ chose the people to be his people before the world was founded. Van Wyk states that the expression election in Christ is meant to show that our election is an election of God's free grace. We were not elected on the grounds of our own faith foreseen by God from eternity, but in Christ, in God's grace and mercy. Election in Christ may mean belonging to Christ's church and to Christ himself; it

may also mean to be in the realm of Christ's norms and values because of what Christ did (1984:86-87). Therefore, comprehensively Christ is the ground and foundation of our election because he united himself with us in God's eternal council. Van Wyk shows that the ground and foundation of our election is in God, in his free grace and in love which united us in eternity with his Son (1984:88). This life of union with Christ forms part of the witness for God. Therefore to be a witness is not in the first place doing what we are commanded to do, but rather the result of our life with Christ. Seen from another angle being united with Christ will result in a witness to the world, because this life in union with Him will reflect Him.

Van Wyk goes further to say that our election is completed in calling. God's decision to elect is completed in his decision to call us through the gospel of Christ; and Christ completes our election by calling us powerfully by his word and Spirit making us truly part of him and of his church (1984:89; see also Ladd 1974:544).

Ridderbos, in agreement with Van Wyk also says that the leading idea is that God has chosen and called a people to himself out of all peoples as Abraham was called out of Ur, and believers have been called by the gospel of God's grace. And as such, they are his beloved, and they are holy, placed

on God's side and separated from the world. There is an indissoluble bond between the elect and Christ. And Christ is the deepest mystery of their election (1975:333).

Heyns states that the election of the people does not nullify their nature. He says that people are called to do away with sin, but not to abandon nature. If they are called men, women, freemen, slaves, Jews, Greeks, circumcised or uncircumcised, they remain that way. Election does not imply that a man ceases to be a man, or a woman ceases to be a woman. Nature is not cancelled or nullified by election. A person is called to a new life which involves new relationships among the elect. The people who are called to this new life in Christ are brothers and sisters in Christ because they have been united with Christ and they are sanctified, cleansed and purified through Christ (1980:45).

Christ's call applies both to individuals and community as a whole in order to witness for God. The manner in which this community exists apart and sometimes even in opposition to other communities should reflect the one who elected and called them.

In summary, Van Wyk and others emphasise that the Christian community is God's chosen people. God has chosen them by his free grace and decision to be his own people. This election

is effected through Christ who has united himself with the people. And it is completed by the call of Christ through his word and the Holy Spirit to those who receive the call and accept it.

In conclusion: with the foregoing discussion on community and election, it has been shown that the Christian community is constituted on God's initiative, and that it rests in him. It will later be shown that this community receives its mission and witness from God who called and constituted it. The community of the believers is formed by the Word of God as it will be shown in the next section.

1.4 Community through the Word of God

A topic on community and election was discussed in the previous section. To be discussed in this section is the community through the Word of God. God uses this Word to call people to himself. The Word of God gathers the members of the community together. It is God's instrument which God uses to bring the community into existence. Communication of the Word and the reception of the Word by the members are of ultimate importance for the community. Focus in this section will be on the Word and the life of the community, and the Word and the social, economic and political structures.

1.4.1 The Word and the life of the community

The community of the believers comes into being through the Word of God. K Barth (1963:39) describes the community as the commonwealth, gathered, founded and ordered by the Word of God. Members of the community were encountered by the Word and so moved by it that they could not withdraw themselves from its message and call. Therefore, they became able, willing and ready to receive it and offered themselves, their lives, thought and speech to the Word of God. This is the society which was called to believe in the Word. He (1956:512) also points out that when the Bible speaks to us as the Word of God, it awakens and strengthens our faith by accepting the Word. The community of the believers was confronted and was created by the Word of God which was communicated to it for its existence. Barth further describes the Word of God as directed to the people. It is directed to them in order for them to hear it and know its truth (1936:217). So the Word of God is of ultimate importance for the formation and existence of the community of the believers. This is supported by J A Heyns (1980:08) who says that God gives his Word to the church which receives it, confesses it, guards it, teaches it and proclaims it before God, before one another, and before the world. This Word is the only all-inclusive, decisive characteristic of the gathering of the believers. The community of the

believers cannot be without the Word of God. This then distinguishes the Christian community from all other communities. Christians are founded on the Word of God because they willingly responded to this Word in faith. The Word of God is not only important to Christian communities being but also to its life because it is guided by this Word.

1.4.2 The Word and the social, economic and political structures

The Word of God is also important in the social, economic and political structures of the society. O E Costas (1974:69) says that the gospel must be proclaimed because it is a reconciling message. It must be addressed to all the people and their situations. He (1974:67) interprets the term reconciliation in the context of Ephesians and Colossians where it means transformation, creation, change, creation of a new man. He stresses that the situations that shape the life and action of the people must also be changed and transformed according to God's purpose.

Christ's victory over sin and death reaches all spheres of human life. The good news of his triumph must be proclaimed in the political, economic and social structures of the people.

The gospel is God's good news of salvation in Christ. It is a message incarnated in Jesus. It celebrates his triumph over sin and death. It confirms his authority over the world. The gospel announces a new order of life of justice, of peace and love in the world. Besides this, it is also a call to action. Therefore the gospel must be proclaimed to the world by the church (Costas 1974:71). From this it is clear that Costas is convinced that the function of the Word of God does not end with the constitution of the church and its own faith, but that it has a function to transform the world in which human beings are living. God is not only calling people to himself, but he is also the one who wants to transform this world.

Costas (1974:72-74) describes how the early church understood the gospel as a message. The gospel was a message that had to be proclaimed throughout the entire world (see also Schelkle 1974:113-114). There are three elements in this early proclamation. First, Jesus was the centre of the message. This Jesus was God's last word to man, and he brought God to us in human life. Second, the proclamation was oriented to the needs of the different people. When Jesus was presented to the people, he was relevant to the various needs of the people. Third, the early church's proclamation was decision-oriented. The message demanded a response from the people who heard it. The gospel is the

message which the church has been commissioned to proclaim in such a way that Jesus Christ might be represented to the World in his fullness as the Lord and the Saviour of all humanity in order to make the people the disciples of Jesus Christ.

Costas (1974:74-75) discusses the importance of discipleship. To disciple someone is to establish a personal relationship with the view of shaping an entire human life, to incorporate him into Jesus' life, to relate human being to Jesus Christ so that the mind of Christ can be formed in him. The gospel seeks to bring about a transformation in the lives of those who accept it. This change is what the Scripture calls conversion. Conversion implies repentance, change of mind and faith toward God (1.5 below). The Word of God has been discussed first and before conversion because the Word of God is the instrument of conversion. When a person has been converted to Christ, that person is called through the Word and is called to obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ (Costas 1974:76). Costas (1974:77) further says that since the gospel demands change, turning to Christ in repentance and faith, transformation in one's way of thinking and acting, and positive commitment to new relationships, new lifestyle, values and world view, it must be expounded with clarity and precision. The church is therefore called to witness for

Jesus Christ in the world so that people hear and accept the Word of God.

According to what has been discussed concerning community through the Word of God, this Word of God has the power of changing and transforming life, and bringing people to Christ. The call of Christ through the Word of God brings these people together as a community of the believers. God's Word transforms human life and the world in which human beings live. Therefore hearing and accepting the Word of God results in conversion in a comprehensive sense. This will form the basis of the next section.

1.5 Community through Conversion

Community through the Word was previously discussed. In that discussion we have seen how important the Word of God is in the formation of the community of the believers. Here attention will be given to the ideas of D Bosch and J Moltmann on conversion. Conversion is connected with such concepts as repentance, turning, transfer of loyalty, self-denial, change and fresh start. These will be discussed under what conversion implies and conversion to the future.

1.5.1 Implications in Conversion

The entry into the Christian community is through conversion. Bosch (1982:19-22) says that one becomes a member of Christian community by repentance and conversion. He describes conversion as man's response to God. Conversion is always a turning from and a turning to. The most common Biblical terms for conversion are 'shub' in Hebrew and 'espistrephein' or 'metanoien' in Greek (see also Costas 1974:75). Both repentance and conversion indicate the turning to. It is a turning away from sin, to God. Hanigan (1983:26) supports this view by saying that conversion is turning away from darkness to walk in the light, putting off of the old self to put on the new, a change of mind and heart so as to put on the mind of Christ. According to Bosch conversion applies to both unbelievers and believers. The unbelievers are called to turn to God while the believers are called to return to him. This conversion is always linked to a specific moment in history, a specific kairos.

It is quite clear from Bosch that conversion is turning away from sin, and from the way of sin. This turning away from sin leads to turning to God and to his way. A person who has been converted walks in the path of God and lives according to God's will. This happens when one responds to God's call. Bosch also makes a distinction between the conversion of the

unbeliever and the believer. The unbeliever who has been walking in the sinful path turns from that path to God's path. While the believer who previously turned to God and then goes back to his old sinful way is regarded as returning to God when he is converted again. He is like a prodigal son who left his father and then comes back to him.

Bosch also says that conversion always implies transfer of loyalty or allegiance; this always involves self-denial, implies a journey into the unknown and a new relationship to both God and man. It is vertical as well as horizontal (1982:20). Bosch says, "True conversion always has to do with those things that touch us most deeply, which we are most attached or devoted to, without which, so we believe, we simply cannot live. They are not necessarily bad things. On the contrary: they may be very good things". He continues to say that for instance, Abraham loved his son, Isaac and God ordered him to sacrifice Isaac to him. Abraham was ready to offer his only son as a sacrifice to meet the test. Conversion implies transfer of allegiance as well as leaving self behind. Abraham was prepared to transfer his allegiance from his own ideas about the future to God's ideas. He was prepared to embark upon a journey into the unknown. Bosch here points this fact that conversion means total obedience to God, going the way of God regardless of the cost involved. When Bosch says conversion touches the most profound things

in our lives, this may imply the most fundamental things on which our lives are built. The foundation of our lives are replaced by Christ. When saying that man's foundation should be replaced by Christ, it is because the Holy Spirit is constantly struggling to replace our most fundamental beliefs and attitudes with Christ himself.

According to Bosch (1982:21-22), Paul is another good example of conversion. Paul in his life was totally dedicated to the law. This in itself was completely in order. As far as Paul was concerned, the definition of the community and solidarity had two criteria, namely, circumcision and membership of the Jewish people. After his conversion, the whole centre of gravity of Paul's life radically changed. He discovered a new definition of allegiance, of solidarity and of community. What happened to Paul was that the basis of his existence changed. Nürnberger would say that his old ultimate was replaced by a new one, and that is Christ himself. Because of this new basis of his life, all his relationships also changed because it was based on a new foundation. Paul sees all people through new eyes now. In testifying Paul's conversion, Bosch says, "Everything that used to be sacred, untouchable, incomparable in Paul's life, he now considers mere dung. This indeed is conversion par excellence. This is 180° turn". Conversion is an experience of the change of heart. He (1982:27) also says, "conversion and joining the

new community means precisely a demolishing of all ramparts, standing completely unprotected under the wide open sky of God". Bosch stresses the importance of conversion in order for a person to become a member of the Christian community. He makes it clear that true conversion means turning away from sin to God, complete change of life, loyalty to God and obedience to his reign.

1.5.2 Conversion to the future

Conversion here is related to the Messianic Mission of Jesus Christ and the coming rule of God. One context in which the gospel of Jesus stands is conversion or fresh start (Moltmann 1977:80). Mark summarises Jesus mission in these words: of Jesus "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (1.15). According to Moltmann and according to this statement, "the promised Messianic era has dawned with Jesus' coming". God who was far away has come near in the person of Jesus and in his ministry. The Kingdom of God which is at hand in Jesus Christ points to this fact that God is King and that he has brought his reign near the people in Jesus Christ. Moltmann says, "it is therefore time for men to make a fresh start and to free themselves, and this they can do. The gospel itself is the mediation between the coming Kingdom of God and the person who is turning to freedom". The nearness of the

coming rule of the Kingdom of God is realised in the ministry of Jesus in this fact that the blind see, the prisoners are set free, the poor are happy, the sick are healed, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear and the dead are raised (Moltmann 1977:79). "The imminence of the Kingdom, as it is preached and believed, makes men free to repent, free to turn away from their godless way of life and their Godforsaken circumstances" (Moltmann 1977:80). Therefore people turn away from this world of oppression, death and evil to the future of life of the Kingdom of God (see also O A Curtis 1905:353-356). When Moltmann speaks of a new start, this includes people, their relationships and the conditions in which they live. "Conversion includes soul and body, the individual as well as his community, his own way of life as well as the system in which he lives".

The new start or fresh start is the result of the proclamation of the gospel, the nearness of the approaching Kingdom, the rule of God who is King. The fresh start is a call to freedom. The fact that God is King makes this freedom possible. The rule of God does not enslave men, but it empowers man to be free (Moltmann 1977:78). The freedom to repent, the freedom to turn away from their sins, or their "godless ways" is the fact that people overpower others on different levels of life such as social, economic, physical, psychological or religious life (Moltmann 1977:79). The

oppressors must repent and turn away to receive their freedom. Those who are oppressed and live a life of "Godforsakenness" should also become free by turning away from their own way of life because of the Word of Christ and of the Kingdom of God which is at hand. For this reason, Moltmann (1977:81) says, "Conversion is the concrete form of the people of God which gathers together for the kingdom of God and lays hold on its freedom in the Kingdom's imminence".

He regards this concrete form of the people of God as the fellowship of the "people of the beautitudes" which consist of the poor, the meek, the hungry, the mourners, etc. Conversion according to Moltmann should become clear in the fact that the gospel of the poor has been accepted and has become concrete in the life of the church (see also Moltmann 1973:82-87).

It is now concluded from this discussion that Bosch and Moltmann make it clear that the people who form the community of the believers are converted and make a fresh start. These people were called by the Word of God, or the good news about the coming Kingdom, into a new relationship with God, with other people and with the situation in which they live. The importance of conversion is that it creates new freedom of relationships in the community. It brings members together under the same authority of the coming Kingdom of God, and it

leads the community members to live according to the norms and values of the Kingdom. This does not rest in man himself, but it is the work of the Holy Spirit who brings the community together through the Word as we shall see his work in the next section on Community through the Holy Spirit.

1.6 Community through the Holy Spirit

As community through conversion was discussed in the previous section, it has been shown that conversion is brought about through the call of the Word and the coming Kingdom, and the Holy Spirit uses this Word to convert people to God. Community through the Holy Spirit is going to be discussed in this section, and it will be shown that the formation, existence and relationships of the Christian community are through the Holy Spirit. This can be seen in the work of the Spirit who congregates and guides the community.

1.6.1 The Holy Spirit and Community's existence

In describing the work of the Holy Spirit, Barth (1962:758) says, "The Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies all Christians on earth, keeping them in the true and only faith in Jesus Christ". The power of this act of the Holy Spirit by which he calls this community together is the power of Jesus Christ in his relationship with that

community. He continues to say, "Jesus Christ causes it to exist by the Holy Spirit" (Barth 1962:758-759). It is through the work of the Holy Spirit that this community comes into existence and is still being congregated (see also Berkhof 1979:321). When Barth says, "The Christian community exists as Jesus Christ exists", he wants to explain that this community is not based on any "chance or caprice" but that it is based solidly on the grace of God. This community which is gathered through the Holy Spirit is to witness to God in the World.

Barth (1962:759) goes on to say, "The Holy Spirit is the power of the grace of God addressed to the Whole World in the Son of God and Son of Man in free, creative action in and on this people". As God is gracious to humanity, he creates, upholds and governs within it, causing it to exist, giving it a share in his being, endowing it with the power, freedom and capacity to do its human work. If the community enjoys and exercises this power, it is not its own, but God's power addressed and ascribed to the community. It is the power of the free grace of God. This action of the Holy Spirit as the work of the free grace of God in Jesus Christ, is the basis and the secret of the existence of the Christian community (Barth 1962:760). The action of the Holy Spirit in the Christian community is the witness for God. It is God who is acting in the community through the Holy Spirit.

The work of the Holy Spirit is to co-ordinate the life of Jesus Christ and that of the community. The Holy Spirit is the bond of peace between Jesus Christ and the community, and he constitutes and guarantees unity between the two in the community. This co-ordination and unity is the work of the active grace of God. Barth (1962:761) also says that as Jesus Christ exercises his power; this power is operative as the power of his calling Word and therefore as the gracious power of the Holy Spirit.

The work of the Holy Spirit is to bring and to hold together what is divine and human i.e. to hold God and believer together, the Head and the body, transcendent and the immanent. His work is not to identify and intermingle the two, "not to change one into the other, nor to merge one into the other, but to co-ordinate them, ---, to bring them into harmony and therefore to bind them into a true unity". The work of the Holy Spirit takes place so that Jesus Christ is present and received in the life of his community, and that he issues recognisable commands and actively guides his people. In virtue of this gracious act, Barth (1962:762) says, it is always true and actual that Jesus Christ, the Head of the church lives with and in the community, and the community lives with Christ through the Holy Spirit. In accordance with what is said above, the Holy Spirit calls and gathers people together in Christ, thereby bringing them into

the community (see also Ladd 1974:541-542). Besides bringing them together, he keeps, holds them together and links them with Jesus Christ and with one another. Consequently, God's order is in their lives and in the life of the community as a whole. The gathering together of the members and their relationship with Christ and with one another is part of God's witness in the world.

1.6.2 Community in the power of the Holy Spirit

Moltmann (1977:292-293) describes community through the Holy Spirit as the community of the order of peace, of the order of freedom and of the rule of Christ. All rule in the church is legitimate under the rule of Christ who is the Head of the church. The risen Christ has overcome the evil powers of this world through his death and resurrection; and he has led the believers out of the prison after breaking down the prison through his resurrection. This breaking down of the prison refers to the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ where Jesus emerged victorious. So the community is filled with different energies of Christ's liberating power. According to Moltmann (1977:294), "All the gifts and powers of his liberating Spirit in the church are directed towards the world freed from the 'elemental spirits'". The church was instituted in the world to be "the earthly form of Christ's Lordship which overcomes the world, and the instru-

ment of his liberation of that world". Christ freed the people through his death and resurrection. The church is entrusted with the message of his death and resurrection for the salvation of the world. Christ's liberation is realised in the fellowship of Christ through faith and hope, discipleship and new fellowship which affects the whole world and puts Christ's church at the service of humanity (Moltmann 1977:293-294).

Moltmann regards the eschatological history of Christ as the history of the Holy Spirit. He (1977:34) describes the Holy Spirit as 'the power of futurity', 'the eschatological gift', 'the guarantee of the future'. Eschatology as such is the work of the Holy Spirit who was sent to continue the work of Jesus Christ. "The powers of the Spirit are the powers of life, which determine the present, extending their influence forward from the future of the new life".

The sending of the Holy Spirit and the eschatology of the history of Christ are inseparable and interrelated. The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of truth who witnesses to Christ and leads to knowledge of the truth. Moltmann (1977:35) calls him as "one with the Son and the Father". He glorifies the Father through the Son in those people who belong to him. The church at present is living in the experience and practice of the Spirit. As the church of Christ, it is the

church of the Holy Spirit, the fellowship of the believers creating hope in the world. For this reason, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of hope.

Moltmann distinguishes the theology of the Reformed Churches and that of the Orthodox Churches as far as the history of Christ and the history of the Holy Spirit are concerned. He (1977:35-36) says that the Reformed theology focuses the history of Christ on the justification of the sinner, the forgiveness of sins and freedom for new life. Those who are justified are justified by faith through grace. "Man's history in its relation to the history of Christ begins with the forgiveness of sins and his being freed for a new life" (Moltmann 1977:36). Therefore, justification according to the Reformed theology leads to the new creation. But the Orthodox Churches stress "the history of the Spirit, his continuing presence since Pentecost, the breadth of the Spirit's gifts, the abundance of his energies, and his glorification of the Father with the Son, a glorification which we can already experience and celebrate with him in the liturgy". The Orthodox Churches understand the history of Jesus Christ in the sense of the Holy Spirit. Jesus' incarnation, his mission, his anointing and his resurrection are the works of the Holy Spirit. This means that "the Holy Spirit is the divine subject of the history of Jesus". From these two positions, we see that the difference between the

two positions lies in the emphasis. The Reformed position emphasises the work of Jesus Christ while the Orthodox position emphasises the work of the Holy Spirit. The fact is that in the history of Jesus Christ both Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are at work. Jesus Christ is working in the world together with and through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, as Jesus Christ promised to be with the church (Matthew 28:20), he is with the church through the Holy Spirit.

Moltmann (1977:294) says, "For Paul the congregation is the place where the Spirit manifests himself in an overflowing wealth of Spiritual powers (Charismata)". According to the OT prophecy, the Spirit is counted as the gift of the last days (Is 44:3; Ezek 36:27; Zeeh 4:6; Joel 2:28ff), and all the people of God will be filled by the living force and newly creating power of God. This means the new creation of all things and the glorifying of God, for God himself is present in the Spirit. By virtue of the Spirit, God himself takes up his dwelling place in his creation. Early Christians experienced this after the resurrection of Christ and after the coming of the Holy Spirit. The new people of God see themselves in their existence and form as being the creation of the Spirit (cf A Richardson 1958:109-112). The Spirit calls them into life, gives them authority to work, unites them, orders and preserves them. The Spirit is God himself who calls into being the thing that is not, and he is

the life giving Spirit who gives life to everything that is mortal, and makes the godless righteous, and raises the dead. "As the power of resurrection, the Spirit is the reviving presence of the future of eternal life in the midst of the history of death; he is the presence of the future of the new creation in the midst of the dying life of this world and its evil state" (Moltmann 1977:295).

When we observe what Barth and Moltmann say about the work of the Holy Spirit, Barth regards the power of the Holy Spirit working in the church, and in the world, as the power of Jesus Christ (1962:758), the power of the grace of God (1962:759) which causes the Christian community to exist (1962:759). The action of the Holy Spirit as the work of the free grace of God in Jesus Christ, is the basis and the secret of the existence and of the service of the Christian community (1962:760). This means that Jesus Christ is working in the church and in the world through the Holy Spirit. Moltmann sees the eschatological history of Christ as the history of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the Holy Spirit is the divine subject of the history of Jesus Christ (1977:36). The future power of new creation, of resurrection and eternal life is with us now working in the church and in the world (1977:295). The presence and the work of the Holy Spirit in the world witness to God's presence and to the reign of the Kingdom of God. It is now concluded that

Moltmann in this way bends the eschatology back into the present world. Of an expectation that God will do something decisively in the future is very little left. The eschatological future of Christ, becomes the presence of the Spirit in the church and in the world.

1.6.3 Community in relation to the Holy Spirit

Heyns describes the church as the temple of the Holy Spirit. He (1980:60) says that the believers are the temple of God where the Spirit dwells. The Holy Spirit dwells in every believer with his body as a temple of the Spirit. This Holy Spirit is in the church working with and through it. As the Spirit is living and working in the church, he links man with Jesus, man with the Kingdom of God, man with the Word, people one with another, man with the world, and links man with the future.

1.6.3.1 Man's link with Jesus

Heyns (1980:78) says that when the Holy Spirit links man with Jesus Christ, a mystic bond of unity is created between Jesus Christ and the believer. Without the Spirit, Jesus Christ cannot dwell in the believer, there is no belief in Jesus, no resurrection to life, no sorrow for sin, no ear for the call of the Gospel. We have a share in the benefits which Christ

has obtained for us because we have received the Holy Spirit. "The Spirit's work is to bring us salvation in Christ". He takes it from Christ and gives it to us. This salvation has been obtained for us through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. The Holy Spirit proclaims the message of Christ to us and gives us a share in what Christ did for us. The work of the Holy Spirit makes the church into a Christological community.

1.6.3.2 Man's link with the Kingdom of God

A person who has a share in Christ and his benefits has been admitted to the Kingdom of God. Such a person has been made a Son of God (Rom 8:14) and a member of the body of Christ who walks by the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:25) (J A Heyns 1980:78). The church is one mode of the Kingdom of God because Christ is the King in the church and also outside the church. Christ as the King, he must be obeyed in both spheres. Heyns (1980:79) says that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit makes the church and the world aware of God's universal Kingship. This places "every believing member under the obligation of universal obedience to God". God's sovereignty must be acknowledged in the whole world and he must be obeyed in life, in science and art, in politics and commerce, etc. Therefore the Holy Spirit makes the church a "basileological" community.

1.6.3.3 Man's link with the Word

Heyns (1980:79) says that the written Word is the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit used men to record this Word so that he could address the people and lead them to faith. The Spirit takes the Word, explains and interprets it to man as the Word of God. He also uses people to expound the Word to his community. He enlightens people's insight and guides them into the truth of the Bible. Since the Holy Spirit turns the facts of salvation into the message of salvation, and since the written Word is the only source where those facts are reliably given, the Spirit links the community to the Bible as the only revelatory document and the Word of God which is wielded by the Spirit of God. The church exists where the Word of God is heeded and where the church members commit themselves to this Word because the church is created by this Word, and it is sustained and regenerated by this same Word. Heyns (1980:80) states that the church should listen to the Word of God and respond to it. By listening and responding to God's Word, the church learns its origin, recognises its destination, realizes its task in the world and carries it out. The Word is the essential part of the life of the church with God and it is so central to the church that the Holy Spirit makes it a bibliological community.

1.6.3.4 People's link with one another

The Holy Spirit links people with one another so that they may possess things in common. Heyns (1980:80) stresses that the believers through the work of the Holy Spirit have a common testimony that they are God's children (Rom 8:16), they have sincere and intimate fellowship because they have one thing in common, that is the Holy Spirit who creates this fellowship and binds them together; they have one and common Saviour, Jesus Christ, they also have common past, common present, and common future which is the fulfilment of God's promise of his glory and his absolute sovereignty at the time of consummation.

Heyns also says that the believers do things in common through the Holy Spirit. They pray and praise God together, they listen to the proclamation of the gospel together, they confess their faith, receive forgiveness of their sins and share in the bread and wine at Holy communion together (1980:80). "Because of this common possession and these communal activities, the believers differ from other people". It is the Holy Spirit who enables them to have these things in common.

Besides these things, Heyns (1980:81) says, the believers have varieties of gifts given by the same Spirit. The

believers receive these gifts from the Holy Spirit with the purpose that they use them in serving one another (1 Cor 12:7, 11, 29-30). Some of these gifts are faith, proclamation, healing of the sick, prophesying, teaching, speaking in tongues, etc. These gifts are for the upbuilding of the body of Christ. The Christian community completely depends upon the Holy Spirit's working so that it may rightly be called a pneumatological community.

1.6.3.5 Man's link with the world

The Christian community is not for itself, but for God and for the world. Heyns (1980:81) asserts that the church is commanded by the Holy Spirit to spread the Gospel of God's Kingdom throughout the world (Mk 16:15). The apostles carried out this command laid upon them by the Lord Jesus after they had received the Holy Spirit's power (Acts 1:8). The church is obliged to continue with the proclamation in the world. "As it transmits to the world the salvation which Christ achieved, the church is made a saving community by the Holy Spirit (Heyns 1980:81). As it proclaims the salvation, the church becomes the agent of the Spirit so that the whole man must be liberated from very enslaving bond and that he may be freed for the service of God and his Kingdom (Heyns 1980:82). The Holy Spirit sends the church into the world to proclaim the salvation in Christ. Therefore the Holy Spirit makes the church a missiological community.

1.6.3.6 Man's link with the future

Heyns (1980:82) calls the Holy Spirit as "the first fruits". This idea of the first fruits is derived from the OT cultus where it refers and represents the harvest as a whole. Heyns (1980:83) says, "Just as the first fruits represent the whole harvest, so the 'world harvest' of converted people is depicted in the Spirit as the first fruits". When the Holy Spirit is given, the end has arrived, and those who receive this Holy Spirit, the future becomes present. The Spirit guarantees the future and the completion of the salvation which has already begun. So the Spirit points the believer from the present to the future. Since the Holy Spirit is the promise, the believer expects the future to be the fullness of what they already possess through him. The Spirit is regarded as the "pledge", the "deposit", the "guarantee" of what the believer may expect in the future, i.e. the fulfilment of God's promises.

As the Spirit links the believer to the future, he also relates this to Jesus. The Holy Spirit makes Jesus and his benefits available to man. One of these benefits is the resurrection of Christ which is described as the first fruits of the harvest of the dead. In Christ's resurrection, we see the beginning of the end, the new life which has broken through the old dispensation, the guarantee which has been

given that the believers will receive what they have been promised. Heyns (1980:84) states that the Holy Spirit is an active presence in the lives of all the believers in the church. As the church has received what was promised to it for the last days (Acts 2:17; Joel 2:28), the believers will also receive what they have been promised. Therefore the Spirit makes the church as an eschatological community as we shall discuss it in the next section.

1.7 The eschatological Community

In the previous section community through the Holy Spirit was discussed; but here, it will be shown that the eschatological community is founded and centred in the death and the resurrection of Christ, the coming of the Holy Spirit and the second coming of Christ.

1.7.1 The Church

The church is created and established by Christ. King (1967: 81) describes the coming of Jesus as decisive and truly eschatological event. For the death and the resurrection of Christ are seen as the decisive eschatological action of God. Berkouwer (1956:157) also says "For Christ's death, resurrection and return are the foundation on which virtually everything stands that can be predicted of man, of his

future, of his end and purpose in God". Küng continues to say that crucifixion is an event of salvation, it is the saving event; and the resurrection points to the completed work of salvation, new future and new hope. When Jesus was raised from the dead, he already reigns as the Christ glorified by God.

Küng (1967:81) says, "The new community of the disciples of Jesus comes to see itself as the eschatological community called and chosen by God". This community renewed its decision for Christ because of the new event of the death and the resurrection of Christ. Members of this community are regarded as 'the elect', and they form the eschatological community of God, or the community of God, or simply called the church today.

The word church comes from the Greek word *ekklesia* which means those who have been called. Küng says that God gathers together a people and the *ekklesia* therefore becomes his community (1967:82). The *ekklesia* of God is the congregation of those who were previously chosen by God, and who gather round God as their centre. Küng (1967:83) says that by taking the name *ekklesia*, "the early Christian community made its claim to be the true congregation of God, the true community of God and the true eschatological people of God". It is God who gathers his people together and because of that it is already now a sign of what is to come.

Küng (1967:84) goes on to say that the Word *ekklesia* means "both the actual process of congregating and the congregated community itself". An *ekklesia* is not "something that is formed and founded once and for all and remains unchanged; it becomes *ekklesia* by repeated concrete event", people coming together and congregating, particularly congregating for the purpose of "worshipping God" and "The concrete congregation is the actual manifestation, the representation, indeed the realization of the NT community". According to him the church is a real visible community. Thus the witness of this community although partially, is in its visible coming together, congregating and worshipping of God. The real church should therefore not be sought behind the congregating community. The congregated community is the real church and should reflect Christ who is its foundation.

Küng mentions three words, namely congregation, community and church which need to be defined briefly. These terms are not mutually exclusive, but they are interconnected. These three words are not in contrast or in competition; but they complement one another in translating the very rich word *ekklesia*. Küng (1967:85) states that generally, community and church are interchangeable. Congregation emphasises a concrete event, while community is a constant local group, and whereas church is a supra-local fellowship. But fundamentally, they are interchangeable, and one may speak of

a local church or a local community as well as a total church. The eschatological time of salvation has begun with the coming of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the church through the Holy Spirit. "This eschatological period between fulfilment which has come, and consummation which is to come is the temporary interim period of the church" (Küng 1967:87). The church's expectation of the coming parousia unites the church and gives it its distinctive form. This idea is supported by Barth (1962:929) who says "the church confesses Jesus as Lord, it has confidence that the Lord himself during this interim period will lead the new community and with it the world to its predestined goal". Because the church has this confidence that the Lord will lead it to its predestined goal, this church saw itself as "an eschatological phenomenon" (Küng 1967:87). From the beginning the church understood its existence as temporary and as reaching for God's final goal. The basis of its existence did not lie in itself but in the risen Christ who is taking it to his goal. The church is now existing between the two comings of Jesus Christ, that is between the first coming and the second coming which is the consummation. Küng (1967:87) describes this period as the period of the eschatological community of Jesus Christ; and it is the period of the reign of the Kingdom of God. He also says (1967:87) "the fire of eschatological expectation soon grew cold" and "It established firm roots in this world ...

identifies itself with the Kingdom of God". In doing this the church also does not see Christ as its parousia and then it does not differ from the world because it becomes a permanent institution which is not expecting anything more or new from God.

1.7.2 The church and the Kingdom of God

Before we discuss this subject, it is necessary to discuss the difference between the reign of God and the church. These two are not the same. According to Küng (1967:95), the church as an eschatological community of the believers comes from the preaching of the reign of God. The reign of God is the beginning and the foundation of the church. The church is moving towards the revealed consummation of the reign of God. This means that "the reign of God is its goal, its limitation, its judgment" (1967:95). Küng does not identify the reign of God and the church. He (1967:92) says that if the reign of God is identified with the church, this leads to an intolerable glorification of the church. And this is to forget that the power and the glory of the reign of God are still to come; and it is to forget that the church is composed of people and sinful human beings.

Although there is this distinction between the reign of God and the church, Küng does not dissociate the two. He

(1967:93) says that if there is this dissociation, then the reign of God is made an opponent or an enemy of the church which is out of the question. Therefore, there is a connection between the two. Küng (1967:95) points out that although the church is not the Kingdom of God, but it looks towards God's Kingdom, waits for it, and it is its servant proclaiming it to the world. The promises and powers of the coming reign of God are already evident and effective in the church through Christ. This could be interpreted that the Kingdom of God is brought into the world by Jesus Christ and is manifested through him.

This fact of the presence of God's Kingdom in the world is also expressed by Moltmann (1977:191) who says that the Kingdom of God is present in faith and new obedience, in new fellowship and the powers of the Spirit. The presence of the Holy Spirit is to be understood as the earnest and beginning of the new creation of all things in the Kingdom of God. God rules through Word and faith, promise and hope, commandment and obedience, power and Spirit. According to Moltmann, the realities of the activities of the Holy Spirit indicate that the coming Kingdom is present, God's Kingdom is active in the world. Moltmann (1977:191) says, "The Spirit of God creates faith where there is nothing else to believe in; he creates love where there is nothing lovable; he creates hope where there is nothing to hope for". Conclusively, faith, love and

hope are the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God works in history as the creator of a new future. He opens new and hopeful future for the world in and through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

The Lordship of Christ points beyond itself; it points to the Kingdom of God (Moltmann 1977:192). This Kingdom has been brought into the world by Jesus Christ. Through his mission and resurrection, Jesus has brought God's Kingdom into history. As the eschatological future, the Kingdom has become the power that determines the present. This future has already begun; and the presence of the Holy Spirit puts new creation into force.

When Moltmann discusses the eschatological community, he sees that everything has been freed by God for his service. His emphasis is more on the present action of the Kingdom of God although he also says that the consummation of the Kingdom is awaited at the end of time (1977:84). It, however, seems as if Moltmann brings the Kingdom of God into the present liberating action of Christ, and thus reduces the future eschatological expectation to what can be done on this earth. But Küng stresses the future coming of the Kingdom of God. According to him, God's Kingdom will be fully realised at the consummation. The presence of God's Kingdom in the world is relevant for the witness of God.

1.7.3 The church in the service of God's Kingdom

The church is in the service of the reign of God in this period between the two comings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Van der Merwe (1985:16-17) states that when Jesus appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, he intended to create an unshakable faith in him as the One who had been resurrected; and he especially intended to prepare and commission them to go into the world through the Holy Spirit to proclaim him and his Kingdom, his crucifixion and resurrection, his victory and the ultimate coming of the Kingdom of God upon earth. After his ascension, the Lord Jesus sends his disciples back into the world. Van der Merwe (1985:25) clearly asserts that this is the world into which Christians are sent to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom after the ascension of Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ shows how the gospel of the Kingdom of God should be proclaimed in the world.

1.7.3.1 The reign of God as decisive, future and final event

When Jesus came, he proclaimed the message of the Kingdom of God. King (1967:97) says, "Jesus preached that the reign of God is decisive, future, final event at the end of time". This proclamation of the reign of God must be carried on by the church in the world. The church should not make itself

the focal point of its preaching in these last days. Its task is to point from the fulfilled reign of God in Christ to the coming reign of God. The church looks forward to the consummation as the goal of its mission. It is moving towards the revelation of God's victory and glory. This revelation will universally be seen and recognised by all that God is universal King.

1.7.3.2 The reign of God as all-powerful act of God himself

In his proclamation, Küng (1967:98) says, "Jesus preached that the reign of God is an all-powerful act of God himself". The reign of God in the world is the act of God. This means that the church must not think that it can itself create the Kingdom of God because God creates it for the church. The church must put its whole trust in God's acts and obey God in his service. The church must participate in the act of God in which He is to bring his Kingdom finally. If the church can claim to inaugurate and build up the Kingdom of God by its own strength, that church will not build the Kingdom of God because it is dependent upon itself and serves itself. But a church which trusts that it is God who inaugurates and supports his Kingdom, and rules over this interim period, that church will be used by God to gather together and build up; for this is how God intended it to be. Therefore it is God who is working through the church. Van der Merwe

(1985:19) says, "The work which God therefore began in the resurrection of his Son Jesus Christ and continued in the work of the Holy Spirit, He will surely bring it to completion in the return of Christ and the consummation of the world". By saying this, van der Merwe agrees with Kling that it is really the Kingdom of God and not of the church.

1.7.3.3. The reign of God as purely religious reign

Kling (1967:99) states, "Jesus preached the reign of God as a purely religious reign". The role of the church in the proclamation of the Kingdom of God is spiritual and diakonia. The church must not present itself as a religio - political theocracy. For it has been called as a servant of God to serve both God and humankind. If a church overlooks this fact that it is called to the selfless service of humanity and of the world, it loses its dignity and the very justification of its existence because it abandons the true discipleship of Christ. Jesus came to serve God and humanity and not to be served. Therefore the church should remain aware that it is the reign of God which is coming in power and glory.

1.7.3.4 The reign of God as a saving event for sinners

According to Kūng (1967:100), "Jesus preached the reign of God as a saving event for sinners". This shows that the church exists for sinners and godless, in order that they may be saved. This idea is also supported by A Nygren (1952: 140). Therefore the message of the church must be of healing, forgiveness and salvation. Its warnings must not be an end in themselves, but a reminder of grace held out by God. Van der Merwe (1985:51) says, "A church which wants to follow the footsteps of the apostles has the obligation to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to the whole world, the gospel of Jesus Christ who for the sins of the world gave his life, and who through his resurrection from death brought to light the new world, who by the transforming activity of the Spirit wants to renew everything in new heavens and new earth. The world in which Jesus must be proclaimed today has by the amazing achievements of science and technology become one world which, however, is also burdened with problems of universal extent, such as impending overpopulation, pollution and depleted natural resources, terrible poverty of millions of people amid great wealth and luxury of others, the pining away and slow death of millions of children and adults as a result of malnutrition; the frightening display of power and alarming arms race between the East and the West". He (1985:52) emphasises that the

church can only be church in such a world "following the narrow way of the cross". Knowing its weakness and failure, knowing that it is composed of saved sinners and exists for sinful men, the church should continue to proclaim the gospel of salvation in the humble Spirit.

1.7.3.5 The reign of God requiring radical decision for God

Kling (1967:101) also says, "Jesus required for the reign of God that man should make a radical decision for God". The church is confronted with a decision to make between God and his reign on one side, and the world and its reign on the other side. The church must constantly turn away from the message of the world and accept the reign of God. As it lives in the world, the church must be inspired daily by the radical obedience to God's will in its task. This service must be marked by devotion and complete surrender to God's will. By doing this, the church has taken the witnessing task upon itself.

Van der Merwe (1985:3) says that eschatology depicted in the NT has three dimensions. First, it has the resurrection of Christ; second, it has the coming and the work of the Holy Spirit in the intervening time between ascension and return of Christ. When Christ ascends into heaven, he sends his disciples into the world to proclaim the gospel of the

Kingdom of God. Third, it has the return of Christ, the general resurrection and consummation. This very brief structure of the eschatological community is also the structure of K Barth.

When we see these different eschatological views of the Kingdom of God, we find that Küng, van der Merwe, Heyns and Barth have the same eschatological view of the Kingdom of God. According to them, the Kingdom of God has not yet been consummated although it has come into the world. It will be consummated at the time of the parousia. The responsibility of the church now is to proclaim the gospel of this kingdom in the world. Therefore, their emphasis is of the future coming of the Kingdom of God. But according to Moltmann, the coming of the Kingdom of God through Jesus Christ has freed man and the world. God has freed them through the death and the resurrection of Christ, and through the coming of the Holy Spirit. Moltmann's emphasis is on the present realisation of the Kingdom of God. When the church is proclaiming it. However, the church is not a final and eternal social-structure, but temporal and will be superseded by the final coming of God's Kingdom. It points to Christ and the Kingdom of God which is greater than itself. In this sense the church witnesses in the world that dependence on this world and on its structures for its salvation and security is unwise and would eventually be revealed as foolishness.

In conclusion, first, an eschatological community's life and hope are based on the death and resurrection of Christ, and the coming of the Holy Spirit and his work. This community is centred in Jesus Christ who died, rose from death and now reigns. Second, the community is constituted to show the reign of God which has been brought in the world by Jesus Christ. Third, the task of the church in the world is to show its nature in this changing world. The church is to remain faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ who is the Head of the church. The relevance of this is that as the church and the world are going towards the consummation, the church must remain committed, faithful and active in its witness to God. This task of witnessing to God is given only to the people of God. The following chapter will be on the community as people of God.

2. COMMUNITY AS PEOPLE OF GOD

2.1 The people of God in the OT

Community as people of God starts from the OT. This discussion of the people of God in the OT is relevant to this community because God first chose and made a covenant with these people. It will therefore be shown in this section that the relationship between God and his people largely depends on the election and the covenant of God. The essence

of God's covenant with his people is captured in the summary promise, "I will be your God and you shall be my people" (Gen 17:7; Ex 6:7; 2 Cor 6:16-18; Rev 21:2-3) (Ferguson 1998:173). This promise applies to all God's people up to consummation.

According to Kūng (1967:116), "The concept of the people of God is at the heart of Judaism". Fundamentally, the whole faith of Judaism can be summed up in these words, "Jahweh is the God of Israel and Israel is the people of Jahweh". This statement is the content of the covenant as it has been stated above. It could be observed from these words that there is close relationship between Jahweh and the people of Israel; and this relationship goes back to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the ancestors of the people of Israel. Kūng states that Jahweh uniquely manifests himself to be the God of Israel from the moment he mercifully delivered and led them out of Egypt; and then these people came to see themselves as a national and religious unity. The mission of Moses was fulfilled and became meaningful when this unity was realised in the history of the people. He (1967:117) also says that Jahweh as the God of Israel and Israel as the people of God underly the thought of the OT writings (see also König 1983:40-41). It is systematically and theologically worked out in Deuteronomy (especially Chs 4, 6-12), and it is composed in hymns in the Psalms (eg Ps 135). Many examples are expressed in the OT to indicate this fact. And "Jahweh's

name rescinds throughout Israel". Out of many of these examples, two of them are the following, "Jahweh the Lord of the earth and of all nations, is the God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our forefathers, our God"; and "The Israelites are the chosen people, holy and righteous, just and upright; they know Jahweh, cry to him, seek him, fear and love him, trust and wait for him". These two examples show that the existence of Israel as a people depends on their relationship with God. And Küng (1967:119) describes the idea of the people of God as the oldest and most fundamental concept underlying the people who have been called and have made a covenant with God. The foundation of this relationship is mainly based on the choice of the people by Jahweh and the covenant made between Jahweh and his people.

2.1.1 The choice of Israel by Jahweh

Jacob (1958:201) says, "Election is one of the central realities of the OT". This election is the initial act by which Jahweh comes into relation with his people before the covenant relationship. Election which is based on the free choice of God is the initial stage in the relationship between Jahweh and the people of Israel. Küng also maintains that the union between God and his people does not depend on natural necessity. It all depends on the free historical

activity of God in the history of his people. Israel interpreted everything in terms of God's free choice, his mercy, love and faithfulness. God acts in the very dawn of history by choosing the forefathers (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) to be his nation. He acts by freeing the tribes from the Egyptian slavery; and this action binds Israel together as a nation for the first time (1967:117). Dyrness (1979: 119) is of the opinion that the choice of Israel and their deliverance from the Egyptian bondage is an expression of God's love for them. And Jacob (1958:207) states that by choosing Israel, Jahweh has conferred on Israel a privilege of being God's people, and this is also a proof of his grace and love for them. Therefore, the covenant is the purpose of the election. God elected Israel to live in a covenant relationship with them.

2.1.2 The Covenant between Jahweh and Israel

Jahweh entered into personal relationship with his people Israel by a covenant. A covenant is an agreement or contract between two parties (McCarthy 1972:10). Jacob (1958:211) points out that when God makes this covenant with his people, obviously there is no question of bilateral contract. Jahweh's covenant with his people is unilateral, and it is initiated by God. All the accounts of the covenant between Jahweh and his people show that the covenant is a gift.

Jacob (1958:212) says that the meaning of this covenant is an election, a close bond between Jahweh and his people (see also Knight 1959:330).

Ferguson (1988:173) stresses that while the covenant is unilateral in establishment, it is mutual or two-sided in accomplishment. He says that as God promises to be ever faithful to his covenant, he commands his people to keep the covenant through love and obedience. The covenant always creates obligations in order to make it binding on both sides. Dyrness (1979:113 and 119) also expresses that when God made a covenant with them. This idea is also supported by Clements (1978:98). On his part, God promised to keep and protect his people. The obligation of the people is their obedience to God (Clements 1978:101). Jacob (1958:211) states that the covenant between Jahweh and the people of Israel shows three aspects, namely:

- (a) the covenant which Jahweh makes with his people is a gift to them;
- (b) by the covenant, God comes into relationship with his people and creates a communion with them;
- (c) the covenant creates obligations which take concrete shape in the form of law.

Ferguson (1988:173) supports this idea and he states that the law and the entire worship system of Israel were related to the covenant. When God made a covenant with Israel at Sinai, he also gave the people of Israel a law to govern their lives and the worship of Jahweh. According to Jacob (1958:212), the Sinai covenant includes a revelation granted to Moses, a rite of blood-sprinkling, a reading of the law and a sacramental meal. The meaning of this covenant is an election of the people who now belong to God, a close bond between Jahweh and his people, and an obedience on the side of the people. Since the obligation of the human partner is faithfulness and obedience, the people of Israel continuously failed to keep the covenant with God. Despite this failure on the side of Israel, God remained faithful to his covenant. Ferguson (1988:174) states that the OT holds out the hope of a coming era when a new covenant will be granted by God to his people. This points to a reign of the Messiah in universal righteousness. And this is the emphasis of the NT on the reign of Christ, or the Kingdom of God.

It has been shown here that the relationship between God and his people is a covenant relationship which is based on God's election. This covenant relationship makes the people of God a community which witnesses to their superior covenant partner and his will. This will be seen later in the last chapter when witness will be discussed. The covenant

relationship with God applies not only to the OT people, but also to the NT people as it will be discussed in the next section.

2.2 The people of God in the NT

As the people of God in the OT were discussed in the previous section, it was shown that the relationship between God and his people depended upon God's choice and his covenant with the people. People of God in the NT will be discussed in this section; and it will be shown that election and covenant are also the main concepts concerning the people of God even in the NT.

2.2.1 NT Conception of the people of God

The NT conception of the people of God is applied to the eschatological community which is gathered in its faith in Jesus as the Messiah. Küng (1967:119) says that this community realized more and more clearly that through faith in Jesus as the Messiah, it was the true Israel and the true people of God.

Küng (1967:120) points out that the New Testament word *Laos* is used in the sense of nation, the populace or the people. But specifically, it is used in the sense of the people of

God to describe Israel as opposed to the heathen (ethne). The New Testament goes a decisive step further to say that Laos is used for the fellowship of the disciples and for the community of Jesus Christ. This community is composed of both Jews and Gentiles. Therefore, the idea of the people of God is directly applied to the community of the Christians. James (Acts 15:14) gives us a striking example in the following words when he describes the Christian community: "God has visited the Gentiles to take out of them (ex ethnon) a people (Laos) for his name". This example indicates to us that the Christian community is truly the people of God. The foundation of the community is election and covenant as it has been discussed above in 2.1 on the people of God in the OT.

2.2.2 The covenant between God and his people

Before the covenant is made between God and people, there is an election of God which must be responded by the people. Election is one of the important concepts of the church. It is important because it is the root basis of the people of God, and is applied to all the people of God, both in the OT and in the NT. Ridderbos (1975:332) states that this word is traced back to the OT designation of Israel as God's chosen people. V Steuernagel (1986:13) describes the idea of God's own people as the very reason for the existence of this new

race, community of priests and special nation. They exist only because God has chosen them and made them his own.

God's election is completed in the call. Küng (1967:126) says, "Everyone belongs to the people of God through God's call". He describes the church as always and everywhere dependent on the free choice and call of God who wills the salvation of all people. God's call to people is his decisive initiative for their salvation both in the OT and in the NT. Küng (1967:129) also says, all people belong to the people of God through their human decision to indicate acceptance of God's call. The church is always and in all cases dependent on free human assent. There can be no church without the reply and assent of the people in faith and obedience. God's call and a person's assent in faith and obedience are closely related to the covenant of God.

Ridderbos (1975:333) refers to this covenant as a new covenant to distinguish it from the OT covenant and to show the continuation of Israel from the OT. He (1975:334) says that when we speak of a new covenant, it "means a new definition of the people of God, and likewise a new concept of Israel". This new definition of the essence of the church as the people of God is not natural or national, but is of Christ, faith, sharing the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6ff).

Ridderbos (1975:335) states that for Paul the promise of the new covenant is one of the great supports of his spiritual and universal definition of the church as the people of God and the new Israel. Salvation plays a much greater role in this new covenant. He (1975:336) points out that this new covenant is grounded in the blood shed by Christ on the cross. Since the new covenant has taken effect in the blood of Jesus, it is done in the hearts of the people by the Spirit of God. Ridderbos (1975:337) refers to this as a new setting of the salvation appearing in Christ, and salvation is connected with the covenant. This is a breaking through of the boundaries between the Jews and the Gentiles, universalizing salvation and making the church as the people of God. There is in this church no question of Jew or Greek, of slave or free, of male or female. This universal character of the Christian church embraces all sorts of people as long as they are united with Christ by faith. Those people who were far off, now have been brought near through the blood of Christ and they now have a share in the covenant of the promise. Ferguson (1988:174) states that the new covenant is superior to the old covenant because the new covenant displaces the old covenant, and the new covenant is related to the great events in the life of Jesus. Here, I do not agree with Ferguson when he says the new covenant is "superior" and "displaces" the old covenant, because the content of the covenant of God is one and the same, both in

the old and in the new covenant (Rev 21:7b). The covenant is always initiated by God and depends upon God's grace. For this reason, it seems that Ridderbos is correct when he says that the covenant is confirmed by the blood of Christ, and therefore, new concepts regarding the covenant are needed. This is observed in his use of Pauline words and phrases like: breaking boundaries between Jews and Gentiles, no Jew nor Greek, no slave nor free, no male nor female, united with Christ, brought near by the blood of Christ.

The sign of the covenant is baptism. Baptism is one of the two sacraments which Jesus Christ instituted. It is closely linked with faith. Küng (1967:207) describes baptism as coming from faith, and faith leading to baptism. This means that baptism is the sign of the covenant and that we must accept the grace of God through faith. One's faith is followed by one's baptism (see also Heyns 1980:48; Berkhof 1979: 331).

Küng (1967:125) says that all members of the people of God have been called by the message of Jesus Christ to faith, obedience, and complete devotion in love. Heyns (1980:48) points out that God's acts create a people and delineate the bounds of these people. These people must be holy and dedicated to God (see also von Rohr 1986:35). The peoples' task is to point continually and emphatically to God's

wonderful work. By pointing to the work of God, the community is a witness to God in the world.

In conclusion, God has chosen his people for himself from all the nations and peoples. Having chosen and called these people, he has made a covenant with them. This covenant demands people's acceptance of the covenant, faith and obedience. While the description of the people of God includes both the OT and the NT, the body of Christ is a description which concentrates on the NT understanding of the church. The next discussion is on the people of God as the body of Christ.

2.3 The people of God as the body of Christ

The people of God in the OT and NT was discussed above and it was shown in that chapter that the people of God were chosen, called and made a covenant with God. But this section is on the people of God as the body of Christ. It will be shown in this discussion that this term body of Christ indicates a deep and wide meaning of the relationship between Christ and his church. Christ in this relationship is the Head while the church is his body with unity and diversity in the relationship.

2.3.1 The body of Christ

Heyns (1980:50) says that the image of the church as the body of Christ is the richest and most valuable for our understanding of the church. This image is not literal, but symbolic. "A literal interpretation would make the church an extension of Christ" (1980:50) which he says is not the case. When we speak of the body of Christ, or church we mean the believers. Ridderbos (1975:363) confirms this view that this expression body of Christ is the symbol (see also A Ferriman 1990:123-134); this interpretation is the more traditional view of the description of the church. He (1975:362) also says that this description indicates the special and close bond, and communion which Christ has with the church.

This bond is further discussed by Heyns. He (1980:50) states that "the designation 'body of Christ' is very closely bound up with the expression "in Christ" (Rom 8:1-2; Gal 2:17).

This phrase, "in Christ", must be set over against "in Adam" in order to understand it. Adam represents all humanity and is a corporate personality. As a consequence of sin, all people in Adam are subject to death. But through Christ, humanity has been released from this corporate bondage of sinful humanity in Adam, and transferred to the body of Christ of which he is the Head. Heyns points out that, like

Adam, Christ is also a corporate personality for in him the new humanity receives a new beginning. Just as Adam was the head of the old humanity and of its body, so Christ is the Head of the new humanity and of its body. Just as there is the body of death, there is also the body of life; just as there is natural human being derived from Adam, there is also the new human being reborn in Christ. And between them there stands the death of Christ. Through this death of Christ, a person moves from the body of death over into the body of life. This transition takes place through faith, for through faith a person is engrafted or implanted into Christ (Heyns 1980:50).

He goes on to say that the phrase "in Christ" indicates a particular relationship between Christ and the believer. Fundamentally, this determines the way in which the believer will be engaged in the world, in time and in his work. This phrase also refers to a particular relationship that is established among those who are in Christ, and to the church itself because Christ is the Head of his body. Ethically, the life of the one who is in Christ changes because he derives his life from Jesus Christ (2 Cor 5:17). And those who are in Christ share in the blessings of the resurrection life, for they have been raised with Christ and are waiting for full enjoyment of this life at the consummation. This description of the body of Christ signifies the indissoluble

bond which God has created between Christ and his church (Heyns 1980:51). This bond between Christ and his church is a witness in the world because it is this bond with Christ which makes this community differ from all other communities based in the world.

As it has been said above that Heyns and Ridderbos agree on the traditional view of the body of Christ, Ridderbos (1975:364) goes further by saying that this traditional view of the interpretation of the body of Christ has been criticised because of a one-sided pneumatic character of it (some Protestants), and because of the collective extension of existence of Christ in the church as his body (some Roman Catholics). This twofold criticism is one, and it has gone over from figurative to literal, real and personal interpretation of the body of Christ, i.e. it is interpreted in the sense of the historical and glorified body of Christ. Ridderbos (1975:365) stresses that this criticism cannot be accepted because this body of Christ also finds expressions in such phrases as "in Christ", "with Christ", thereby the spiritual indwelling of Christ in the church maintained by the Holy Spirit, has not been denied or become of less significance. In addition to this, Heyns also points out that a literal interpretation of the body of Christ would make the church an extension of Christ, which is not right. So both Ridderbos and Heyns maintain the traditional

interpretation of the body of Christ that it is a metaphor indicating the relationship between Christ and his church.

In order to give a significant interpretation of the body of Christ, Ridderbos dwells on Romans and 1 Corinthians where the body of Christ is described. He (1975:369) emphasises that every believer is to know his own place in the church as a whole. This point is enlightened by the figure of the body with many members (parts). Each member has its own place and function in the body. This is also true with the church; and this point is supported by Black (1962:962&949). Each believer in the church has a place and a function to do as each has been given a gift. Believers as they are members of the body of Christ need each other for their spiritual well-being, strength and growth. Ridderbos (1975:370) states that the expression, the body of Christ, implies the organic unity of the church within itself.

He (1975:371) stresses that the distinguishing feature of the idea of the body is that these many members in virtue of this common belonging to Christ, form in him a new unity with each other. They form a corporate unity all together in Christ. This idea is supported by Lloyd-Jones (1972:278-281) and Costas (1974:25). Ladd (1974:545) also says that Paul uses the metaphor of the body of Christ to express the oneness of the church with its Lord. The primary emphasis of the

metaphor is the unity of believers with Christ. Ridderbos (1975:372) further indicates that the realisation of this unity of the body of Christ starts with Christ who is the foundation; this body is then united in Christ, and finally Christ dwells in the church through the Holy Spirit. Since the body expresses oneness of the church (Ladd and Ridderbos) with different gifts (Moltmann 1977:296), these two characteristics of the church show the relevance of the church for its witness in the world.

The body of Christ also refers to the diversity and the unity of the church. Heyns (1980:54) states that unity and diversity further elaborate the image of the body of Christ (see also Kuncheria Pathil 1988:49). The limbs of the body are not just individual believers, but also groups of believers with different gifts. Paul mentions apostles, prophets, teachers and other skills which God has distributed among the members of the church (1 Cor 12:28). Groupings of the believers are to be found in various places. Heyns (1980:55) points out that this diversity is of the nature of the church, and therefore there is no rival or threat to its unity. That unity is maintained and is actually served by the variety, because all these individuals or groupings are working together for the upbuilding of the body. The fact that the church is one, and yet members or groups have different gifts, is a witness to God because in the life of

the world, differences easily and most often spell enmity. Through its oneness in differences the church witnesses to God in the world.

Berkhof also discusses the diversity and unity of the church and warns against the misuse of the gifts. He (1979:403) points out that the charismatic structure can make the body of Christ vulnerable and insecure by egotism, self-seeking and sloth. This may happen when gifts are used for the benefit of the possessors and not for others, and when one regards his gifts as more important than those of others (Berkhof 1979:404). He says "sin transforms the function of the gifts of grace into its opposite and division". But the Spirit of God who distributes these gifts to the believers in diversity, is the Spirit of unity for the sake of the witness of the church to God. As the Spirit gives different gifts for the upbuilding of the community, this becomes a witness in the world, if believers use the gifts which they received for the purpose that the Spirit had intended. For in the world people most often do things just for their own benefit.

The purpose of diversity and of the gifts is the upbuilding and growth of the church. Berkhof (1979:407) describes the growth of the church as twofold, namely extensive and intensive. Extensively, the church must grow and expand to the ends of the earth. This is done through the proclamation

of the gospel to the people. The church must also grow intensively in order to reflect its own Lord. The faith of the members must develop and grow to maturity so that the life of Christ is reflected in the life of the church particularly in unity between Christ and the church.

2.3.2 Membership through baptism

Baptism will be discussed as adult and infant baptism.

2.3.2.1 Adult baptism

Baptism is the sign of God's covenant with his people. Kūng (1967:204-205) states that the roots of Christian baptism lie in the Judaic sphere, particularly the baptism of John. John's baptism is conditioned by eschatological expectation of the coming of a Messiah and the creation of a pure people of God. His baptism is connected with repentance and forgiveness of sins upon those to be baptised. Baptism happens once in one's life.

Kūng says that Jesus was baptised by John to approve this baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins and to accept it. He (1967:206) goes on to say that as the church baptises, it does that in memory of John's baptism and in

memory of Jesus himself who approved and accepted it. Easter gave this baptism a completely new meaning, for Jesus now is the risen Messiah and Lord. Eschatological salvation has become a reality through the death and the resurrection of Jesus. So repentance must now mean a turning to Christ; and the forgiveness of sins reveal that Christ has now the authority to do this; for God through Christ has given the human being the promised salvation, has created the new eschatological community of salvation, and has bestowed his Holy Spirit on it. Baptism was therefore originally done in the name of Jesus Christ.

Baptism administered in the name of Jesus distinguishes the baptism of the Christian community from the baptism of John, or Jewish baptism of the proselytes. Küng (1967:206) stresses that by being baptised in the name of Jesus, a person becomes the property of the risen Lord, and has a share in him, in his life, his Spirit, his sonship of God. The Trinitarian formula reported only by Matthew (28:19) is an expansion of the true content of the Christological formula. Ladd (1974: 349) confirms this view when he says that the church welcomed into its fellowship all who accepted the proclamation of Jesus as Messiah, repented and received water baptism. Some years ago, a wave of baptising in the name of Jesus alone swept some parts of Malawi, especially in Secondary Schools and University Colleges. Christians

baptised their fellow Christians regardless whether one was baptised or not. This teaching and practice disturbed the church. However, the churches united together and preached the message that baptism is done in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18-20), and it is done by the ordained ministers only. Consequently, those who had been misled returned to the truth, and they were accepted back into the church fellowship.

Küng (1967:206) continues to say that the young community baptises according to the Lord's intentions, in fulfilment of his will and in response to his word; it baptises in his name, in his authority and according to his command. Küng mentions important points here which are related to baptism. According to him, firstly, baptism is done according to the Lord's will, intentions and command. The Lord's will is that those who hear and accept or believe in the gospel should enter into the covenant relationship with God. In this covenant relationship, God promises to keep, protect and bless his people, while the people are obliged to trust and obey God. Secondly, the church baptises the believers in response to the Lord's command. The responsibility of the church to the Lord is obedience to the Lord's commands because the church is established to serve the Lord. Thirdly, baptism is done with the Lord's authority. The Lord Jesus Christ who is the Head of the church authorises the

church to administer baptism. The authority of the church to baptise is from the Lord and it depends upon the obedience to the Lord. Since baptism is based upon the Word of the Lord and is done according to this Word, the community which baptises is founded on the Word of God.

Küng (1957:209) also says that the believer becomes a member of the community through baptism. He is baptised in the presence of the community and for the community (see also G D Younger 1983:239-240). In order to enter this community, there must be true decision. True person's decision to enter the community must be a free decision in faith. But this action is only possible in response to God's call. Küng emphasises that the person who freely offers himself for baptism has been drawn and is inspired by God's grace. The believer is therefore made a member of the community, and is to witness together with the whole community of the believers, which is the body of Christ. This community's foundation for its way of life is based not on the principles of the world, but on him who is the living Lord. Küng (1967: 207) points out that in Jesus the reign of God has already begun, in him had been given the call to a radical decision of faith in God and his reign; in him God's reign, God's challenge, God's will, God's Word, and hence God himself has been revealed. Baptism is meaningful when baptism and repentance, baptism and faith go together. Since baptism is

a sign of the covenant with God, since it is administered openly and publicly, it is part of the work of God through the community (see also J La Grand 1989:122-123).

2.3.2.2 Infant baptism

Infant baptism is equally important in the life of the church as adult baptism. Murray (1952:48) describes baptism as the sign and seal of membership in Christ's body which is the church. The argument for infant baptism is that God deals with his elect through a covenant; the infants of the believers are embraced with their believing parents in this covenant, and this applies to both the OT and the NT (Kingdon 1973:5). According to Kingdon concerning infant baptism, first, God deals with his people through covenant, second, believers' children are included together with their parents, and third, this is seen both in the OT and NT. Murray states that in God's covenant with Abraham, Abraham's children were included in that covenant; and circumcision was its sign and seal. That is why all men including children, were circumcised among the people of Israel. Male children were circumcised eight days after birth.

Since the OT covenant included the children, Berkouwer (1969:173) says that this is why we receive such strong impression of continuity between the Old and the New covenant.

concerning the place of children in the covenant of God. According to Berkouwer, the grace of the New Covenant is no less than that of the Old Covenant because God promises to be the God of his people and of their children (Rev 21.7). In describing the children of the believers, Jesus regards them as belonging to the Kingdom of God. This implicitly means that these children belong to the church (Murray 1952:56). In Eph 6:1, 4 and Col 3:20-21, Paul included the children of the believers in his address to the communities of the believers. For this reason, Murray argues that the children of the believers should be baptised. The ground of this baptism is the divine institution. It is therefore concluded that infant baptism shows that the covenant starts from and is initiated by God who promises to be the God of the believers and of their children. As God freely and mercifully offers us his grace, we must accept it through faith in order to enter into covenant relationship with him through Jesus Christ.

2.3.3 The relationship between the Head and the Body

When we speak of the body of Christ, we at the same time think of the Head, for we cannot speak of the body without thinking of the Head. Ridderbos (1975:378) clearly states that the relationship of the body with the Head emerges clearly in Ephesians and Colossians where Christ's position

of authority as the exalted Lord receives particular emphasis (see also A Perriman 1990:135-142). Christ is here repeatedly called the Head. As the one who has been invested by God with all power and who is the Head of all things, he has been given to the church, which is his body (Eph 4:8ff). The idea of the body is related to the gifts. Berkhof (1979:400) mentions spiritual gifts given to members. But he says that these gifts are given to the members of the body by the Holy Spirit, while Ridderbos says that they are given by the Lord Jesus. The interpretation of this could be that the Lord Jesus Christ gives these gifts to the members through the Holy Spirit. So it seems there is no contradiction between them. The purpose of the gifts is to build up the body of Christ (Eph 4:12 and 16). Ridderbos emphasises that this spiritual upbuilding must bring the church to maturity as it is identified with a person or a new man. Col 2:19 says that the body draws its divine growth from Christ who is its Head. He (1975:375) also says "what is in Christ, is more and more to become". This emphasises that the church is not yet what it should be. Being prepared and continuously busy to be transformed in the body of Christ as it ought to be is part of its witness in the world. But the world is often totally satisfied with what it does; the church continuously struggles to be what it is in Christ.

Ridderbos (1975:379) says that the idea of the head-body relationship is developed in Eph 5:22-23. This relationship is the relationship of husband and wife, where the husband is regarded as the head and the wife as the body. This image refers to the relationship of Christ and the church where Christ is the Head and the church is the body of Christ. The origin of this relationship between Christ and the church is in what Christ once did for the church in saving it. Christ is the Head of the church and the Saviour of his body. As the husband loves his wife, so too Christ loves his body and his love is shown by dying for it. The relationship of Christ and the church demonstrates how deep the unity is between Christ and the church, and it also shows the close spiritual communion there is between the members. This deep unity between Christ and the church, and close spiritual fellowship of the members should be a real witness for God in the world. If one has in mind what Ridderbos says about the church and does not see the above relationship with Christ, the church has often a blurred picture of the real church. It is often difficult for the world to see the body of Christ when it is looking at the church.

Since Christ functions as the Head of the church, his part is the most prominent part of the body. Ridderbos (1975:381) says when Christ is described as the Head of the body. Headship therefore points to a position of authority. This

position of authority of Christ arises from the very specific and unique character that he is the risen Lord. The church has its origin in Christ, and therefore it is dependent on him as the one who has prepared the way for it and to whom it owes its existence. Ridderbos (1975:382) further states that Head not only points to superiority, control and rule, but it first of all points to a relationship of beginning which is determinative for the whole of continuing existence. This same relationship exists between Christ and all things. All things, from the beginning, have been comprehended and have their subsistence in him as the First-born of every creature. Head therefore is in the closest connection with origin. This implies that Christ is the Beginning and the First-born of all things in general and of the church in particular.

Heyns (1980:52-53) describes the Headship of Christ as the Saviour, the Head, the Mediator and the Perfecter of his church.

2.3.3.1 The Saviour

Jesus Christ is the Saviour of his body. Heyns (1980:52) says that Christ had to redeem his body in order to make it his own body. He is man's Saviour (Mt 1:21). The church receives its life from Christ who was crucified, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. Therefore the church

finds its life in Christ's death and resurrection. This is the reason for celebrating holy communion to recall its origin and its source of life. The salvation of the church bears witness to the Lord Jesus Christ.

2.3.3.2 The Head

Christ is the Head of his body which is the church (Eph 1:22; 4:5; Col 1:18). Heyns (1980:52) describes Christ (the Head) as the exalted Lord and King of the church. He exercises his "dominion over his body, directly through his Word and Spirit, and indirectly through the work of his servants, ...". The obedience of the church to the Lord Jesus Christ witnesses to the authority of Christ over his body.

2.3.3.3. The Mediator

Jesus Christ is the Mediator of his body with the Father. Heyns (1980:52) states that this "exalted Christ continues to minister to his people as their advocate with the Father". He intercedes for his community which still falls into sin. Because of his intercession and mediation, the Father accepts the church, and always reveals himself as merciful and the One who desires to bless and give his salvation to his people. Since Christ has fulfilled the requirements of God's righteousness, he has the right to appear before the Father's

judgment-seat as our Mediator. The mediation of Christ witnesses to the safety and the security of his body.

2.3.3.4 The Perfecter

Heyns (1980:53) describes Christ as the Perfecter of his body. Since he has brought his body into being, Christ continues to support and rule over his church to the end. He continues to impart the faith which he has imparted to it until that faith has obtained its fullness. Christ leads his church on to the fulfilment of the intention which he has for it; "he awakens and maintains within it a passionate anticipation of the future". The Lord Jesus Christ sanctifies the church as it draws towards consummation.

In conclusion the body of Christ is the creation of the Lord Jesus Christ. The purpose of this creation is deep unity between Christ and his body, and the fellowship between the members. This body in its diversity and unity has to bear witness in the world to the Lord Jesus who is the Head of the body through its communion with him as it will be discussed in the next chapter.

3. COMMUNITY AS THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

Community, as people of God, was discussed in the previous chapter where the community was more from God's side. Topics like body of Christ, the Head of the body, election and covenant were discussed. Here, in this chapter where community as the communion of Saints will be discussed, the emphasis will be on the believers, that is more from man's side. In both cases it should be noted that the existence of the community is because of God's Acts in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit and man's response to it.

The term communion is coming from the Latin word *communio*, and the Greek word *koinonia* which means fellowship. Sabothoma (1990:63) says that the meaning of this word is more or less participation in something, for example in Christ, and the bond between the participants. The idea of participation and that of the subsequent fellowship of the participants are inseparable (see Barth 1958:641-643). Participation and the bond between the participants are the basis of the communion of the believers (see also Dulles 1988:49-50). Communion of the believers as it is discussed here is limited to prayer, worship and the Lord's Supper. Kling (1967:84) says that the congregation is not formed "once and for all" but it is the people that come together continuously, "in particular for the purpose of worshipping".

In this chapter the focus will be on the worshipping of the congregating community. Prayer will be treated separately because it is one activity of the believer which has a very special focus on the believer, his dependence and worship of God.

3.1 Communion through prayer

Prayer is communion between God and human being. It will be shown that this communication is the means of communion of the believers and therefore relevant to this discussion.

Nürnbergger (1984:279) states that a human being by nature is not open to God because of his sinful nature. When he is open to respond to God, this is the work of the Holy Spirit through God's Word. The Holy Spirit bit by bit, dismantles the fortifications which the sin of man has built up against God. The cramp is taken away by the constant impact of the Word of God. Man then becomes able to face God, to listen to his address, and to respond to what God has to say to him. Balthasar (1961:27) has the same opinion. He confirms this by saying that since God himself has made us to listen to his Word, he must have endowed us with the ability to do so. He continues to say that the person who believes, who declares himself a believer, proclaims that he is ready to hear the Word of God.

Mürnberger further says that this opening up is the receptive form of prayer. Man realises that God in his call has laid claim to his life. He is led to accept the offer of a new life in Christ with gratitude. He allows the Holy Spirit to loosen one fetter of his spiritual enslavements after the other. Man marvels at the possibility of participating in God's own self-giving and creative love. He discovers to his surprise that the future of God is open to him so that all fear is unnecessary. He also (1984:280) points out that as the Holy Spirit opens man up for God, as Christ's new life takes over in him, all his faculties are awakened and involved in the dynamics of this life. Prayer therefore becomes active in his life.

Rahner discusses the importance of open-heartedness to God. He (1958:20) says that once we have opened our hearts, we no longer seek to escape from ourselves; and where we formerly experienced an aridity empty of God, we now feel the joy of his presence. The feeling of the presence of God and the joy of his presence encourages us to approach God in prayer. In the depth of our heart, we find the courage to say, 'our Father'. The courage to address God is derived from our union with Jesus Christ. Rahner continues to say that as God made man, Christ adopted us as his brothers and co-heirs so that we may realise the full significance of that adoption. Christ teaches us to join him in saying, our Father.

Incarnation therefore is our great source of inspiration in prayer.

Prayer is defined as the communion between God and the believer (Claim 1966:103). Our prayer must be inspired by the Holy Spirit. Rahner (1958:28) maintains that the Holy Spirit dwelling within us is the source of our prayer. He works in us and for us, and he inspires us when we are engaged in prayer. Since the Spirit of God prays in us, this is the source of the confidence which enables us to pray. Prayer in the life of the believer is possible through God who brings man back to himself through Jesus Christ and helps him to speak to him through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit links the believer with the church so that he becomes part of the church and participates in the corporate worship of the church, that is corporate communion with God.

Prayer has different aspects:

3.1.1 Prayer of praise

According to Nürnberger, God's call to join him in his authority and love evokes the praise of man. This praise comes about because of overwhelming magnitude of God's Lordship which managed to become insignificant and slave-like in Christ in order to save man. Man adores God's power,

God's love, and God's readiness to let him participate in his power of love. Baughen supports Nürnbergger on this point. He (1981:41) states that praise of God is also related to his worship. Worship is giving God the glory and honour which is due to him. At the same time it is an expression of our dependence on him and our submission to him as Lord. Nürnbergger says that as one praises God, one becomes aware that God is in charge of one's reality, whether it is a pleasant or an unpleasant experience thereof. Praise proclaims the Lordship of Christ over all aspects of experienced reality.

According to Nürnbergger, it is imperative for man to praise God because of his greatness and love for man. God humbled himself and became man in Jesus Christ for the purpose of saving man and letting him participate in God's life. The Christian community praises God particularly for the salvation given to the world through Jesus, for the community's experience of this salvation and for the presence of God in the community because of the salvation. Praise of the community is closely related with gratitude.

3.1.2 Prayer of gratitude

Gratitude is an attitude of thankfulness for love expressed in giving, helping, supporting, etc. Nürnbergger (1984:219)

says that God's gift of unconditional acceptance of man evokes man's gratitude and thankfulness. He says gratitude is receptive. Man has to accept and receive God's gift and love with a thankful heart. The greatest gift that God has given, is his Son Jesus Christ. He stresses that man should claim the sonship of God and should stand before him claiming his birthright. God wants the Christians to become really serious about his promises which he has given to his children. As the individual believer should claim his birthright, so too the community as a whole should do the same in their prayers before God. The community has the right to do so because of the relationship with Jesus Christ who is the Head of the body. God's love, holiness and mercy in Jesus Christ should also create the spirit of penitence in the life of the community.

3.1.3 Prayer of penitence

The holiness of God evokes his judgment, and this judgment arouses the penitence of man. The community allows the bright light of truth to shine into all corners of its life and world. All thoughts, words and deeds of the community, all its part decisions and events are exposed to God's holiness. As a result, all autonomy and secret revolt are surrendered to God in penitence (Nürnberg 1984:260).

Lee (1980:129) describes penitence as an inner attitude, a commitment to examine one's own inner motives and intentions, and bringing them into consciousness, and to acknowledge them before God. Such inner attitude desires the assurance of God's forgiveness and reconciliation. Dobson (1941:45) says, "The heart cries out for the assurance of reconciliation with God, a removal of the barrier and a healing of the pain that sin creates". Nürnberger also points out that the Christian believes that God freely justifies the person who turns to him through faith in Christ, confessing his sins. Penitence is a constant attitude of turning to God in trust, and of humbly accepting his forgiveness. Forgiveness is a free gift from God (see also Rahner 1958:83). The heart of the gospel is that God in Christ has forgiven us our sins, has restored us to fellowship, and has brought us into his Kingdom (see Spykman 1969:117).

It is concluded that God's holiness and judgment lead the community to penitent life caused by the Holy Spirit. The purpose of this penitence is God's forgiveness, reconciliation and fellowship with God, so that the community is able to pray for itself in its needs and for others.

3.1.4 Prayer of petition and intercession

The community of the believers has the task of praying on behalf of the world in its need. As prayer is motivated by the Holy Spirit, Nürnberger says the Holy Spirit brings prayer into action, and that it may be dangerous to pray for others, because God may send the one praying to do that for them. The church must be prepared to follow God's guidance and do his will.

Nürnberger also states that prayer is a stubborn struggle with God on the basis of his own word. Jesus had to struggle for his authority and power all the time; and that was the secret of his life. That is why Jesus advised his followers to ask and he promised to give them what they asked. This advice, Nürnberger says, was based on his own experience. Through prayer man can be freed from spiritual powers, from social norms and values which may cause him to suffer, from ideologies and enemies (see also Jackson 1968:112, 116). The prayer that constantly reminds God of his promises, and which struggles with him, witnesses to the faith of the community. This is true of the prayer of intercession.

The church is called to intercede for the world. It acts on behalf of the world, performing a task which the world itself does not perform. The church makes an appeal to God, who

loves the world and sent his Son to save it. It asks for the advance of the gospel, for the work of the Spirit in the hearts of the people, for the improvement of evil situations, for the settlement of conflicts, for the removal of such evils as oppression, war, for the guidance of the rulers of this world and those who are responsible for political, social, economic decisions, for peace and prosperity. The church also prays for the believers so that they may faithfully follow the Lord Jesus Christ (RES 1980:21). Supporting this view, Nürnberger discusses how God involves man. God's involvement of man in the dynamics of his love evokes man's intercession. Intercession is asking God's permission to become active where help is needed. The intercessor asks God to come into the situation that needs his help (Nürnberger 1984:282). Intercession is a conscious attempt to get rid of the burdens of other people such as obstacles, dangers, and frustrations. God's power goes beyond our participation in the situation. Where we are helpless, we should entrust ourselves and our concerns to his care, which is not terminated even by death.

Murray describes the power of prayer, particularly the united prayer. He (1983:13) says, "Although Jesus has taught us that the meaning of prayer is personal and individual contact with God, Jesus has also taught us that prayer is of public and united prayer". Jesus gives a very special promise for

the united prayer of people who agree in what they ask for. Jackson (1968:156) supports this idea and says, "We pray to be used to fulfill God's will through a power that is operative from person to person". Murray continues to say that the bond that unites a man to his fellow men is that which unites him to God. That is why God is addressed as our Father. Murray (1983:14) states that the marks of the true united prayer are agreement on the thing to pray for, gathering together and securing a special answer. The agreement must be in Spirit and in truth; and the gathering should be in the name of Jesus. In the unity of faith and of love and of the Spirit, the power of the name and the presence of Jesus acts more freely and the answer comes as expected (Murray 1983:15). Realising the importance of united prayer, Paul asked the churches of Rome, Corinth, Ephesus and Thessalonica to pray for him. Jackson agrees with Murray on this point. He also (1968:120) says that the praying church becomes a different church. The church that develops groups of people dedicated to the discipline of prayer takes on a new vitality. The people in these groups see the marks of the power that the prayer attitude has released. From what Murray has said, it is concluded that the united prayer is a proof of the believers' unity and faith in Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, it has been shown in this discussion that prayer is part of the communion between God and the believer, and between God and the church. God's faithfulness is shown in the work of the Holy Spirit who inspires the church to pray, and in the answered prayers of the church. Constant prayer life of the church is a vital part of the church's worship. It has been shown that the whole life of the Christian community comes through prayer which includes the acceptance of God's gifts, the opening of the believers life before God, the worship of the believer, the focus on personal needs and those of the world. Prayer puts the believers in action in their relationship with God, towards each other in the Christian community, and towards the whole of God's creation. The community's response to God's Word that addresses it, is indispensable for the community to be the Christian community. Therefore the witness of this community which calls itself Christian, is bound up with its life of prayer. The manner it prays and what it prays for will have a direct bearing on its witness in the world.

Communion through worship will be discussed in the next section.

3.2 Communion through worship

Prayer as part of the community's worship was discussed separately above. Communion through worship will be discussed in this section; and since worship has a central role in the life of the community, it includes prayer and the Lord's Supper. This worship is corporate communion between God and his people.

Watson (1982:179) says, "Worship means to give someone the honour or worth that is due to his name". Thus when the church worships God, it gives him the honour that is due to him. The reasons for this were discussed previously in chapters 1 and 2. It all boils down to the fact that the church owes its existence to God's act of grace in which he called it into fellowship with his Son through the Holy Spirit. Because of this act of grace, the community must give honour to God through its worship. The word worship as it comes from the Hebrew word means first to bow down, to prostrate before God as a sign of profound respect and humility; second it means to serve God. According to Watson, true worship involves praising God with lips and serving him with lives. Worship of God therefore is total response to the total giving of God in his love to us (1982:180-182).

Dobson has the same opinion. He (1941:29) describes worship as man's response to God. Worship begins in man's consciousness of the existence and unseen presence of God who transcends man himself. He (1941:31) also says that worship in the full meaning of the word is the acknowledgement by the appropriate words and acts of the worth-ship of God. It is the aspiration and intention, the attitude and action by which a realised relationship with God is sought, found and expressed (see also Garrett 1961:4). Inward compulsion to worship God is itself an evidence of the reality of God (Dobson 1941:32).

Christian worship has developed out of a long experience of God. It witnesses to the constant and various dealings of God with men in all their adversity (Dobson 1941:33). In worship, there is profound apprehension of the nature and character of God. One of the characters of God is his holiness. The essence of God's holiness which separates and differentiates him from man is his righteousness. What broke fellowship between God and man is man's sin which was an offence before the righteous God. So the greatest need of human beings is deliverance from the evil which separates them from God. This involves the penitence of men and the pardon of God (Dobson 291:35). Dobson describes worship as man's acknowledgement of God's redemption and salvation which God has effected and has given to man. It confesses the

situation in which we find ourselves in consequence of God's action in Christ. It witnesses to an experience of God's gracious dealing with man. For redemption is an act in time and a continuous experience of the work of God through Christ and the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son. Christian worship realises the gracious and redemptive action of God and communion with him (Dobson 1941:39, 40). According to Dobson, the basis or the centre of Christian worship is the act of God, his salvation through Jesus Christ. The Christians who have been graciously saved come together to worship God as they acknowledge and celebrate their salvation.

Christian worship is articulated and corporate witness and response of people to all that God proves himself to be to them through Christ (Dobson 1941:42). Cully (1963:11) describes worship as central in the Christian community, and participation in congregational worship as one of the marks of the Christian person. Worship follows a liturgy which means common work and suggests an act in which all present are engaged; church service suggests mutual action.

According to Cully (1963:12), the heart of the service is the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ (Mt 18:20). Christians gather together to give the honour and to worship the Lord (Watson) who is the Saviour and the Lord, and to respond to

him. This gathering indicates the Christians' commitment to him and preparedness to serve him as their Lord.

Barth regards worship as a responsibility. The church's responsibility is to worship God who has commanded his people to keep his day holy, a day of worship. God's people in this worship are to confess God as their God, in their hearts and with their mouths, and they come to him with their requests. In order to do this, Christians have to limit their activities such as their own daily work, undertakings, work for their livelihood and service of the community. On the day of worship, they must rest and have temporal pause to reflect on God and his work and to participate consciously in the salvation which God has provided through Christ. Christians should worship God freely and joyfully (1961:47-72).

Baughen (1981:42-45) describes how people should worship God. Since God is Spirit, those who worship him should worship him in Spirit, in mind and in body. These three areas should be involved in the worship of God. The Spiritual worship is opened up by the Holy Spirit. And therefore, the worshippers should be indwelt by him who would inspire, enlighten and empower them from within. Worship must include the submission of worshippers' minds to God. Open mind is essential in the worship of God. Besides this, the body must

also be submitted to God. Submission of the body is submission, dedication and surrender of your life to God. It is preparedness to obey God, to put oneself at God's disposal. Complete surrender of the worshipper to God indicates witness to him.

Under the heading worship, I shall discuss five different aspects of worship namely prayer, singing, confession of faith, offering and preaching of the Word. Worship here contains the elements of a worship service. But it should also be acted out in life. Words and actions in the church service, and in the life of the Christians are the church's witness in the world. Worship is a display of faith in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

3.2.1 Prayer

Martin (1964:29) describes the Lord's promise to be present with his people who come together in prayer as vital source of the power of prayer. The people who are gathered in his name are assured of the Lord's living presence with them. This is true in Sunday worship and whenever the church meets in accordance with the will of Christ (1 Cor 5:4). Dobson (1941:51) says that prayer is a response to God's waiting readiness to bless his people. In prayer, people realise that intimate personal fellowship which involves a community

of will between God and themselves is a core of spiritual experience (Dobson 1941:52; cf K Barth 1961:87-115).

By prayer, people grow in gracious relationship with God and know him as their Father, and they find that there is peace in his will. Prayer is the vital breath of worship, and it is the focus of congregational worship.

3.2.2 Singing

Martin (1964:40) states that the church is cradled in Judaism and borrows many of its forms of worship from the Temple and Synagogue worship. The early church had its services in the Temple and Synagogue before Judaism and the church separated. Martin (1964:44-45) states that it is not surprising that Jewish influence found a place in the church's corporate worship, and became a regular feature of its morning worship in the use of hymns and psalms which the early church took over from the Temple and Synagogue worship, or forms which were adapted by the Christians from these sources. Singing is one of the most important parts of the Christian worship. In singing, the believers glorify, praise and confess God on whom they depend and trust. Therefore what Christians are singing, the meaning of the songs is very important. Because what they say in the words of the songs is a response to the word which came from God. It is thus not the singing as such

but what or how they are singing that is important. It is their relationship with God and their witness in the world which is important. A song of joy sung with sad faces is contradiction. Besides this unnecessary repetition which is sometimes found in black churches, can also become meaningless. Thus what Christians sing and how they sing the songs is a witness to the world.

3.2.3 Confession of faith

Believers enter into the church through faith in Jesus Christ. Faith involves knowledge, trust, acceptance of the truth of God and obedience to God. Thus the church is a believing and confessing community. Martin (1964:53) states that the first confession of faith was expressed in short and simple sentences like 'Jesus is the Christ', or 'Jesus Christ is Lord'. This short creed was later expanded to its present form because of some problems which came into the church, for example, the tendency of apostasy and denial of the faith (Martin 1964:56). The creed is a call to the members to stand fast in the faith and to hold firm to its sound teaching found in the Scriptures. Brunner (1936:121) supports Martin on this point. The creed is part of the service of worship, and it is recited corporately in every Sunday worship. This joint confession of faith by the members indicates and testifies common loyalty, commitment and

obedience to God on whom their faith depends. The faith of the confessing members is based on the Scriptures. This whole hearted confession in the church should continuously be reflected in the congregation, and it should be tested by the Scripture. The congregation should continuously struggle to conform its life to the content of the confession, and this confession should be lived out when members leave the worship service. Confession of faith should also be accompanied by the confession of our unfaithfulness. This, as such, is also part of the community's witness in the world, because humankind constantly wants to justify itself. To confess our unfaithfulness is to testify that our faith rests in Christ and not in ourselves.

3.2.4 Offering

Another part of worship is that of offering. Thanksgiving and pledge offerings are part of the worship and an expression of gratitude to God for his goodness. Martin (1964:80) states that man's response to God is found in the offering of himself. According to Martin, man in response to God has to offer to God his heart, his life, his time, his materials, including money. This offering of self, time and possessions as a response of gratitude and thanksgiving are most often reflected in our offering for others - people, God's creation. Thus the offering is not only for human

beings, but also for the living and non-living creatures. This offering of self is done because the Spirit unites the community with the living Christ, who in selfless love offered himself in order that we can expect a new heaven and a new earth. Through their self-offering for God, people, creatures, and the rest of creation, this community witnesses in the world. Giving of money, belongings, their time, their privacy, their abilities, themselves, as a sacrifice to God, is the offering of gratitude which the community is called for by the word. The giving of the offering is an acknowledgement of God as the giver of all the gifts that man receives. This becomes part of the witness to God.

In conclusion, service of the worship is part of the communion of the believers. The church at worship, is the people who believe in God and experience the presence of God among them. In reading the Scriptures and preaching, God speaks to his people, and in prayer, people speak to God. This is a two-way communication between God and his people. The prayers of the believers as individuals or as a community confess that they totally rely on God and that they expect their salvation and that of the world from God. Their help is not from the world or any worldly power, but from the God of the Bible. Thus they witness to God from whom they expect their help, and in whom they find their security. In singing they witness to him to whom their praise and confession belong.

This points to the fact that man should not worship anything worldly or anything in the world, but God. Christians need the Word of God in order to know what God requires them to do. This is seen in the preaching of the Word of God.

3.2.5 The preaching of the Word

The life of the church depends upon the Word of God. Martin (1964:66) emphasises that the chief element in the worship in the Synagogue, was the reading and the exposition of the Law. This is the centre of gravity of the Synagogue's service with the blessings and the prayers gathered around it. This pattern was carried over into Christian services and the early believers gave prominence to the ministry of the Word. Cully (1963:61) stresses the importance of the Word of God in the service of worship (cf F R Anderson 1986:63-74).

In the worship of God, the Bible is read before the people who have come together as a congregation because it is the day of celebrating the resurrection of Christ, and of worshipping God who acts in history. Therefore listening to the Word of God is of vital importance in this worship of God. The people are in the presence of God listening to him. The Bible is heard specifically as the Word through which God is speaking to his people. The reading of the Bible and its exposition has personal meaning to each individual, to each

congregation and to all Christian congregations wherever they are gathered on Sunday. Describing the relationship between the reader of Scriptures and members, Cully (1963:61) says that there comes a sense of personal communication between the one who reads the lesson and those who hear. There is a bond of community among the congregating participants for the Word is addressing all of them. Those who participate in the act of listening and subjecting themselves to the word proclaimed to them, demonstrate in this manner their commitment to God whom they worship.

The reading of the Scriptures is always followed by the exposition of the word. Cully (1963:64) describes the purpose of preaching as to clarify, to explain, to awaken insights, and to make the Biblical Word and message present. Preaching strengthens the responses of the participants, reinforces learning, gives assurance and deepens faith. Protestant worship has laid stress on the sermon as the climax and often the most important part of the service (I V Cully 1963:65). The reading and the preaching of the Word of God bind the believers together as the people of God. The Word of God is the word which should always direct the lives of those who are the Christian community, and also those who are the community at large. When they respond in prayers it is in response to the word and is directed by this word. The service of worship and the songs which they sing as well as

the manner in which they sing them, are a response to the word and are directed by the Word of God. The content of their faith and how they respond and confess their unfaithfulness are directed by the same word. The offerings, which they offer, and the attitude in which this offering is given, are all a response to the Word of God.

In chapter 1 it has been show that this community came into existence because of God's initiative. Through his acts, his Son, and his Spirit he congregates this community. Therefore whatever this community does in response to God's actions of bringing it together, is directed by God's Word. This is also true with the Lord's Supper.

3.2.6 The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is part of the worship of the Christian community. At the Lord's Supper the Christians celebrate the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ on which our salvation depends. It will be shown here that the Lord's Supper indicates New Covenant between God and his people and that it is an expression of mutual love.

3.2.6.1 The Lord's Supper indicating a New Covenant

The Lord's Supper is one of the two sacraments (baptism and Holy Communion) which the Reformed Church recognises and accepts. G C Berkouwer points to the significance of this sacrament. The important thing in the institution of the Lord's Supper, "is the indication of Christ's significant self-surrender". When Christ commands the bread and the wine to be eaten and drunk, bread and wine receive sacramental significance. These two elements represent Christ's body and blood. The blood is the blood of the covenant which is poured out for many. Christ's body and blood are related to his surrender to death. "The Lord's Supper is indeed a matter of the bread of life." There is a "profound connection established between Christ's self-surrender of body and blood and the blessing of his dying". His death brings and gives life eternal. And his blood is the purifying blood. What is important for us is "our communion with the blood of Christ (1 Cor 10:10), which purifies us of all sins" (1 John 1:7), and draws all nations close to God (Eph 2:13). "The New Covenant is realised in this blood". "The blood of Christ, like the cross of Christ, is another graphic expression for the death of Christ in its saving significance" (1969:210-211). According to him, "The New Covenant is realized in His blood". Through self-sacrifice Christ realised the new covenant. He took the sins of the

community upon himself, giving them life. By participating in the meal which signifies his death the community participates in the new covenant. Participation in this new covenant should result in the community living a life of self sacrifice daily.

A Murray emphasises the significance of the Lord's Supper. He says when the Lord gives his body in the form of bread and wine, he gives himself to us and desires that we should participate in his life, death and resurrection. The fellowship of the Lord's Supper is a fellowship of Christ giving himself, and the Christians receiving this gift (1897:64). It is God who comes to give what the community needs; and it is the Redeemer, Jesus Christ at the Table who gives what he has purchased for man. He gives his body and blood, that is he gives himself as a sacrifice for sin. (A Murray 1897:65). Jesus gives his body and blood because he loves man; he desires to redeem and give him eternal life (see also M Marry 1980:76-77 and Wainwright 1971:91-92). Jesus gives himself to man to be the food, the joy, the living power of his life. According to Murray, Man has to respond to Jesus' self-giving. As Jesus gives himself to man, man has to receive and hold him by faith so that Jesus' body becomes his food and life. Murray (1897:66) states that this fact that where God gives, there is power and life, and there is communication and real participation in the life of

the person who receives God's gift. Communication and communion between the Lord and the participant depends upon what God gives, and man receiving the life which the Lord is offering to man. Participating in the covenant is receiving the gift of Christ and there is communion with Christ and with each other.

3.2.6.2 The Lord's Supper as communion of love

Before his crucifixion, the Lord Jesus Christ instituted the Holy communion in order to ensure a constant communion with his own people in future. The participants are invited to a fellowship of love at the Lord's Table, with the one who is love (A Yannoulatos 1983:635-639 cf J LaGrand 1989:123-126). Jesus' love is revealed in his self-offering for the sake of the people of the world. The Lord's Supper is the sacrament of communion of the believers with Christ and with one another. It is impossible to understand the Lord's Supper apart from the communion of the saints, as we confess it in the creed (G C Berkouwer 1969:279). The shared bread is the experience of people as community and the experience of God. It is communion of human and divine (J Stromberg 1983:11). When the believers participate in the Lord's Supper, they profess and declare that they are one by virtue of their common relation to Christ and their fellowship with the Father and his Son (N Macleod 1920:94). The significance of

participating in the Lord's Supper is that the believers witness that they belong to the Lord, in whom they have relationship with God, and with one another, and that their fellowship depends upon their relationship with God who has brought them together in Christ.

Cully describes the meaning of the action of participating at the Lord's Table. Each human action reflects meaning, and participation in the Lord's Supper expresses a meaning and conveys a meaning. There is an action of giving and receiving in the participation; and active participation is demanded of all who are present. The minister takes and breaks bread and gives bread and wine respectively to the participants (Cully 1963:109, 110). In grateful devotion to Christ, the believers accept the elements freely, eat and drink them. These elements signify God's gift of salvation (S McCormick 1952:73). Personal action lies in receiving what the Lord is offering to his people through the elements. Such action and participation indicate self-giving of the Lord Jesus Christ to the believers and the believers receiving the benefits of the Lord's death and resurrection. Self-giving and receiving express communion between Christ and his people. It is at the Lord's Table that fellowship with Christ and with one another is brought into focus. And such fellowship brings joy and strength to the hearts of the believers (cf Charley 1971:20; Higgins 1952:68, 69;

Bickerseth 1822:130-136). When the Lord Jesus Christ is with his people, he blesses them; but sometimes his presence may be judgment in case of disobedience (Israel).

At this point, it is necessary to make a clear distinction between the Reformed view of the Lord's presence at his Table and the Roman Catholic view in which they stress the real presence of Christ in bread and wine (transubstantiation) which we do not accept. The Reformed view is that bread and wine are the signs of the Lord's presence at his Table. The Lord is not physically present but Spiritually present through the Holy Spirit (see also Berkouwer 1969:220). Through faith the believer receives the body and blood of Christ.

This idea is also expressed by Craig. He (1932:112) says, "Communion is presence realised". As the Lord Jesus was physically present with his disciples in the Upper Room, so we can also now enter into fellowship with his spiritual presence for he has promised to be with us. Craig argues that when we speak of the communion, we think of the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ who is with us. It is by his appointment that we meet him at his Table. The Lord Jesus offers himself to us, and when we receive the elements in faith, we are made partakers of his body and blood with all his benefits for our spiritual nourishment, strength and

growth. Participation in the Lord's Supper does not only indicate New Covenant and fellowship between God and his people, but it is also a witness to God because God through Jesus Christ gives himself to the people and the people give themselves to God.

The next chapter is on the community as a witness.

4. COMMUNITY AS A WITNESS

A number of aspects of the church have been discussed up to this point. I have done this because of the following reasons:

- (1) to define the community which witnesses to God;
- (2) to explain the basis on which this community is founded;
- (3) to point out what the relevance of the abovementioned things are for the witness of the church. Therefore in this chapter the main concern is the witness of the church. It will be shown that witness is the supreme task of the church in the world, and that the content of the Christian community's witness does not come from itself, but could only be found in the acts of God and specifically in the life, death and resurrection of

Jesus Christ. Here witness will be discussed from three different angles, namely through the Word, through good works and through the example. Before the threefold witness of the church is discussed, it would be necessary to discuss what witness means and what the content of the witness thereof is. It has already been shown that the witness of the church flows from its being. By being what it ought to be it is witnessing to the world.

4.1 Witness

The word witness according to Kittel (1967:475) is coming from the Greek verb *marturein* which means to be a witness, to come forward as a witness, to bear witness to something. In legal sense this word means witness to facts (Kittel 1967:476), and in general sense it means witness to facts, truths or views (Kittel 1967:477). In this general sense, witness points to the establishment of events or actual relations or facts or experience on the basis of direct personal knowledge (Kittel 1967:478). It also signifies the proclamation of views or truths of which the speaker is convinced. Wigngaards (1979:275) supports Kittel, but he describes knowledge through personal experience as being eyewitness of what happened. He says giving witness to an event "means to testify that one has seen this event, one has

experienced it and is an eye or ear witness of what happened". Abbot-Smith (1921:278) expresses the same opinion. The apostles testified as eye-witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus because they were eye-witnesses what they were testifying can be accepted as trustworthy. Wigngaards (1979:276) describes Christ as the centre of the NT witness. To witness in the NT sense of the word is to witness about Christ. The centre of the community's witness is Christ's life, death and resurrection (Chun Chae - O K 1986:43). To give witness in this sense means to carry forward the witness of the eyewitnesses who saw and heard the risen Christ. In its witness to the world, the Christian community does not have a message of its own, but it can only repeat the message of the eyewitnesses who testified God's acts in Christ with reference to the present situation in which the community is living. Therefore witness through the Word is of vital importance.

4.2 Witness through Word

The church is founded upon the Word of God by the Lord Jesus Christ. This is seen in section 1.4 above where community through the Word of God was discussed. It was shown in this section that communication of the Word was very important for the formation of the community of the believers. The Word of God brings people to God and is the foundation of the

community of the believers (Barth 1963:39). It is its reconciling message which transforms the people into the people of God (D E Costas 1974:67, 69). This word which called the church into being is proclaimed in the meeting of the believers, and this is already a witness. Those who see and hear it, already hear the witness of the church. When the church moves into the world it carries this word with it and proclaims it to the world with speech and actions. The actions of the church will be discussed separately. The church which is renewed and prepared is sent out with the same Word of God to the world to witness to God.

Since the church is concerned with the witness in the world, D Bosch (1980:13-19) describes evangelisation as the core of the Christian mission to the world and the centre of an all-embracing mandate of God to the church. Man's encounter with the Word of God makes him a witness to God in the world. The centre of this witness is Jesus Christ. Chur. Chae - O K (1986:43) emphasises that the centre of the witness of the church is the life, the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is supported by Walls (1987:26-32) who says conviction that Jesus has risen and is Lord, means to share this with others. This is closely related to the sending idea from God. For God sent Christ, and Christ has sent out the church to witness to him. Therefore God calls the church to witness to Christ.

There are three dimensions in which the church's witness is based. These dimensions are God's character, Christ's command and the condition of mankind.

4.2.1 The character of God

God's character demands Christian witness in the world. Kane (1974:116-119) describes the Christian witness as God's work which grows out of his essential character of love and light. God's light stands for his glory, truth and holiness, while his love reveals his unique nature. God loves the sinner, and at the same time, he hates his sin. God's love makes it possible for the repentant sinner to be saved, while his holiness makes it inevitable for the unrepentant sinner to perish. God's love is manifested in Jesus Christ his Son who came, died and rose so that the sinner may be saved. A church which knows God in his love and holiness cannot do anything else but to proclaim Him to the world. The sinner will know the love of God through the witness of the church (see also Heyns 1980:62-63; Kennedy 1970:2-4).

4.2.2 The command and commission of Christ

The church must witness in the world because it is commissioned by the Lord Jesus Christ to do so. According to Kane (1974:110-124), the great commission which is recorded

in the gospels is summed up in three words, namely, come, follow and go. These words, Kana says, are part of the great commission. The first word 'come' is an invitation. All the believers are and have been invited to come to Jesus Christ. In section 1.3 above where election of the community is discussed, van Wyk (1984:89) says that our election is completed in calling. God's decision to elect is completed in his decision to call us through the gospel; and Christ completes our election by calling us powerfully by his Word and Spirit making us truly part of him and of his church (see also Berkouwer (1956:89-122)). Therefore, those who have responded to this gracious call have found what Christ promises, that is forgiveness, salvation, life, etc.

The second word 'follow' refers to those who believe. Having come to Christ, a person now becomes a believer and follower of Christ, a member of the community of the believers, a disciple of Christ. To be a disciple of Christ means to learn from him, to be led by him, to obey his commands.

The third word 'go' is a command or commission. This command is not only for the cultivation of believer's own spiritual life, but mainly for others. Having followed Christ, the believer is now sent into the world with the saving gospel of Jesus Christ, as a witness to the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which is the foundation of

the salvation from sin. This is supported by D Howard (1976:66-68) who says that the true disciple of Jesus Christ will have the same compassion for the world that Jesus had. This is one of the things which he learns from his Teacher and Master. The Lord Jesus Christ commands his disciples to go into the world and make disciples of all the nations (Mt 28:18-20). The follower of Christ is sent into the world with the message of God's love, of Christ's death and resurrection, and of salvation which is an accomplished fact (cf Verkuy1 1978:221). According to Kane, one cannot be sent out to witness to Christ without being called and saved by Christ. The power or authority of witnessing is based on the call, saved life and commission.

The Christian community through the Holy Spirit is sent into the world with a definite task of witnessing to God because it exists for God and for the world. The community is given this task by the Lord Jesus Christ. Barth (1962:796) states that the Christian community is sent out to call the people to the community in order for the Lord Jesus Christ to make them his people, his body and members of this body (2.3 above). Since Christ has made himself known to the community, he sends it to the world to confess him to the people, so that these people may know and believe him (Acts 1.8). Barth (1962:798) says that Jesus Christ has signified God as the Friend, the Helper, the Guarantor and the Saviour

who wants to redeem people from their ruined condition. He is effective justification and sanctification of sinful human beings; he brought the Kingdom of God, which invaded torn human suffering which was caused by sin; he is the gift of what it has not merited, that is a human being's liberation is by the free love, by the free grace and by the free mercy of God. As God sent Christ to bring His Kingdom into this world and as Christ, through free love and mercy came to liberate, in the same manner Christ sent his church into the world to erect signs of the Kingdom of God and to bring liberation through the love and mercy of God. This is what the spirit creates in the community, that is to continue with the mission of Christ.

4.2.3 The condition of humanity

The condition of humanity and the rest of creation since the fall is of disobedience, alienation, rebellion against God, separation from him and of hopelessness because of sin. The greatest need of humanity is salvation in order to find peace with God and to have hope. Kane (1974:124-127) stresses that this is the main reason for the church to proclaim the gospel of salvation to the world because without this there is no salvation and hope for the world (see also Comblin 1977:96-97).

In 1.7.3.4 above, it was discussed that the "reign of God is a saving event for sinners" (Küng 1967:100). This task of preaching the reign of God is given to the church. But when the church is proclaiming it, it must not distance or separate itself from the world. The church is in the world and is composed of sinful people. For this reason "it can never assume that unholy, godless and evil things exist only outside itself". Therefore the church is not perfect. The church which is aware of its unworthiness before God is given "the grace of holiness and righteousness which it cannot create for itself". So when the church is proclaiming the message of salvation, it must remember that it is also in need of salvation and that it must humble itself in its proclamation. Küng (1967:1010) says, "If the church, as the fellowship of those who are called to righteousness and holiness, remains aware of its guilt and sin, then it may live in joyful assurance of forgiveness, then in the dawning reign of God its unholy members will be saints, ...". Therefore the church should discharge its task of proclaiming the reign of God with humble and obedient Spirit to the will of God.

A Boesak (1983:535-538) also discusses the urgency of the task of the church in its witness in the world. He describes Jesus Christ as the life of the world. Christ's concern is not only for the church, but also for the world. In his

life, death and resurrection lies the future of the church and of the world. Boesak says, "Therefore the church must proclaim clearly and unequivocally that Jesus Christ came to give meaningful life to the world so that all of human history, all human activity can be renewed and liberated from death and destruction". The life of the world, the destruction of this world and the future of this world are the concern of the church. The church has responsibility for this world because it is God's world. What Boesak intends to say is that the church needs to take its task seriously and to witness faithfully to the Lord Jesus Christ who is the life and the future of the world. This witness for Christ includes witness against all forms of sin, including social injustices.

Gilliland (1983:187-188) discusses the power which enables the church to fulfil its task in the world. This power is of the Holy Spirit (1.6). The first disciples of Jesus Christ responded to the great commission after they had received the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit given to the church who empowers the church to witness to Christ faithfully and successfully. According to Gilliland, the obligation to witness to Christ depends upon the Spirit of Christ. The Holy Spirit is given to the church to help it in its life and obligation. Witness to Christ through the Holy Spirit is part of the life of the church and its supreme task in the

world. The church is for the world which is the object of God's love.

There are important factors related to the church which help the church in its task of witnessing to Christ in the world. These factors are the importance of the historical foundations of the Christian faith, the importance of Christian witness in a questioning age, the importance of witness to convictions, and the importance of integrity in Christian witness.

4.2.3.1 The importance of the historical foundations of the Christian faith

Christian faith has its own historical foundations in the life, death and resurrection of Christ (1.7.1 above). Tritos (1983:135) states that the events in the life of Jesus Christ are the foundations of the Christian faith and witness. The apostles acted as eye witnesses of the whole public ministry of Jesus Christ. They spoke what they had actually seen and heard from the baptism of John right through the Lord's ascension. They could particularly certify that Jesus who had been crucified on the cross, had been raised from the dead. And they emphatically declared that they were witnesses of the risen Lord who is alive. Because of this truth and experience, no one was able to stop or refrain them

from speaking the things which they had personally seen and heard concerning Jesus Christ. Trites (1983:136-137) describes the value attached by the NT to eyewitnesses upon the historical facts of the life, the death and the resurrection of Jesus as the cornerstone of the Christian faith and witness (see also Peters 1981:207, 215-216 and Berkouwer 1956:139). Since the Christian faith is based on the events in the life of Christ, the church is established on a foundation which is its basis in this modern age of many problems and questions.

4.2.3.2 The importance of Christian witness in a questioning age

The age in which we are living is the age of many problems facing the world. Some of these problems are that of the economy, war, poverty, overpopulation, hunger, mass destructive weapons, fear, mistrust and others. Many people ask various questions concerning the hope of the future of the world, and debates and discussions are being held on various and critical issues in order to find solutions. Trites (1983:138) says that these problems and questions give an opportunity to the Christians to give reasons for the hope they have for the future. They also offer unparalleled opportunities for the Christian gospel and an unending challenge to sincere Christian witness in the world.

In chapter 1.7.3 above, the church in the service of the Kingdom of God was discussed. This service of God's Kingdom in the world is relevant to this situation. Describing the service of the church, Van der Merwe says that when Jesus appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, he intended to create an unshakable faith in him and to prepare and commission them to go into the world through the Holy Spirit to proclaim him and his Kingdom, his crucifixion and resurrection, his victory and the ultimate coming of the Kingdom of God upon the earth (1985:16-17). The church is sent to this world of many problems and questions so that it may proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

The fact that God is God and King of the whole world reveals the relevance of the witness of the church in the world. Chun Chae - O K (1986:44) describes this witness as centred in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The cross and the suffering of Jesus Christ have far reaching effects for all men, and for all ages. Jesus Christ through his death and resurrection purchased salvation which is freedom for all the people. The church realised this after the command of the Lord Jesus Christ (Mt 28:19). The church today should have the same realisation. Chun Chae - O K (1986:45) says that the death and the resurrection of Christ affect and draw all the people together as they all share in forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with God. He intends to say that all

the people in all ages need God's forgiveness and reconciliation with him. The task of the church in its witness is to direct the world to the Lord Jesus Christ who is the King of peace and hope. The hope of the world lies in an unconditional acceptance of the Kingdom of God through Jesus Christ. Church witness in the world should be done with conviction.

4.2.3.3 The importance of witness to convictions

Nürnberg (1984:142-148) discusses the role of convictions in structures and ultimates which have power over the lives of the people. The question is whether the "convictions cause man to design and implement structures" or whether the "structures generate convictions" (1984:143). If the mind of a man is changed that man changes his environment. This has "a high respect for the dignity and freedom of man". Man is "meant to rule over the world of things, including his own physical needs and mental desires. Thus his convictions, values and norms are of the highest importance" (1984:143). But whatever conviction a man may have, that conviction should be tested by the criterion of Jesus Christ who is the ultimate norm. The right conviction is under and is obedient to the will of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The early Christians were completely convinced and convicted that they belonged to Christ their Master who died, rose and was alive. This conviction gave them authority and courage to witness to Christ without fear. Trites (1983:139-140) describes these Christians as passionately devoted to Christ and his Kingdom. They were ready to witness about their faith in Christ in courts of law, on the streets, in the marketplaces and on the high ways. They felt inward compulsion to speak and bear witness to the Lord their Saviour (see also Hesselgrave 1978:189-192, 199-203). The church today has many challenges such as permissiveness, indifference to moral values, easy acceptance of low standard of life, and others which demand courageous witness. It is not easy in such a situation to be different, to bear witness about one's faith when others mock it and Christian standards are openly despised and discarded (see also Bosch 1980:221-224). However, the people who belong to Christ, Trites says, have the promises of the Lord Jesus Christ who is with them through the Holy Spirit. They rely upon him who equips them to bear witness to him wherever they may be. The Spirit gives them boldness and courage in their witness so that they are able to stand for the Lord (cf Macleod 1920:22 and Lehmann-Habeck 1984:13). If the Christians have solid convictions of the Lord Jesus Christ that he is the Saviour of the world and Lord, they have a story to tell and a witness to share with the whole world today.

In 3.2.3 above, confession of faith was discussed where it was shown that the church is a believing and confessing community. Heyns (1980:153) says in the confession, the church responds to God's revelation and his Word. In this confession, the church declares itself, says where it stands and provides scriptural grounds for why it stands there. Through the confession it also expresses its readiness to accept all the consequences attaching to that confession and to defend its content. Therefore, it is of vital importance for the church to have this conviction of faith in its witness to Christ. This conviction of faith is not only a witness to God by itself, but it also provides a strong foundation for the integrity of the church's witness.

4.2.3.4 The importance of integrity in Christian witness

The integrity in Christian witness is very important for the church. It indicates the church's faithfulness in its obligation to the world. A Trites (1983:141) describes the witness of the apostles who were chosen by God through Christ for that primary role as unique and normative for the Christian community at all times and in all places. If the witness of the church is to be honest, it must be in agreement with the witness of the apostles, for they were the eyewitnesses. The church must guard against departing from the Biblical witness. Honest witness involves presenting

Christ and his gospel in such a way as to bring out the full divine meaning of the life of Christ who is the light of the world. Trites emphatically says, "As faithful witnesses we must ever keep before ourselves and those whom we share our faith the fully rounded, finely balanced, many-sided yet unitary significance of Christ".

Trites also expresses the importance of the life of the witness. He points out that witnesses are called upon to make their lives square with the testimony they give. They must be well spoken of by both outsiders and by fellow believers. An effective witness demands a good name. What Trites says in regard to evangelism is in line with what Bosch says. He (1980:19) emphasises that the person who evangelises the gospel is himself part of the message because the life of the person and the message of the person are inseparable. The church would be credible in its task of witnessing in the world if it is what it says and remains faithful to God who is its origin. The truth of the Word of God should regulate the speech, the actions and the existence of the church in order to witness to Christ effectively. Witness through good works is also included in this.

4.3 Witness through good works

Witness through the Word is the main task of the community of the believers in the world. This has been observed in the previous section where the church is commissioned by the Lord Jesus Christ to proclaim the gospel. The witness of the believers should be in accordance with the commission of Christ and with the Word of God, and it should be part of their lives in the world. In this discussion of the witness through good works, it will be shown that good works are the result of faith, they are an expression of gratitude to God and that they witness to God. A König (1983:190) distinguishes between works of faith and works of the law. Works of the Law are deeds which are performed to obtain merits before God by adhering to the Law; while works of faith are the result of the union between the believer and Christ. It results from the faith of the doer of the deed. As good works are discussed in this section, the discussion is in the latter sense.

Claim (1965:97) describes the purpose of good works in the life of the church. Good works are done by the believers to testify their faith, to thank God and to witness to Jesus Christ.

4.3.1 Faith and good works

Good works testify to the faith of the believers. Faith among other things, such as knowledge and trust, means obedience to God. Faith and obedience are related to the covenant relationship which God makes with his people (see 2.1.2). In this covenant relationship, there is mutual obligation between God and man. God promises to keep, protect and bless man, while man promises to be obedient to God (Ferguson 1988:173). The sign of the covenant relationship of God with a person is baptism. When a believer is baptised, he is obliged to trust and obey God in his life to show his commitment to him and to witness to this relationship with God (see also 2.3.2.1 and Küng 1967:206). Goldsmith (1976:87-88) regards good works as the fruit of the Christian faith, for faith must produce works. Faith without works is dead; and the faith of the believers is made perfect through the actions (James 2:18 and 22). If a believer or unbeliever has no food and if another believer next to him has food and does not help his fellow man in need, his faith is dead because it has no works to express itself through (James 2:15-17). The preaching of the gospel and its outworking in acts of love go together. The balance between the two must always be maintained in order for the witness of the church to be true and credible (cf Oleksa 1990:336-337 and Nicholls 1985:41-82).

4.3.2 Good works as expression of gratitude to God

Good works done in faith are connected to the believers' appreciation and gratitude to God for his grace, particularly for his salvation and benefits which he has given to his people through Jesus Christ. God's desire is the salvation of his people. This is clearly seen in the sending of his Son (John 3:16) and in the sending of the church to the world to proclaim the gospel of salvation (Matthew 28:18-20). The church exists for sinners and people who live without God. The church should serve them and bring the good news to them. The message of the church in the world is the message of forgiveness and salvation (see 1.7.3.4 the reign of God as saving event for sinners). For this reason the saved sinners should express their gratitude to God in deeds. Against this background Claim (1965:97) says that believers, through the power of the Holy Spirit, do good works to thank God.

One form of expressing gratitude to God is the offerings which the believers give in the worship of God (3.2.5 above). According to Martin (1964:78-80), man's response to God's love is found in the offering of himself and what he has. Part of this offering is his possession which should form an integral part of the Christian worship. This offering is done in the spirit of acknowledgement of God as the giver of all the gifts. It has been shown in 3.2.5 that this offering

to God is an offering to his creation, it is a willingness to serve man, living creatures and the rest of creation. And in section 3.1.4 on prayer of intercession, it has been argued that prayer for others includes the willingness to be available to do just that what I ask God to do for others. The prayers of the community demonstrate the willingness of the community to act what they desire for others.

4.3.3 Good works as a witness

Good works play an important role in the community's witness. This will be seen in this section when good works and the gospel, good works in general, and specific example of charity work are discussed.

4.3.3.1 Good works and the gospel

Words and deeds are effective means of witnessing to Christ. Heyns (1980:120) states that the community of the believers finds its concrete expressions of the witness in word and actions. The church is the community of those who serve others; and their service is not restricted to fellow members of the church, but it extends also to those outside it. According to Heyns, the witness of the church is manifested in serving and helping those who have no food, those who are sick, those who are exploited by injustice, those who have no

housing and are poor. To be actively involved with the poor and exploited is an important part of their witness. It is a visible action of the church and a sign of love and care.

Moltmann says that Christians should be involved in the economic, political and cultural crises and problems where there is ruthless self-satisfaction, social injustices, exploitation, suppression, poverty, fear, insecurity, aggression, etc. These Christians especially those who are working as secular professionals are in a position to play a vital role in solving these problems. They can help solve the problems by means of the ethic of solidarity with those who are suffering, by means of the principle of symbiosis with one another, that is, inter-dependent life with one another, by the fellowship of sharing and helping one another so that this can give everyone, collectively and individually a chance of survival. These Christians should strive for equal rights for all, and encourage forms of government which best serve human fellowship, human rights and human dignity because all people are equal before God. All the people are to be treated as human beings, for human life has eternal value because it is loved and accepted by God. In the sight of God, there is no Jew, Greek, man, woman, master, slave, handicapped, etc. What the people need is faith in these crises which means courage to be, and an affirmation of life. They also need power of hope to overcome loss of

courage and to make life possible (1977:164-187). The involvement of Christians in the lives of the less privileged is an important witness to Christ. Moltmann thus sees the witness of the church from a broad perspective. All aspects of human life should be considered and whenever this life is in danger, either in material things, thus physically or emotionally, the church should care for these people. Wherever human rights are violated the church should involve itself. In this respect Moltmann is correct in his understanding of the Kingdom of God.

The view that the church should act on behalf of those who suffer is supported by Bergquist (1986:243-245) who says that the Bible never separates proclamation and service. Word and deed in the NT go hand in hand in the witness to Christ. The early church therefore regarded word and deed as integral part of the witness of the church (see also Biggar 1989:315-317 and Fackre 1975:53-77). RES (1980:49) also regards words and deeds as generally accepted and as comprehensive witness to Christ because these two are inseparable. The preaching of the gospel must be accompanied by a wide range of activities in order to proclaim the gospel as effectively as possible. The witness of the church must find its expression in the actions (cf Guder 1985:51 and Habib 1990:258).

4.3.3.2 Good works in general

The believers' good works point not to the believers themselves as witnesses, but to God who is the source of all good things. Murray (1952:211) considers good works of the believers as "the light that streams out to conquer the surrounding darkness with its ignorance of God and estrangement from him. They bring the lost souls out of darkness into God's light". When Murray uses the word 'souls', he divides man into body and soul which is not acceptable in the Reformed anthropology. Man is a unitary being. As Murray (1952:212-213) continues, he stresses this fact that the believers are placed in the world with the sole purpose of shining in good works in order to win people to God, to serve and to glorify him. Here he focusses on a specific facet of the witness of the church and that is spiritual life of those who are witnessing. This is of prime importance because without this relationship with God the church and humanity are lost. But God's liberative actions include more than the personal and individual life - it is directed to the whole of his creation.

The early Christians understood this point. Watson (1976: 137-138) says that the first century Christians astonished the world by their outstanding generosity, by their practical care for the widows and orphans, the sick and the infirm, by

their loving concern for prisoners, slaves and by their generous hospitality to the Christian travellers. The Christian community became a genuine caring community of love which witnessed to the Lord Jesus Christ (cf Wetmore 1990: 231).

Graham (1965:178) emphasises that the coming of Jesus Christ has changed the conduct of much of the world. Christians have given their lives to help neighbours, to relieve poverty and to care for the sick. "The history of the Christian church through the centuries with its triumph and its failures alike point to the fact that Christ has sensitized the life of the world and Christ has pointed man in a new direction". If the community of the believers is going to touch the people of their communities, it must know their sorrows, feel for them in their temptations and stand with them in their heartbreaks as Jesus Christ identified himself with the people in their situations and needs (see also Zachman 1990: 49-53; Müller 1987:125-126 and Guder 1985:53).

4.3.3.3 Charity work among Mozambiquan refugees in Malawi

The problem of the Mozambiquan refugees in Malawi, as it is the case in other countries surrounding Mozambique, has been a challenge to the witness of the church in Malawi. The Government and the church have joined hands in caring for these refugees materially, physically and spiritually.

4.3.3.3.1 Influx of the refugees

Since the beginning of the war, 80,000 Mozambiquan refugees have taken refuge in Malawi. Most of these refugees came with nothing and some of them even without clothes. Their situation was of desperate need. In this situation the church had to act.

4.3.3.3.2 Accommodation

The refugees have been accommodated in all the three regions of the country. But most of them have been allocated in the centre and in the South of the country. Although these refugees have been accommodated, many of them still need proper shelters.

4.3.3.3.3 Food and clothes

Since the refugees came with nothing, clothes and different kinds of food are regularly supplied to them for their basic needs. Some of them are given pieces of land by their Malawian friends to farm, if land is available, so that they can help themselves.

4.3.3.3.4 Medical services

Medical services are offered freely to these refugees in all the hospitals. Many clinics at all the camps have also been established so that those who are far away from the hospitals can be helped there in minor problems.

4.3.3.3.5 Water supply

In most of the camps, adequate water supply is available. Water has been supplied by means of boreholes and pumps so that enough water for the refugees is available.

4.3.3.3.6 Educational facilities

All schools are open for the Mozambiquans. Some schools have also been established in the camps, and these are taught in Portuguese by the Mozambiquan teachers.

4.3.3.3.7 Skills training

Some centres have been set up at various camps in order to teach as many refugees as possible different skills for the purpose of helping them to help themselves. As far as the material and the physical needs of the refugees are concerned, these refugees are given basic needs to help them

in their day to day life. It is a big burden to care for so many refugees.

4.3.3.3.8 Spiritual care

While most of the above work is done by the Government, churches also participate in this work of alleviating the physical needs of the refugees. The churches are mostly involved in the spiritual care of the refugees. Those refugees who were church members in their country have been received into different churches such as Roman Catholic Church, Presbyterian Church, Anglican Church, etc in order that they may become part and parcel of the Malawian churches. Some churches have set aside some people who are working among these refugees full time and part time. In addition to this, some ministers who are in Malawi as refugees are also working in the camps among their own people in conjunction with the churches in Malawi. Their services are very helpful and very fruitful among the refugees. These refugees are strengthened in their faith in Christ and are given hope especially of the coming Kingdom of God. As a result of this work, many refugees have been converted to the Lord Jesus Christ. At one place the majority of the village camp has been converted to Christ. Although many refugees are being converted to Christ, there are still many more refugees who have not yet been converted. Some of the

churches are working as hard as they can to reach as many refugees as possible with the message of salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ. With this example from Malawi, it is shown that good works of charity should be accompanied by the word which explains the actions of the church in its witness to God.

In conclusion, it has been shown that deeds of the church are very important part of the witness of the church. The Christian community does good works in honour of God and for the glory of his name; the believers do these good works through the power of the Holy Spirit. Church witness in the comprehensive sense of the Word involves the whole life of the church, that is its being, actions, example and proclamation. This witness is directed to the whole human life and the whole world.

Witness through example will be the next topic to be discussed.

4.4 Witness through example

Having discussed witness through good works, witness through example will be discussed in this section. Christian witness through example is largely related to the conversion which has been discussed in 1.5 on community through conversion.

When a person is converted to Christ there is a change in his life and in the course and direction of his life because conversion means turning away from sin to God. This change is the very basis of his life and the foundation on which his life is built. This should have far reaching consequences for his attitude and actions. The important part of the community's witness is in this that outsiders should notice this difference. The person who is converted to Christ has changed the ultimate values on which his life was based for a new set of values which he finds represented in the life of Christ. This change of values of life, is the basis of life which is called the witness through example. Because if the foundation of one's life is changed, life would look different and this leads to actions which point to Jesus Christ who is the ultimate basis of life.

Describing Christian example as a witness to God, Kuiper (1961:145) stresses that the godly life and the exemplary behaviour go hand in hand with the verbal witness. He (1961:147) describes the life of the believers as Spirit - written version of the gospel of Christ which is read by all the people. What Kuiper wants to say here is that people who are not Christians watch how Christians live and behave in the society. If they live according to their faith which they profess, then they witness to Christ (see also Roberts 1990:7 and Griffin 1989:177-179). This will particularly be

seen here in Christian love, unity and fellowship. I have chosen these three aspects because they are very common and relevant for witness of the church.

4.4.1 Witness through love

Christian love has great influence on the lives of the people. The source of this love is God who gives it to his people through the Holy Spirit. It is God himself who has demonstrated this love through his Son Jesus Christ. Chun Chae - O K describes the cross which Jesus Christ accepted as his supreme example in making God's love known in the very best way for all people. The means of communicating God's love seemed to be shocking because it took the form of death; and yet it left an eternal effect on those who believe in Christ. The cross of Christ was the total expression of God's love for man. It was the manifestation of God's love for the world so that the world could be saved and that people might live in fellowship with God and with one another (1986:48-49). It is here clear that Christ in his death demonstrated what sacrificial love is like. This sacrificial love is giving self for others; it is giving up life so that others can live.

Barth (1958:785-788) discusses what Christian and sacrificial love is. He describes Christian love as "human response,

correspondence, imitation to God's love" (1958:785). "A Christian is freed by the love of God to love". When we speak of loving it means giving. Such love has been demonstrated by God himself whose love has been shown in action of giving (John 3:16). A Christian is freed to love by the power of the Holy Spirit, and the Christian love breaks the circle of receiving or taking and keeping, which is natural human love (1958:786).

Barth (1958:787) says that Christian love is a self-giving sacrifice. The Christian who loves gives himself instead of trying to keep and maintain himself. This self-giving results in giving others the things which he has. "For to love and therefore to give ourselves is to affirm in practice that we do not belong to ourselves" but to God. The love of God frees us for this action which is basically self-evident.

Self-giving love has also a profound and comprehensive sense of impartation. "The Christian who loves does not divide up himself, but he imparts himself to the one whom he loves, or to whom he gives himself". When one gives oneself to the loved one, one remains and continues to be oneself as a human being. There is no natural change as a human being. Barth (1958:788) says that self-giving love gives the heart. In loving us, God gives himself to us and for us. He imparts himself to us, entering into relationship and fellowship with

us. He "gives us his heart and then becomes our salvation". This divine action is what the Christian who loves may imitate in his action. This action for the Christian means exaltation, gain and joy. In other words, a Christian who loves in this way is counted as blessed. Christians are called to live and show this self-giving and sacrificial love so that they may witness to God's love in action.

In subsection 3.2.6.2 above, the Lord's Supper is described as the communion of love. The participants are invited to a fellowship of love at the Lord's Table with the one who is love (cf Yanculatos 1983:635-639). The love of Jesus is demonstrated in his self-offering for the sake of the people of the world. The significance of participating in the Lord's Supper is that the believers witness that they belong to the Lord in whom their relationship with God and with one another is based. The Lord's Supper also witnesses how the Lord loves his people and how the believers love one another. The love of God in Jesus Christ puts believers under the obligation to love one another and to share with one another. Chao (1984:87) describes the superiority of the Christian life in China. Christians have demonstrated the superiority of the Christian life to the Marxist ceaseless struggle ethic through the practice of love in a society of hatred and human alienation. These Christians have demonstrated the possibility of authentic common life in Jesus Christ; they

have exercised the life of faith and hope in situations of disillusionment and despair, the life-giving character of the Christian faith. These Christian manifestations of love, truth and hope are rare in a society of endless class struggle. Chao concludes, "It is these spiritual attributes of the Christian church which are attracting many non-Christians to seek after Christ in whom the Christians believe". According to Chao, Christian love is unique in the world because it binds the believers together so that these believers stand together, help and strengthen one another in times of difficulties.

A child of a certain refugee Christian family passed away in Dedza, Malawi. This family was poor and had nothing. But Christians played a very important role at this funeral because of the Christian love they had for the family. They stood by this family at this difficult time, they made the coffin and contributed money to help the family and for food at the funeral. This Christian action of love touched the hearts of many outsiders who saw what Christian love means. Christians can show God's love in action in many different ways, for example providing the needs of the poor and the disabled people, building a house for a poor person, helping the sick, cultivating the garden of the old people who are physically weak to help themselves, etc. This charity work should not be directed to the Christians only, but to all the

people in need. Such actions witness to God's love in the society especially if they are done in the Spirit of the Christian unity in Christ and are inspired by God's love.

4.4.2 Witness through unity and fellowship

The unity of the church is based on Jesus Christ in whom all the believers are united as it has been discussed in 2.3.1 on the body of Christ. This unity is expressed by the phrase "in Christ" (Heyns 1980:50); the description of the body of Christ signifies the indissoluble bond which God has created between Christ and the church (Heyns 1980:51); and this body of Christ implies the organic unity of the church within itself (H Ridderbos 1975:370). The idea of the body of Christ also expresses common belonging of the believers to Christ (Ridderbos 1975:371) and oneness of the church with its Lord (G E Ladd 1974:545). The unity of the believers in Christ forms the basis of the witness to Christ.

Gilliland (1983:184-186) describes the people who belong to God in Christ as belonging to one another and experiencing the life of togetherness. Thus the basis of their belonging to one another is their being called by Christ and their trusting in Christ. Being together, loving one another, sharing, serving one another is the result of being called and their trust in Him. Unity is a unity in Christ. This

shows how unity and fellowship are interrelated. The believers are joined to one another by Christ. Therefore belonging both to God and to one another is the essence of what it means to be a church and an essence of the witness to God. This is also supported by Watson (1976:137) who points out that one of the most important factors in the witness of the church to Christ is the quality of its corporate life in Christ. The church can proclaim the living Christ in the united and loving relationships between its members. The consequences of this relationship with Christ should be new relationships between the members, because in Christ all barriers are broken and believers are made one in him who is their peace. Christ made peace between God and man, and between man and man through his death and resurrection. The church which proclaims this truth of their oneness in Christ, and peace with God, and with one another, must demonstrate this in the life of love, unity and peace which are based on Christ.

The unity of the church should also be observed in witness and service. Heyns (1980:117) says that the church has one task in the world, and that is to witness. The church that does not do so may not lay claim to the title church because the church is unconditionally and indissolubly bound to the facts of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ which are the foundation of the witness of the church. The

service of the church is determined by the service of Jesus Christ who came not to be served but to serve others and to give up his life as a ransom for many. This means that the church is the community of those who serve the needy, the hungry, the sick and the poor (Heyns 1980:12). The unity of the community of the believers must be seen, heard and actually experienced. It must be a unity of relationship, of action, of attitude and a unity that belongs to an order of God so that it may witness to God.

Unity in service is demonstrated by one of the CCAP congregations in Malawi, which built a good church on a self help basis. When this congregation saw the need for a new church, members agreed to build this church on a self help basis. These members contributed money for this project; some of them offered materials such as iron sheets, cement, doors, windows and window pane, planks, nails, etc; men offered themselves to make bricks, and women offered to bring water for making those bricks. The money which they contributed was used for paying the builders, carpenters and other things. The members were so united in this project that a good and beautiful church was successfully built; and this church is now being used for worshipping God. From this example we can conclude that Christians united in Christ can do things that can witness to God who is the basis of their unity. Unity of the believers in Christ is the strength of the church and it is the basis of its witness.

There is a close relationship between the unity of the community or the church at large and the fellowship of the people of God. As communities were discussed in 1.1, it was shown that a community was based on common interests, values (Hendrick 1983:125) and ultimates (Nürnbergger 1984:108-110). These values and ultimates have power and authority over the people. They bind and unite the members of the community together, and they also draw a line between those who are part of the community and those who are not. This shows that common values and ultimates are the basis of the unity of the community.

The church is the community of fellowship as it has been discussed in chapter 3. It expresses its communion and fellowship through prayer, Holy communion and worship. This new set of values replaced the old set and results in a new life style. Praying is an example of this new set of values. When Christians pray they show that they are no longer depending upon themselves or upon the world institutions around them, but upon God who is the ultimate source. This applies also to participating in Holy Communion or church service. Participation in the church service or in Holy Communion is part of the witness that the lives of the Christians are founded on, another basis is, Jesus Christ. Therefore the unity and the fellowship of the Christians is based on Christ.

The idea of the unity and the fellowship of the Christians in Christ is also expressed by Krodel (1986:92-93) who says that the fellowship of the believers witness to the one Lord who is the Saviour of the world and to the one Holy Spirit who created and sustains the church. This is also supported by Lenski (1961:116) who says that this life of fellowship attracted many people in the early church who were outside the church. These people who were attracted were drawn to the Lord Jesus Christ. The fellowship and the unity of the Christians indicate that the believers belong to God through Jesus Christ. Their common ultimate is Christ who controls and directs their lives.

4.5 Conclusion

The main concern of this work is the witness of the church. The church has been instituted and is in existence in the world to witness for God in all ages until consummation. It is entrusted with an all comprehensive mandate to proclaim the gospel to the whole world (Mt 28:18-20). The church has been sent out to witness to its miraculous origin, to disciple the nations of the world, to teach them and to make known the good news about the Kingdom of God (1.7.3 The church in the service of the Kingdom of God above). In this mandate, there is the promise of Christ's presence and power in order to accomplish the task. Throughout the Book of the

Acts, one can find evidence of the power of God drawing people to Christ through the witness of the church. The basis for the Spirit's persuasive action through the witness of the church is grounded on the relevance of the message to the people's varied situations and needs. The church is called in Christ to share with all the people personally and collectively the good news of God's Kingdom. Believers are sent to proclaim in word and deed the good news of this new order of life.

Our era in which we are living is the period of unprecedented opportunities and challenges for witnessing to Christ. Many people need and respond to the Christian faith. These responses point to the ripened condition of our world for the gospel. It may be that this ripened condition could be as a result of the Christian comprehensive witness. The witness which is needed now, must be an united witness which aims at leaving no geographical corner, no structure of society, no individual person outside the boundary of Christianity. The world needs to hear and see a united church witness of the message of Christ in word and deed. This can be done by mobilizing all churches resources, by proclaiming and teaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God to the whole man, by training members of the church, by the participation of all church members, by striving for the integral growth of the church so that all the people might experience God's

salvation in Christ in their struggle for life everlasting, reconciliation, forgiveness of sins and hope.

The Christian witness is ultimately the witness of God himself through his Son Jesus Christ. The Father's chief concern is to glorify Jesus Christ as Jesus himself glorified his Father in his earthly work. My Father is the one who glorifies me, Jesus declared (Jn. 8:54). The supreme concern of the church as the witness of Christ therefore remains the same today, and it should be to glorify Christ. Paul exemplified this truth and fact by saying, "Now as always, Christ will be honoured in my body whether by life or by death". The chief end of man is to glorify God. The community of the believers fulfils its duty of witnessing for Christ when it glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. All true God-inspired witness must finally point to Christ, lead and bring a person to Christ, help a person to truly commit his or her life to Christ, so that he or she will witness to the saving power and Lordship of Christ in life, deed and word for the glory of God.

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