



Missio Dei as a Foundational Ontological Reality of the Church

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Abstract

This study examines the concept of the Missio Dei as an important ontological element underlying the identity and existence of the Church. Using a qualitative methodology that combines theological analysis, biblical interpretation, and a comprehensive literature review, this research highlights how God's mission is not merely an additional activity but constitutes the very essence of the Church's existence. From a Protestant and Pentecostal perspective, this study highlights that the integration of Missio Dei into ecclesiastical structures fosters a dynamic and transformative approach to liturgical expression and social engagement. The findings suggest that as the Church internalizes its mission as an existential mandate, it becomes more innovative and responsive to contemporary cultural and social challenges, while simultaneously preserving its underlying theological principles. By internalizing its mission as an existential mandate, the Church becomes more innovative and responsive to contemporary cultural and social challenges while preserving its foundational theological principles. Consequently, this study provides significant insights for pastoral strategy development, offering practical recommendations to enhance the Church's role as an agent of transformation in contemporary society.

Keywords: Missio Dei, Ecclesiological Ontology, Trinitarian Theology, Church as a Missionary Community, Pastoral Strategy.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji konsep Missio Dei sebagai elemen ontologis yang mendasar dalam menentukan identitas dan keberadaan Gereja. Dengan menggunakan metodologi kualitatif yang menggabungkan analisis teologis, eksegesis biblika, serta telaah literatur yang komprehensif, penelitian ini menyoroti bahwa misi Allah bukan sekadar aktivitas tambahan, melainkan esensi utama dari keberadaan Gereja. Dari perspektif Protestan dan Pentakosta, penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa integrasi Missio Dei ke dalam struktur gerejawi mendorong pendekatan yang dinamis dan transformatif terhadap ekspresi liturgi serta keterlibatan sosial. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ketika Gereja menginternalisasi misinya sebagai mandat eksistensial, Gereja menjadi lebih inovatif dan responsif terhadap tantangan budaya dan sosial kontemporer, sembari tetap mempertahankan prinsip-prinsip teologisnya yang mendasar. Dengan demikian,



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penelitian ini memberikan wawasan mendalam bagi pengembangan strategi pastoral, serta menawarkan rekomendasi praktis guna meningkatkan peran Gereja sebagai agen transformasi dalam masyarakat modern.

Kata kunci: Missio Dei, Ontologi Gerejawi, Teologi Trinitarian, Gereja sebagai Komunitas Misionaris, Strategi Pastoral



INTRODUCTION

In an era of globalization and rapid social change, the role of the Church extends beyond being a place of worship; it also functions as an agent of social transformation. The concept of *Missio Dei* emerges as a theological response to this challenge, affirming that God's mission is not merely an additional activity but the very essence that defines the Church's identity and existence. This study seeks to understand how this concept is integrated into the life of the Church, particularly within the framework of Pentecostal .

The development of modern theological thought has led to a paradigm shift in the perception of the Church's mission. In the past, missions were often seen as a set of external activities, separate from the Church's core identity. However, through an in-depth study of biblical texts, theological literature, and charismatic experiences, a new understanding has emerged: *Missio Dei* constitutes the ontological foundation that unites all aspects of Church life. This includes not only liturgical practices but also tangible actions in congregational empowerment and responses to social issues.

This study also highlights the relevance of *Missio Dei* in shaping adaptive and contextually relevant ministerial strategies. Employing a qualitative approach with a comprehensive literature review, this research aims to provide a theological framework that is responsive to contemporary cultural dynamics and challenges.

Beyond a purely academic reconstruction of the Church's mission, this study also seeks to bridge theological reflection with practical implementation. It aims to encourage constructive dialogue between ministry theory and practice while facilitating reforms in pastoral strategies to cultivate a vibrant in the Gospel message, inclusive, and transformational Church.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research methodology to explore and elaborate on the concept of *Missio Dei* as an essential ontological aspect of Church life. The primary method utilized is a comprehensive literature review, incorporating critical analysis of theological literature, academic journals, reference books, and biblical texts. This approach ensures a well-rounded understanding of how *Missio Dei* is interpreted and applied within the framework of Pentecostal theology.

The analysis involves a comparative examination of diverse theological perspectives, minimizing bias while identifying commonalities and differences in the interpretation of *Missio Dei*. Additionally, an exegetical study of biblical narratives is integrated into the research to establish a direct link between the ontological dimension of *Missio Dei* and its contemporary ecclesiastical practice.

By employing this multi-faceted qualitative approach, the study seeks to reveal the theological and existential dimensions that underpin the spirit of the Church's mission. The findings aim to contribute significantly to the development of theological thought within the Pentecostal



movement, addressing both traditional theological perspectives and the challenges posed by the modern era.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

Introduction to the Ontological Nature of *Missio Dei*

Missio Dei, a fundamental theological concept translated as "God's mission," has become an increasingly significant subject of theological discourse in recent decades. This idea argues that mission is not a secondary or auxiliary activity of the Church, but an essential expression of the nature and existence of God, in which the Church is invited to participate. Thus, the mission originates in God rather than being a mere function within the Church.¹ The concept of *missio Dei* sees God as the initiator and subject of the mission, which encompasses all places, spheres of life, and events in the world. The relationship between *Missio Dei* and the Church's ontology is profound and revealing, as it helps us understand that a mission is not just a set of tasks or programs, but an intrinsic manifestation of what the Church is in its essence.

In this article, it will be argued that *Missio Dei* is an important ontological aspect of the Church. Its main thesis is that the true identity of the Church as the body of Christ is found in her participation in God's mission. This implies that the mission of the Church cannot be fully understood without recognizing its ontological foundation, which is rooted in the nature of God and in the identity of the Church as a community redeemed and sent by God.

To discuss this topic, this article will be organized into several main sections. First, the Church's ontology will be explored, defining its essential nature and identity as a community of God's people. Next, the concept of *Missio Dei* will be presented, examining its biblical and theological foundations, as well as the contributions of contemporary theologians such as Karl Barth and David Bosch. Next, the interconnection between *Missio Dei* and the Church's ontology will be analyzed, highlighting how mission is an expression of its innermost being. Potential criticisms of this approach will be examined, along with appropriate theological responses. Finally, this theological framework will be applied to the contemporary challenges facing the Church, illustrating how an ontological understanding of mission can guide and revitalize its current practice.

This study draws upon foundational biblical texts, major works by renowned theologians, and recent scholarly research on *Missio Dei* and the ontology of the Church. This approach enables a comprehensive and well-reasoned exploration of the theme, offering a clear and coherent perspective on how the Church's mission is ultimately an expression of its ontological identity.

¹Rolf Kjøde. "Missio Dei: Is There Any Common Ground?" *Mission Studies* (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1163/15733831-12341848>.



The Ontology of the Church: Identity and Essence

First of all, ontology, as a philosophical discipline, examines the nature and fundamental characteristics of existence, exploring what entities are and how they exist. Its studies cover a wide range of fields, such as natural philosophy, philosophy of language, philosophy of mind and metaphysics.²

In this sense, the ontology of the Church is a multifaceted concept that explores the nature and existence of the Church in relation to God, its members, and its role in the world. Several scholars have examined the Church's ontology in relation to its functions and defining aspects. For example, Cockayne (2019) has studied the social ontology of the Church³ and suggested alternative models for understanding the Church as a single entity made up of many different parts. Davis (2021) has studied the sacramental ontology⁴ of the Church in which he proposes that "the church is an ontological reality with the epistemological goal of traditionalizing its members, shaped by prayer, Scripture, weekly services, and ongoing discipleship training." Tomislav (2015) wrote his article linking Ontology with Ethics⁵, arguing that the Church is an event of Communion, which transforms the world's ontology into the ontology of God, and can benefit from the new currents of human thought such as Heidegger, Levinas and Buber. Finally, in relation to his predecessors, Hauerwas studied the ontology of the church as a political community. Hauerwas's concept of the church as a political community emphasizes the dynamic nature of its collective body, offering an alternative to the modern state-centric model rooted in coercion⁶.

What, then, is the Church? Joshua Greever defines it as "supporters of Christ who derive their identity and mission from Jesus and understand themselves as the true eschatological community of God."⁷ On the other hand, David Witthoff defines it as follows: "A group of people who gather to worship a Jewish-Christian God. This definition is specifically applicable to the worship of God after the coming of Christ."⁸

There is a more specific definition given by Torey Teer: "The Church is a community of all people who—through grace, through faith, on the basis of Christ's life, death, resurrection, and

²Jeremías Camino, "¿Qué es la Ontología?: Consideraciones Histórico-Críticas," REVISTA LATINOAMERICANA DE FILOSOFÍA, 2022, <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:253442357>.

³Joshua Cockayne et al. "Analytic Ecclesiology: The Social Ontology of the Church". *Journal of Analytic Theology* (2019). <https://doi.org/10.12978/JAT.2019-7.091400021404>.

⁴Melissa Davis. "The Sacramental Ontology of the Church." *Pneuma*, 43 (2021): 25-42. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700747-BJA10014>.

⁵Paunović Tomislav. "Reflection on some questions in the framework of the introduction to the theme of the theological symposium 'Ontology and ethics' (2003)". (2015): 83-108. <https://doi.org/10.5937/SABORNOST9-9777>.

⁶Hauerwas's concept of the church as a political community emphasizes the dynamic nature of its collective body, offering an alternative to the modern model based on state violence.

⁷Greever, Joshua M. 2016. «Church». In *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, edited by John D. Barry, David Bomar, Derek R. Brown, Rachel Klippenstein, Douglas Mangum, Carrie Sinclair Wolcott, Lazarus Wentz, Elliot Ritzema, y Wendy Widder. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

⁸Witthoff, David, ed. 2014. *The Lexham Cultural Ontology Glossary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.



ascension—have been united to Christ and entered into His body through the baptism of the Holy Ghost (Acts 1:8; Romans 6:3–11; 1 Corinthians 12:12–27; Ephesians 1:13-14).⁹

As for the etymology of the word, Daniel Hays clarifies that the New Testament word for "church" is *ekklēsia*, and literally means "those who are called to go forward" (Hays, Duvall, and Pate 2007, 86). In classical Greek, the term *ekklēsia* is used almost exclusively for political meetings. In Athens, for example, the word means a gathering of citizens to run the affairs of the city. In addition, *ekklēsia* only refers to the meeting itself, not to the citizens themselves. When individuals do not assemble, they are not collectively recognized as an *ekklēsia*. The New Testament records three examples of the use of this secular term (Acts 19:32, 41).¹⁰

In the New Testament, *ekklēsia* is used to refer to the community of God's people 109 times (of the 114 occurrences of the term). Although it only appears in two passages of the Gospels (Matthew 16:18; 18:17), it is very important in Acts (23x) and Paul's writings (46x). It is found twenty times in Revelation and in isolated cases in James and Hebrews. In this sense, His identity is found, is a borrowed term that undergoes diachronic semantic evolution, shaped by its use in new cultural and contextual domains, that is, the body of believers to identify themselves, whether they are gathered or not.

Although none of the above definitions fully encapsulate the depth of the term, New Testament writers employed various metaphors to refer to the church: God's people, God's kingdom, God's temple, Christ's bride and Christ's body. However, it must be acknowledged that, for the most part, this definition reaches the reality of the church as an organic community of people. The Church, composed of those who are born again, reflects the Image and Likeness of God through this new birth. and, therefore, must reflect the *Missio Dei*. In Ephesians 1:23, 5:29-30; Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:27; Colossians 1:18,24; Ephesians 5:23 there is an ontological identification of the church as the body of Christ, as an assortment of unity, made up of various members, who together form what in the original sense is called an assembly (*eklesia*). Its identity is found, as revealed in Scripture, in its union with Christ. (Ephesians 1:22-23). For this reason, the church is and should always be united to the will and direction of Christ like a branch is united to the vine (John 15:5).

Now, true ecclesiology begins with an orthodox understanding of the church's ontology. The Church's identity is fundamentally rooted in its recognition as the body of Christ, a concept deeply rooted in the New Testament. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 12:27, "You are the body of Christ, and members of each one in particular." This identity is not merely symbolic but an ontological reality that fundamentally defines the Church. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer pointed out, "The Church is the

⁹ Torey Teer, "AS the FATHER HAS SENT ME, EVEN so I AM SENDING YOU': THE DIVINE MISSIONS and the MISSION of the CHURCH," *JETS* 63 (2020): 535–58.

¹⁰ Hays, J. Daniel, J. Scott Duvall, y C. Marvin Pate. 2007. *En Dictionary of biblical prophecy and end times*, 86. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.



Church only when it exists for others"¹¹ ("Community Life," p. 60). This identity underscores that the Church is not only functional but is, at its core, a community redeemed for mission.

The Universality of the Church and Its Mission

Now, with regard to the universality of the Church, or its catholicism, it refers to its presence and relevance in all places and times. The Church is not limited by geographical, cultural, or secular boundaries. Jesus taught His disciples in Matthew 28:19, "Go and make disciples of all nations," underlining the mission of the Church as a whole. Yves Congar, in his work "The Church: From St. Augustine to Our Time,"¹² argues that "the Church's catholicism is manifested in its ability to embody and transmit the fullness of the Gospel in all cultures" (Congar, "The Church: From St. Augustine to Our Time," p. 134). This underscores that catholicity is not merely about geographical reach but involves spiritual and cultural depth. This perspective reinforces the idea that the Church's mission must be adaptable to diverse cultural contexts while remaining faithful to its theological core. The contemporary reality of social issues necessitates an adaptable ecclesiology that remains true to its theological roots while engaging with societal challenges¹³.

The universality of the Church highlights its presence and relevance in every place and time. Jesus commanded His disciples to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19). Jesus commanded His disciples to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19). Yves Congar, though a Catholic theologian, extensively studied Augustine of Hippo, who was among the first to use the term 'catholic' to describe the universal Church.¹⁴ This term has since been foundational in defining the Church's universality. This universal dimension underscores that the Church's mission is global and cross-cultural, reflecting the expansive nature of the *Missio Dei*.

Lesslie Newbigin, in his book *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, explores a theme similar to Congar's by talking about the Church's ability to embody and spread the Gospel in diverse cultures¹⁵. Newbigin argues that:

"The Church is the sign, the instrument, and the foretaste of the kingdom of God in every culture, called to be true Catholic by incorporating the fullness of the Gospel into the specific context in which she finds herself"¹⁶.

¹¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Vida en comunidad* (Ediciones Sígueme, 1983). p. 60

¹² Congar, Yves. 1970. *La Iglesia: De San Agustín a Nuestro Tiempo*. Madrid: Cristiandad Editorial.

¹³ Kalis Stevanus and Yuniarto Yuniarto, "Misi Gereja Dalam Realitas Sosial Indonesia Masa Kini," *HARVESTER: Jurnal Teologi dan Kepemimpinan Kristen* 6, no. 1 (June 15, 2021): 55–67, <https://doi.org/10.52104/harvester.v6i1.61>.

¹⁴ Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to Smyrna*, chapter 8, part 2

¹⁵ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989), 223.

¹⁶ Lesslie Newbigin, "On the Gospel as Public Truth: Response to the Colloquium," response to a neo-Calvinist colloquium at Leeds, U.K. (unpublished manuscript, 1996), 223



Synergy Between God and the Church in Mission

Given the Church's universal nature—both geographically and culturally—the ontological aspect of synergy is particularly significant. Synergy in the Church refers to active collaboration between God and believers. According to Philippians 2:12-13, "So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to desire and to work for His good pleasure." This synergy underscores that the Church does not function independently of God but actively cooperates with His Spirit. John Zizioulas, in "Being as Communion," states that "The Church, by definition, is the fellowship of people in the life and work of the Holy Spirit¹⁷". This synergy reflects the ontological reality in which human and divine action is integrated into the life of the Church (Ephesians 4:15-16,25; 1 Corinthians 12:25-26). This understanding aligns with the theological premise that the Church is not merely an institution but a living organism shaped by the Holy Spirit. Stevanus posits that Jesus' model of ministry serves as a guiding framework for *Missio Dei*, illustrating that mission is inherently relational and Spirit-empowered¹⁸.

If God in His Word says that He produces will and deeds, with His good will; and then he says that He wants all people to advance to repentance (2 Peter 3:9), so it is necessary that the Church as an organic entity work together to be an instrument of God, so that in the community one can seek (regardless of time and geography) those whom God in His grace desires to give the gift of Salvation, in this way the community is expanded, so that the expansion of His kingdom translates into the addition of more who are born again. Since *Missio Dei* represents God's purpose and action for humanity's salvation, God wants the church to be a participant in that mission to expand more communities that glorify God. This holistic understanding aligns with the argument that *Missio Dei* encompasses both spiritual salvation and tangible social transformation.

The mission of the Church, as understood within the framework of *Missio Dei*, is fundamentally Christocentric and eschatological. It is not merely a social initiative, but the unfolding of God's redemptive plan through His people, culminating in the ultimate reconciliation of all things in Christ (Colossians 1:20). While the Church is indeed called to reflect God's justice and compassion in the world, this engagement flows from its primary mandate—to proclaim the Gospel and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19-20).

As Christopher J. H. Wright explains, the mission of God is not simply about societal transformation, but about calling individuals and communities into the redemptive work of Christ,

¹⁷John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 139.

¹⁸Kalis Stevanus, "Mengimplementasikan Pelayanan Yesus Dalam Konteks Misi Masa Kini Menurut Injil Sinoptik," *FIDEI Jurnal Teologi Sistematis dan Praktika* 1, no. 2 (2018): 284–98, <https://doi.org/10.34081/270036>.



where true and lasting transformation begins¹⁹. Therefore, any involvement in social justice or cultural renewal must be seen as a fruit of faithful Gospel witness, rather than as the central aim of the Church's existence. While social engagement is an inevitable result of the Church's mission, the primary goal of *Missio Dei* remains the glorification of God through the proclamation and embodiment of the Gospel.

Missio Dei, properly understood, is not a call to political revolution, nor does it align with human-centered ideologies that prioritize social change over spiritual renewal. Rather, it is a divine initiative where God Himself is the primary agent of mission, working through His Church to reconcile humanity to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). John Stott highlights that while the Church must respond to social realities, it does so from a position of Gospel faithfulness, ensuring that evangelism remains primary while acts of justice and mercy serve as complementary expressions of the transformative power of Christ²⁰. Thus, the Church's engagement with social issues must never replace or overshadow its essential calling—to bear witness to Christ and His kingdom, which is both present and yet to be fully revealed in the eschaton (Revelation 21:1-4).

Stevanus argues that the Church's mission must be holistic and integrative, refusing to separate evangelism from social responsibility. He contends that the dichotomy between individual salvation and social transformation is a modern construct that does not fully reflect the missional model taught by Christ²¹.

Indeed, fellowship is an integral part of the Church's ontological reality; it manifests at a secondary level—not between God and believers, but among believers themselves: within the local church, between local churches, between church organizations, and between believers and congregations of different nations and cultures. Therefore, the metaphor of the Church as a body is often understood as referring solely to the local congregation, that is, the totality of the members of the local church, but the meaning of this metaphor goes beyond the local, moving to the regional, the continent and to the ends of the earth. This is where synergy, universality, and identity overlap. According to 1 John 1:3, "*what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed, our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.*"

Holiness and the Church's Mission

Following this line of thought, the Church is a special community set apart for God. Therefore, another aspect of the Church's ontological reality is revealed: the holiness of the Church. Ephesians 5:25-27 describes how Christ sanctified the Church. John Calvin stated, "The

¹⁹ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2006), 419

²⁰ John Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, revisada (InterVarsity Press, n.d.), 109.

²¹ Kalis Stevanus, "Rekonstruksi Paradigma dan Implementasi Misi Gereja di Indonesia Masa Kini" 7, no. 2 (2021): 105–15, <http://dx.doi.org/10.47543/efata.v7i2.45>, 114



Church is called holy because she is ordained to God and separated from the world, that she may be His inheritance and He may dwell in her'.²²". Both perspectives emphasize that the holiness of the Church is not inherent, but is a quality that comes from her relationship with God and her calling to reflect His holiness in the world. The holiness of the Church, as an essential ontological aspect, is reflected in her mission and practice. This reinforces the argument that her true identity as the body of Christ is found in her participation in God's mission.

Another key aspect of the Church's ontological reality, as a holy community composed of the born-again, is the development of communicable attributes. The development of communicable attributes refers to how believers, as part of the Church, reflect God's shareable attributes, such as love, justice, and holiness. Ephesians 4:24 says, "And put on the new self, created in the righteousness and holiness of righteousness." This transformation is an important part of the Church's ontology. Jonathan Edwards, in *The Nature of True Virtue*, asserts that "the virtues of God must be reflected in the lives of the saints, manifesting the image of God in truth and holiness" This continuous development is an expression of the ontological reality created in the image of God.

The Witness and Unity of the Church as an Expression of Missio Dei

Another aspect of the Church's ontological reality is the attribute of testimony. The Church has a responsibility to proclaim the Gospel. Acts 1:8 commissions the Church to be a witness "*to as far as the remotest part of the earth,*" fulfilling the mandate given by the Lord Jesus before His ascension: "*Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.*"

He promised to be with His disciples until the end of the world. This highlights another crucial aspect of the Church's ontological reality: the hope of Christ's return. The Church lives this hope. Titus 2:13 calls us to "look forward to the blessed hope." Jürgen Moltmann asserts, "Eschatological hope is the vital force that moves the Church"²³. This hope is at the core of the Church's participation in God's mission.

Another fundamental aspect is unity, which is essential to the Church's integrity and testimony. Ephesians 4:4-6 speaks of "one body, and one Spirit," to be united in Christ and in His mission, regardless of the divisions of history. Unity is an expression of Missio Dei, as it reflects the unifying nature of God's mission in the world. At its core, Missio Dei is God's redemptive work to reconcile and unite all things in Christ. This reconciliation and unity are expressed in a concrete way in the life of the Church.

²² John Calvin, *Institution of the Christian Religion*, Book IV Chapter 1, Section 7 (1536).

²³ Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 157.



The Church is called to reflect the unity of God Himself, who is the triune God: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In John 17:21, Jesus prayed for the unity of His followers by saying, "*That they may all be one; just as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.*" This unity among believers is a reflection of divine communion and the visible manifestation of *Missio Dei* in the world. The unity of the Church shows the world God's character and His intention to reconcile all things in Christ.

Missio Dei entails the reconciliation of all things in Christ (Colossians 1:20). The Church's unity serves as a tangible expression of this reconciliation. John Stott, in his book "The Cross of Christ,"²⁴ notes that "The Church is a reconciled and reconciling community, called to be a model of the reconciliation that God brings to the world". This reconciliation is manifested in the community life of the Church, where the barriers of division are overcome and unity in Christ is lived.

The Holy Spirit plays a crucial role in *Missio Dei*, both empowering and uniting the Church. In 1 Corinthians 12:13, Paul wrote: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." The unity of the Church is the work of the Holy Spirit, which allows believers to live in love and unity. Karl Barth affirmed, "The unity of the Church is the work of the Holy Spirit, who unites us into one body in Christ."²⁵

CONCLUSION

This comprehensive examination of *Missio Dei* as a foundational ontological aspect of the Church reveals that the Church's participation in God's mission is an essential trait of its very existence, not merely a functional attribute. This research shows that this ontological foundation is realized through various interconnected dimensions: identity, universality, synergy, communion, holiness, witness, and unity.

A significant finding emerging from this study is the dynamic relationship between the existence of the Church and its mission. The Church does not merely have a mission; it is inherently missionary. This ontological perspective challenges traditional institutional ecclesiology and a purely functional approach to mission, asserting that any authentic expression of Church life must embody participation in God's mission.

This study underscores the Trinitarian foundations of this missionary ontology, demonstrating that mission flows intrinsically from the nature of God. This theological framework offers a robust basis for understanding the nature and purpose of the Church, moving beyond a purely sociological

²⁴John Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Caribbean Editorial, 1986), 223.

²⁵Karl Barth, *Dogmática Eclesiástica*, Vol. IV (Ginebra: Editorial Labour, 1956), 650.



or organizational conceptualization of ecclesiastical life. This study shows that Church structures, ministries, and activities should be evaluated not only on their functional effectiveness but on how they express and enable participation in the Lord's mission.

Furthermore, this ontological understanding of mission carries significant implications for contemporary ecclesial practice, particularly in how Church growth, evangelism, and social engagement are perceived—not as separate activities, but as a unified expression of the Church's very nature. The findings of this research enhance our understanding of the relationship between the local and universal dimensions of the Church, offering a framework to discern how local congregations participate in God's universal mission while maintaining their distinct cultural expressions.

Moreover, this work makes a substantial contribution to theological scholarship by demonstrating that *Missio Dei* is a foundational ontological reality of the Church, providing a valuable resource for renewal and faithful witness in an increasingly complex global landscape.



RECOMMENDATIONS

For the Church to reclaim its true identity and mission, it must prioritize spirituality and mission over excessive bureaucracy and programming. Churches must refocus on worship, prayer, and discipleship as central elements of their communal life, ensuring that the proclamation of the Gospel and the cultivation of spiritual gifts are not overshadowed by administrative structures.

Continual return to Scripture is essential to countering human legalism and tradition, ensuring that ecclesiastical practices are evaluated in the light of God's Word. The Bible must be the norm that governs ecclesiastical life, allowing decisions and doctrines to be based on revealed truths.

Moreover, the training and development of leaders with a profound understanding of the Church's identity—emphasizing both theological and spiritual formation—is essential. This will ensure leadership focused on service and community growth, avoiding the imposition of human standards on the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Strengthening small groups in the congregation fosters true discipleship and fellowship, providing space for shared spiritual growth. Similarly, the Church must continually assess its activities, ensuring alignment with *Missio Dei* and fostering unity amid diversity. In doing so, the Church will remain faithful to her ontological identity, guided by the Spirit and committed to God's mission in the world.



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