The Marks of the Church
as ‘Gift’ and ‘Task’:
A Paradigm for the
Twenty-First-Century Church

by
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# Contents

Certificate of Authorship .......................................................... v
Acknowledgments ........................................................................ vi
Professional Editorial Assistance .............................................. vii
Notes to the Thesis ..................................................................... viii
Abstract ..................................................................................... ix

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Classical Marks and the Tensions .... 1
  1.1: The Challenge of Reading the ‘Marks’ in a Complex World .... 7
  1.2: The Research Question:
  Can the classical marks of the church
  have a continuing and contemporary relevance
  for the church in the twenty-first century? ......................... 17
  1.3: The Significance of the Present Study ........................... 19
  1.4: Thesis Outline ................................................................. 21

Chapter 2: The ‘Marks of the Church’ through the Terrains of History 23
  2.1: The Patristic Period: Early Conceptions .......................... 24
  2.2: The Late Fourth Century: Welcoming the ‘Marks’ .......... 29
  2.3: The Medieval Period: The Marks as Institution .......... 34
  2.4: The Sixteenth Century: The Marks as a ‘Reformed’ Idea .... 36
  2.5: The Twentieth Century: The Marks as an Ecumenical Hope .... 42
  2.6: The Twenty-First Century: The Marks as Division .... 45
  2.7: Summary: The Marks and the Current and Future Church .... 57

Chapter 3: The Marks of the Church and the Triune God:
  A Case Study in Karl Barth’s *Church Dogmatics* ............ 59
  3.1: The Marks in relation to Jesus and Mediated by the Holy Spirit 61
  3.2: Barth’s Understanding of ‘One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic’ 64
    3.2.1: Oneness............................................................... 64
    3.2.2: Holiness ............................................................. 68
    3.2.3: Catholicity ......................................................... 72
    3.2.4: Apostolicity ....................................................... 75
  3.3 The God Who Seeks and Creates Fellowship ............... 82
    3.3.1 God’s ‘Catholic’ Love ......................................... 85
Chapter 4: The Marks through the ‘Gift-Task’ Paradigm:

   Fundamental Elements ........................................ 110
4.1: The Value of Gift and Task ................................... 111
4.2: Communicative Insights from Wieman and Habermas ...... 124
4.2.1: Wieman and His Doctrine of Creative Interchange ....... 126
4.2.2: Habermas and His Theory of Communicative Action .... 134
4.2.3: The Benefits of a Conjoined Communicative Method ...... 141
4.3: The Analytical Element ........................................ 144

Chapter 5: Re-interpreting the Marks: The ‘Gift-Task’ Paradigm .... 158
5.1: Exploring the Need for Contemporary Ecumenical ‘Consensus’ 164
5.2: The Communicative Element: Based in ‘Mutual Understanding’ 175
5.3: The Analytical Element: Based in Self-Examination ........... 197
5.3.1: Held Together in Creative Tension ......................... 198
5.3.2: Received as Dynamic Gift .................................. 200
5.3.3: Practised as Embodied Task ............................... 207
5.4: The Theological Element: Based in the Triune God .......... 211
5.5: Concluding Discussion ....................................... 213

Table 1: The Gift-Task Paradigm ....................................... 215

Chapter 6: Testing the ‘Gift-Task’ Paradigm .............................. 216
6.1: John Zizioulas: Orthodox ........................................ 218
6.2: Rowan Williams: Anglican ...................................... 226
6.3: Jürgen Moltmann: Reformed .................................... 240
6.4: Amos Yong: Pentecostal ........................................... 255
6.5: Concluding Discussion ....................................... 268

Chapter 7: Conclusions, Evaluations, Suggestions for Further Study 270

Reference List .............................................................. 281
Certificate of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and to the best of my knowledge and belief, understand that it contains no material previously published or written by another person, nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Charles Sturt University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis. Any contribution made to the research by colleagues with whom I have worked at Charles Sturt University or elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged.

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Notes to the Thesis

Some material in this thesis is based on previous research I engaged in for my unpublished BTh (Hons) dissertation in 2011 for CSU. This material is specifically found in chapter 1 on pages 1–10 (introductory section), and in chapter 2 on pages 36–40 (sixteenth-century section) and pages 44–55 (twenty-first-century section) of this current thesis. It should be noted however, that the material has been reworked, updated and added to in order to suit the scope and focus specific to this PhD thesis.

Scripture

All Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible: New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984) unless otherwise noted.

Use of Politically Correct Language

Throughout this thesis I have used politically correct language when I have written in my own words. However, when I have quoted various authors verbatim I have retained their texts as they were and have not corrected or identified their politically incorrect language. I have assumed that they were authors of their era and employed the writing styles of that time. Finally, when I have engaged with the various authors and used my own voice and not quoted them verbatim, I have rephrased their terminology in order to use politically correct language, as I believe that if they were writing today they would do the same.
Abstract

Across the globe the majority of Christians confess a shared belief in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. These four ‘marks’ have long served the church as identifying attributes through which church leaders and theologians could dispute heresies, accommodate diversity and articulate key convictions. However, to declare in the twenty-first century that the church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic is a perplexing statement that raises more questions than it answers. Further still, a closer look at the marks reveals that despite dogmatic declaration of the marks, engagement with and treatment of the marks can vary vastly amongst the ecclesial pool. For instance, while the marks are engaged with by creedal churches, they are presented on a divided front in which the marks are defined along preferred denominational and institutional lines. Regarding non-creedal churches, expression of or engagement with the marks is questionable, varying from institution to institution with no formalised or other outline.

Therefore, this presents a problem, since the marks stand as a challenge and a summons to the whole body of Christ. It is not sufficient within current ecclesiology to simply push away these disparities by suggesting that fulfilment of the marks is a matter solely left for the eschaton. Rather, the contemporary church must find a fresh way to engage with the historical marks in order to determine ‘best’ ecclesial praxis, lest it proceed with arrogance and ignorance by neglecting its historical lineage. This suggests the need for at the very least: (1) clearer understanding of the marks; (2) a review of the theological function of the marks; and (3) some form of self-examination amongst and across the ecclesial landscape.
To meet this tripartite need is in part the aim of this thesis – that the marks might be historically understood, contextually assessed and theologically reclaimed – with a view to offering a possible solution to the perplexity surrounding the marks. This thesis will offer a fresh way to engage with the marks by presenting a ‘gift and task’ paradigm that incorporates communicative, analytical and theological elements through which the marks can be viewed and understood. By developing a paradigm for viewing the marks of the church as gift and task, this thesis offers the contemporary church a way of honouring its gift of nature and of mission, and of communicating its task across different contexts.
Chapter 1

Introduction to the Classical Marks and the Tensions

Defining the church and demarcating it from other social organisms is not a new undertaking.¹ Past and present theologians have debated competing accounts of what constitutes the vera ecclesia (true church) without ever achieving full consensus or arriving at a satisfactory answer to this question. The most basic yet fundamental questions in ecclesiology arise from defining the church. Expositions of ‘who’ or ‘what’ or ‘where’ is the church have filled volumes of exemplary works throughout history. One theologian writes: ‘the church is at once a very familiar and a very misunderstood topic’.² Luther is understood to have claimed that ‘a girl of seven knows what the church is’ but that he would have to ‘pen thousands of words in order to explain what she understood’.³ Efforts to describe the church have included either the single or paired usage of terms such as ‘visible’ and ‘invisible’; ‘local’ and ‘universal’; ‘mystical’; ‘institutional’ and ‘sacramental’; ‘from above’ and ‘from below’. Other attempts to describe the church have featured in seminal works by theologians such as Avery Dulles, who offers five ‘models’ of the church, and Paul Minear, who has

¹ Within this thesis, stylistic treatment of the word ‘church’ will be offered according to the editorial practice of the Liturgical Press. Therefore the capitalised word ‘Church’ will be used when it refers to a specific denomination as a whole (e.g. the Eastern Orthodox Church) or as part of an official name or title (e.g. World Council of Churches). Complementarily, the lower-case word ‘church’ will be used to refer to the whole body of Christians, either worldwide or throughout time, as it refers to the Christian faith; http://www.litpress.org/Authors/PDFs/style_guide.pdf. At times the word ‘church’ will also be used interchangeably with the terms ‘congregation’ or ‘ecclesial community’.

² Millard J. Erickson, Christian Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1985), 1026.

detected ninety-six New Testament ‘biblical images’ of the church. Building on works of this kind, theologians from many denominational affiliations have attempted to define the nature and function of the church through the ‘lens of the gospel’; from a ‘trinitarian’ framework; as ‘logocentric’ or ‘pneumatocentric’; as ‘the people of God’; ‘as the body of Christ’; as a ‘servant’; as a ‘community of the Spirit’; amid a plethora of other notions. Notwithstanding this conceptual diversity, they appear to agree that God has ‘created’ this ‘new and inclusive community’ of believers who are ‘reconciled to Himself and to each other’ as they are called into the service of God for God’s purposes and are ‘enabled by his Spirit’. Further, this community is not sustained by human endeavours nor

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6 Terms used by Inbody, *Faith of the Christian Church*, 164; Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 249; and Clowney, *The Church*, 72, 82.
was it created solely to safeguard and nurture the needs of believers.

Instead, the church is to be led by the Spirit of God to the ‘ends of the earth’, proclaiming the gospel to all people and bringing glory to God.

Migliore suggests that part of the problem of defining and characterising the contemporary church is exacerbated by believers being collectively ‘forgetful’ of all the ‘articles of faith’. He further charges believers with having ‘failed’ to ‘hold together faith and practice’. Consequently, the church has failed at times to ‘look’ and ‘act’ like the church, leaving many to question its authenticity even as they observe the great chasm between ‘what is’ and ‘what ought to be’. Nevertheless, theologians past and present generally maintain that the church is ordained and mandated by God to proclaim the divine glory until the eschaton.

The church is not to find expression merely as an institution that exists for itself yet it is bearing less and less resemblance to the triumphant light it is meant to be. Instead the church is to be ever-changing, ever-living, ever-giving and ever-advancing. Additionally, temporal expressions of church do not need to exude a ‘one size fits all’ type of uniformity. The church is meant to embrace the differences found in ‘language, culture, history, practice, taste, style, temperament and habit’. Differing contexts and cultures give fresh expression, suggesting that unity is to be found in

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7 Erickson, Christian Theology, 1051; Inbody, Faith of the Christian Church, 247. See also Richard Bauckham, The Theology of Jurgen Moltmann (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 147.

8 Migliore, Faith Seeking Understanding, 251.

9 Ibid. Inbody concurs, suggesting that there is a ‘major danger’ present in ecclesiology when Christians believe ‘too little’ of the church and understand themselves as ‘people who go to church’ but ‘do not understand themselves to be the church’. Inbody, Faith of the Christian Church, 251, emphasis in original.

10 Inbody, Faith of the Christian Church, 247, contends that ‘the creation and preservation of the church as the instrument of God’s mission and ministry [is] from the resurrection until he comes again’.

11 Ibid., 259. These words are reminiscent of the evolution of gift and task, reminding us that the marks cannot be static and must be understood as dynamic.
diversity, not uniformity. Hans Küng highlights the need for the church to find new ways to express the original understanding of church lest contemporary Christians attempt to preserve a ‘primitive form’ of church that is unable to engage in mission and ministry to the enveloping world.\textsuperscript{12} Küng, referring to the basic structure of the church, adds that ‘changing times demand changing forms’, yet the church still must preserve the saving act of God through Christ if it is to remain the true church.\textsuperscript{13} This balancing act requires maintaining this truth across time, culture and context while remaining innovative in presentation and culturally engaged.

To aid in the task of maintaining the balance while preserving the essence of the \textit{vera ecclesia}, the early church identified four ‘marks\textsuperscript{14}’ of the church when it declared the church to be ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’,

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} What I am referring to are the four classical marks of the church as outlined in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381), namely, that the church is ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’. The marks are sometimes called ‘attributes’, ‘notes’, ‘signs’, or ‘properties’. Küng refers to them as ‘dimensions’ rather than ‘apologetic signs’. Küng, \textit{The Church}, 269. For helpful commentary on the history of the transitioning words, see Charles Van Engen, \textit{God’s Missionary People: Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church} (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1991), 61; G. C. Berkouwer, \textit{Studies in Dogmatics: The Church} (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 11–17. For the purposes of this thesis I will most often refer to them as ‘marks’ or ‘marks of the church’. My understanding of the marks of the church is that they are attributes of the triune Godhead and are given by God to the church (local and universal) and are experienced by the church in both an ‘already’ and a ‘not yet’ form. The fulfilment of the marks of the church will not be complete until the eschaton, but that there is still need for current and visible expression of ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ in every generation. By way of distinction, when I am referring to the ‘Reformational marks’ – ‘Word, Sacraments, and Discipline’ – I will make the distinction of them from the marks of the church clear and refer to them as ‘Reformational marks’ or, as they are often referred to, as the \textit{notae ecclesiae}. Regarding the introduction of the usage of the term \textit{notae ecclesiae}, Berkouwer suggests that this change in terminology is due to the fact that the ‘Reformation introduced a criterion by which the Church could be, and had to be, tested as to whether she were truly the Church’ (Berkouwer, \textit{Studies in Dogmatics}, 13). Distinction is made at this point because, although ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ were named in the fourth century, understanding and usage of them throughout church history has grown and developed only gradually. However, during the sixteenth century, the Reformers for the first time introduced new words (Word, Sacrament, Discipline) and offered them as a criterion for judging the church. Prior to this, ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ were accepted as a statement of fact concerning the church and accepted in faith. See Avery Dulles, \textit{A Church to Believe In: Discipleship and the Dynamics of Freedom} (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 59.
\end{footnotesize}
as outlined in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381). Although the marks were not concretely defined within the creed or necessarily empirically evidenced by the known church at the time, these four terms were offered as a cohesive unit and as statements of faith declaring that the church was indeed ‘one, holy, catholic, apostolic’. Succinctly put, the church is one because God is one (John 17; Eph 4:1–6); it is holy because God is holy and sanctifies it by the divine Word (Eph 5:26–27); it is catholic because through God the offer of forgiveness is extended as an all-embracing and universal gift in which none are excluded (Matt 28:19, 1 Tim 2:4); and it is apostolic because it is God’s Word (through the apostles) that has created, sent and is now sustaining its life (Eph 2:20). These attributes are derived from and dependent on God and therefore carry a transcendent

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15 Throughout this thesis I will also refer to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed as the Nicene Creed or simply as the creed. When referring to any other creeds I will always use the full name of that creed.

16 Interestingly, the Apostles Creed lists only two of the marks, ‘holy’ and ‘catholic’, and omits ‘one’ and ‘apostolic’. Commentary generally suggests that this omission is not based upon differences in ecclesiological doctrine but rather is due to the purposes as to why each creed was formulated. It is well documented that the Apostles Creed originated in Rome as a baptismal creed and was utilised as a profession of faith in the second century. Richard Kropf, Breaking Open the Creeds (New York: Paulist, 2010), 1. The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed is based upon the Jerusalem Creed and was formulated in two parts: first by the Council of Nicaea (325) and then it was finalised at the First Council of Constantinople (381). Philip Schaff, ed., The History of the Creeds, vol. 1. of The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1878), §8, pp. 24–29. The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed was written with a twofold purpose: (1) with a theological edge, to address and exclude certain heresies; and (2) as a ‘conciliar symbol’, to express the ‘communion of the Churches in the one apostolic faith’. Emmanuel Lanne, ‘The Apostolic Faith as Expressed in the Apostles’ Creed, Especially Compared with the Nicene Creed’, in The Roots of Our Common Faith: Faith in Scriptures and in the Early Church, ed. Hans-Georg Link. World Council of Churches Faith and Order Paper No. 119 (Geneva: WCC, 1984), 101; see also 95, 98. Given that this thesis concerns ecclesiology, I will utilise the larger treatment on the marks as outlined in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. Additionally, ‘while the so called “apostles creed”, which originated in Rome has been received and used only in the Christian west, the Nicene Creed unites all parts of the Christian church, East and West’. World Council of Churches, Confessing the One Faith: An Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic Faith as It Is Confessed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381), Faith and Order Paper No. 153, rev. ed. (Geneva: WCC, 2010), 5. For further material on the creeds of the early church, see John N. D. Kelly, Early Christian Creeds, 3rd ed. (Harlow, UK: Longman, 1972), and Andrew E. Burn, The Nicene Creed (London: Rivingtons, 1909).

and dynamic nature.\textsuperscript{18} From the time of the formulation of the Nicene-
Constantinopolitan Creed onwards, these ‘markers’ have continuously
served the church through times of tension and transition, earning them a
place that would appear to be unrivalled, given that across the globe on a
weekly basis the majority of churches confess a shared belief in\textsuperscript{19} the one,
holy, catholic and apostolic church.\textsuperscript{20} Further, the marks remain the most
widely accepted, ecumenically endorsed and commonly recited assertions
and affirmations of ecclesiology among the majority of churches worldwide.
Therefore, given the history of the marks and their standing and apparent
familiarity, one would think that these four words would also be among the

\textsuperscript{18} By way of definitions: Migliore defines ‘transcendence’ as follows: from the Latin
\textit{transcendere}, ‘stepping over’ or ‘going beyond’. As an attribute of God, transcendence
is God’s mode of being ‘beyond’ or ‘above’ the world. God’s being and power surpass
the world God has freely created and to which God freely relates. Migliore, \textit{Faith
and C. Stephen Evans (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 713–14, points out
the necessary connection and balance between God’s transcendence and God’s
immanence. ‘Immanence denotes the ongoing presence and activity of God in creation.
God both transcends creation and is immanent in it. As immanent in creation, God
sustains and preserves the creation, providentially guiding it not only in broad strokes
but also down to the smallest details (e.g., God the Father cares even for the sparrow
that falls to the ground – Matt 10:29). Without immanence, transcendence leads to
deism’ (713).

\textsuperscript{19} Three things to note: first, in contrast to the first person singular \textit{Apostles Creed} that
states ‘I believe in’, the \textit{Nicene Creed}’s confession is plural: ‘we believe in’. Second,
when gathered Christians commonly confess belief ‘in’ the ‘one, holy, catholic,
apostolic church’ the ‘intent is not to displace faith in God with faith in the church’;
rather ‘it means that they have faith that there indeed \textit{is} one holy apostolic, universal
church that has its life in God’. Thomas C. Oden, \textit{Life in the Spirit: Systematic
Theology}, vol. 3 (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1994), 261. Third, the confessional and
communal nature of the creed: ‘In the \textit{Nicene Creed} the individual joins with all the
baptized gathered together in each and every place, now and throughout the ages, in the
Church’s proclamation of faith: “we believe in”. The confession “we believe in”
articulates not only the trust of individuals in God’s grace, but it also affirms the trust of
the whole Church in God. There is a bond of communion among those who join
together in maintaining a common confession of their faith. However, as long as the
churches which confess the Creed are not united with one another, the visible
communion of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church remains impaired’. World

\textsuperscript{20} For the most part these are Christians who make up the traditional mainline churches
such as the Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Orthodox, Lutherans and a number of
Protestant churches. It is important to note that while denominational variations of
liturgies do exist (e.g. the Anglican \textit{Book of Common Prayer} [1662] refers to only three
marks: ‘one, catholic, apostolic’), for the most part, the Nicene marks are addressed and
engaged with to some degree amongst these mainline churches.
http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/1662/baskerville.htm, accessed 16 November
2013.
most understood and easily employed across the Christian community. However, while there is commonality in agreeing to what the four marks are, a closer look reveals that Christian understanding of the marks is characterised by division (denominational and otherwise). This immediately gives rise to questions regarding the cohesive understanding of the marks and to reservation about their currency within contemporary ecclesiology. It further raises questions as to the efficiency of the use of the marks in broader contexts. Specifically, if the classical marks of the church are misunderstood within the bounds of contemporary ecclesiology, can they be useful in aiding the church to navigate the tensions and concerns of the twenty-first century?

1.1: The Challenge of Reading the ‘Marks’ in a Complex World

It is readily documented that the twenty-first-century church is marked by themes of globalism, pluralism and postmodernism. This would suggest that across the ecclesial landscape tension exists, as both the local church and the global church alike must scramble to self-identify among competing criteria. Other pressures on the church include the shift in Christian population from the West to the global South, resulting in rising contextual issues and theologies, as well as an increase in the curiosity of some within the Western population to explore a range of spiritual options. In the midst of this, traditional and mainline churches are bombarded with questions regarding issues of sexuality, gender and leadership. Taken together these pressures and issues add to the confusion of what it means to be the church today. Although ecclesial self-identifying and defining the need for
contextual mission is no new task for the church that bears the motto *semper reformanda* (the church is always to be reformed), it is nonetheless not an easy task in a postmodern environment of contrasting voices that will no longer recognise absolutes. In the sweep of postmodernism, the institutionalised church (along with many other forms of authority) suffers the fate of being viewed with suspicion and discarded by those who prefer a postmodern or pluralist viewpoint. In a bid to remain relevant some of the newer ecclesial communities often attempt to remove as many barriers as possible in sharing the gospel message (e.g. seeker-sensitive services). Grand statements and declarations of the church being ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ seem to resound with elitism and exclusivity and therefore act as a barrier to the gospel being preached. That some churches downplay this supposedly elitist statement guarantees that the classical marks receive little or no profile outside the church and it is questionable how much profile they receive within. Thus the marks suffer from being misunderstood.

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21 According to Stanley Grenz, ‘The postmodern worldview operates with a community-based understanding of truth. It affirms that whatever we accept as truth and even the way we envision truth are dependent on the community in which we participate. Further, and far more radically, the postmodern worldview affirms that this relativity extends beyond our perceptions of truth to its essence: there is no absolute truth; rather, truth is relative to the community in which we participate’. Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 8, italics in original. See also chapter 5 of his work for a helpful overview to the ‘complex phenomenon’ of ‘postmodernism’, and chapter 7, where he considers the Christian gospel within a postmodern context.

22 While many of the older denominations hold onto their traditional forms of liturgies, which can include language that is hard to understand (e.g. terms like ‘begotten, not made, consubstantial with Father’), many newer forms of ‘church’ are opting for jargon-free expressions of church and worship in order to be as inclusive as possible. ‘Seeker sensitive’ services refer to the style of services that developed in the late 1980s and early 1990s in which the more traditional forms of church services and liturgy were replaced or added to with gatherings that were presented in a non-traditional format. One church pastor has written: ‘Five years ago we began a service … we called “Saturday Night – A Place to Answer Questions”. The format is non- (almost anti-) traditional. The music is contemporary rock and roll. We use drama. The dress code is blue jeans and t-shirts … I give a talk (sermon) while sitting on a bar stool … and at the end of the talk I receive written questions from the audience. That is – and is not – about all there is to it’. Ed Dobson, *Starting a Seeker Sensitive Service: How Traditional Churches Can Reach the Unchurched* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993), 7.
by those both inside and outside the ecclesial community. While it used to be that the classical marks of the church were a means and method for authenticating and demarcating the nature and mission of the church, today it would seem that they are often viewed as dogmatic historical relics of an institutionalised church that can serve the church only through rote recitation and memorisation.

The problem is exacerbated when contemporary churches present a divided front on a range of issues (e.g. women in leadership, same-sex marriage). It is not surprising that the marks prove to be yet another casualty of division and discord as the church struggles with the ability to view the marks in a uniform way. While creedal churches such as the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran and Orthodox traditions would see the

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23 By way of example, see William Madges and Michael J. Daley, *The Many Marks of the Church* (New London, CT: Twenty-Third, 2006), 1. In this introduction, on p. 1, Daley writes:

A few months ago, on successive evenings, I was out with two friends. During the course of our conversations, they both asked if I was working on any writing projects. “Yes,” I replied, “I’m working on a book about the marks of the church.” Polite nods followed but they didn’t appear to have any idea as to the nature of the project. In an attempt to give my friends an understanding of the book I was working on, I offered them the word “one”. On both occasions it was met with a long, confused pause. Then I said “holy”. Looking at them I could tell that they were trying to make the connection between the phrases “the marks of the church” and the words “one” and “holy.” To no avail. By “catholic” it clicked though. They were able to finish it out and end with “apostolic.” More than likely we’ve all said them (or grew up saying them) – “one, holy catholic and apostolic.” They are the traditional and classical marks of the church. After a lifetime of repetition, though, these words, and with it the whole of the Nicene Creed, have lost some of their meaning for many people in the church. Perhaps we’ve fallen victim to the importance of valuing memorization over lived faith. Maybe familiarity has bred contempt, or, at least, indifference. Whatever the case, the marks’ present “sleep-inducing” quality is unfortunate. There is so much potential for the marks to challenge and form the church … With this present state in mind, it is high time to retrieve the significance of the traditional marks of the church.

24 One contemporary Lutheran theologian suggests that the biggest ‘hurdles’ are not the ones outside the church but the ones inside it. This author lists four specific hurdles that the Lutheran church needs to get over: the fear of evangelism, preferred homogeneity, its philosophical approach to treating the gospel as merely ‘good advice’, and their theological stance of *sola gratia* (grace alone), which can often inhibit their ability to see how they ‘need’ to ‘do’ anything with regard to their salvation or Christian walk. See Kelly Fryer, ‘The Gift Is a Call’, in *The Evangelizing Church: A Lutheran Contribution*, ed. Richard Bliese and Craig Van Gelder (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005), 17–21.
marks as ecclesiological ‘givens’ within their ecclesiology, some Protestants on account of their commitment to *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone) have paid less attention to the creeds and therefore also to the marks of the church.\(^{25}\) However within Protestantism there are pockets of understanding and most adherents would readily agree to the concepts of one, holy, catholic and apostolic in some form, even if they did not recognise these concepts as being the classical marks of the church. Yet there would be those amongst this group who, for the most part, would be ‘unaware’ of the existence of the marks.\(^{26}\) As will be outlined in chapter 2 of this thesis, even for those churches who ‘hold’ to the marks of the church, there is no common consensus or understanding on defining them. Rather the marks are often defined along the divisional lines of denomination and/or ministry practice preferences.\(^{27}\) This adds a renewed challenge to the marks of the

\(^{25}\) It should be noted that many Anglicans and Lutherans would consider themselves to be Protestants and to suggest otherwise for some is highly debatable. For more on this, see Brad Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), esp. chap. 2. See also Paul Avis, *The Christian Church: An Introduction to the Major Traditions* (London: SPCK, 2002), where Avis clearly identifies that ‘Anglicans consistently define themselves as *both* catholic and reformed’ (141–42). The Protestants I am specifically referring to are those Reformation offshoots that have shaken off all forms of tradition in preference for Scripture alone as the ultimate authority. These churches consider themselves to be non-creedal and do not usually recite the Nicene or any other creed. However, they would presumably adhere to the concepts of one, holy, catholic and apostolic as biblical and patristic truths. In its document, *Confessing the One Faith*, the World Council of Churches points out that: ‘The so called “non-creedal” churches have been particularly sensitive to the danger of creedal formulas. These formulas can easily degenerate into formalism, at the expense of the nature of faith as a personal confession and commitment. They may also be misused when their acceptance is enforced upon persons, thus violating their consciences’ (§13, p. xxii).

\(^{26}\) Regarding those ‘unaware’, I am thinking specifically of the newer denominations (e.g. Pentecostals, Charismatics) or other free church forms (e.g. missional communities, fresh expressions or ‘emergent’ styles) or even of a number of post-Reformation denominations that tout ‘no creed but the bible’, such as the Baptists. For further reading, see Avis, *Christian Church*, and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical, and Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2002).

\(^{27}\) E.g. see Amos Yong, ‘The Marks of the Church: A Pentecostal Re-Reading’, *Evangelical Review of Theology* 26, no. 1 (2002): 45–67. Yong starts from a Pentecostal position and views the marks through a ‘pneumatological’ lens. See also Van Engen, *God’s Missionary People*. Van Engen views the marks through the lens of mission. Further treatment on denominational preferences will be considered in chapters 2 and 6 of this thesis.
church and to ecclesiology as a whole, especially when one considers the number of new denominations being added annually to the ecclesial landscape.  

As will be seen, tensions exist between the aspirations behind the marks and the empirical church. I identify in particular five sources of tension. First, how can the church claim to be ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ when the empirical evidence of multiple denominations would suggest otherwise? It is not sufficient to simply ignore the disparity by suggesting that fulfilment of the marks of the church is a matter to be left solely for the eschaton to resolve. Küng highlights the tension by suggesting that ‘however loudly a church might proclaim itself one, holy, catholic and apostolic’, if the signs ‘exist in such a way that they are no longer seen to be convincing from outside … or inside … they have lost their illuminating power’. The further effect is that people ‘have lost their faith because of the church or believe in spite of it’. This disparity and


29 The idea that the marks of the church present an ‘idealised’ form of church is closely linked to the concepts of ‘mystical’, ‘invisible’ and ‘visible’ church. The prevailing thought is that the ‘visible’ church cannot display the marks of the church but that the ‘invisible’ church does, as does the mystical church. (For discussion on these terms, mystical, visible, invisible, see Stanley Grenz, Theology for the Community of God, [Vancouver: Eerdmans and Regent College Publishing, 2000], 467). In this line of thinking, the marks, however, will not be fully realised until the eschaton, when all things will be made new, perfect and find complete fulfilment. A recent notable opposing view is that of Luke Timothy Johnson, The Creed: What Christians Believe and Why It Matters (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 275, who boldly states that the ‘four marks of the church describe an ideal that the church has never and will never fully realise’ (emphasis added).

30 Küng, The Church, 268.

31 Ibid.
incongruity in self-declaration without demonstration presents a problem for the church today and one that the church must be prepared to address.

A second source of tension has to do with the contemporary church’s continuity with its heritage even as it presses forward in its mission. The classical marks of the church have served the church throughout history as defining and demarcating markers while at the same time they have safeguarded the church’s orthodoxy. The marks of the church provide this link – of being a guiding principle that connects the church doctrinally both historically and eschatologically. Further still, these four attributes ‘relate both to the nature of God’s own being and to the practical demands of authentic mission’, ensuing that if ‘any one of them is impaired, the Church’s mission is compromised’.\(^{32}\) In order for the contemporary church to successfully engage its future, it must not neglect its past, lest it proceed with ignorance and arrogance.

A third tension is in relation to the usability of the marks of the church by all ecclesial communities. ‘Usable’, as defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, is: ‘(1) capable of being used; and (2) in good enough condition to be used, that is convenient and practicable for use’.\(^{33}\) Synonyms include ‘valuable’, ‘employable’, ‘fit’, ‘functional’, ‘operable’, ‘practicable’, ‘serviceable’, and ‘useful’.\(^{34}\) As already mentioned and as will be further outlined in the historical retracing of the marks in chapter 2 of this thesis, in today’s setting it would appear that acknowledgment of the historical marks


of the church occurs within only certain denominations. This raises questions as to the usability of the marks, their availability and employability across the entire body of Christ. In fact I argue that given their lack of employment across the body of Christ, this in essence renders them unusable by all because, as Rausch points out, no one church can ‘fully realize what it means to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic; each embodies important aspects of these marks’, and so they all need each other to fully embody them.\(^{35}\) It is not a stretch to suggest that this lack of use is due in part to the institutional packaging of the marks that sees the marks noted by their denominational distinctions from one another. Theologian Hans Küng suggests that ‘these four credal attributes have become in our post-medieval, post-Reformation theology more and more four marks of distinction to be used apologetically’.\(^{36}\) This would appear to be in contrast with their original purpose, in which the marks were meant to be ‘primarily descriptive’ of the church in an effort to state ‘what the one Church was in Christ’.\(^{37}\)

This reveals a fourth tension between the marks and the church – a tension that relates to current literacy concerning the marks. Chapter 2 explores the status of the marks in the twenty-first-century context and reveals that the marks have been relegated to an institutional handling of them. As a result of this handling, the marks have suffered the same fate as the church, in which they are permeated with denominational differences and nuanced understanding on the one hand through to unfamiliarity and


complete ignorance on the other. Therefore from a twenty-first-century perspective, while there is some consensus in naming the ‘traditional’ marks of the church, significant disagreement surrounds the defined meanings of the marks and how they are to be applied to modern ecclesial assemblies. Attempts to overcome this disagreement have revealed sharp denominational boundary lines. This further reveals an issue in regard to current literacy concerning the marks because, without agreed meanings, and with only some churches aware of and using the marks, new generations of Christians are not being taught to read and understand these ‘gifts’ and their resultant imperatives. This presents at least two problems concerning dialogue for the current church. First, it presents problems for existing churches that already adhere to the marks of the church. For instance, how are they to engage with one another in discussion or appropriation of the marks of the church when denominational preferences draw sharp boundaries and take priority? Second, it identifies the difficulties that are faced by new churches that are unfamiliar with the marks of the church. How might they enter into the conversation when they as institutions have no prior history with the marks and potentially little understanding about how to utilise the marks of the church in ecclesial contexts? In either scenario, attempts to engage in dialogue surrounding the marks could quickly degenerate into denominational disputes over definitions. Discussion around the marks of the church that is based solely upon denominational definitions with the hope of reaching consensus is not an adequate way to address the issues or concerns regarding the marks, but is likely to end in an interdenominational stalemate. Further, this lack of dialogue (due to the churches’ inability to transcend denominational
differences concerning the marks) could limit the amount of literacy, profile and fresh engagement that the marks could enjoy. Literacy has to do with having knowledge of a particular field or subject; conversely ‘illiteracy’ is ‘the state of not having knowledge of a particular subject’. 38 If the various denominational expressions of church are not engaging with one another in discussion of the marks, or if the marks of the church do not have a profile within the various denominations, illiteracy (i.e. lack of literacy and appropriation) regarding the marks of the church is the likely outcome. 39 Further, this approach can only ever reproduce the same dogmatic and static results, leaving any fresh appropriation or understanding of the marks undiscovered.

A fifth tension concerns the appearance that the church has lost its genuinely theological basis for the marks. Various theologians have appealed to viewing the marks through a lens of ‘gift and task’ as a helpful way to accommodate the ‘already’ and ‘not yet’ dimensions of the marks. As such, the marks are both a ‘gift’ to be received and a ‘task’ to be accomplished. Further, the marks are not initiated from within the church but instead are initiated and sustained outside the church, revealing a transcendent and dynamic nature to the marks. This approach suggests that the marks of the church originate and are located within the triune God. In this case, then, a solely institutional handing of the marks is inadequate and needs to be addressed and corrected. This will be the concern taken up in


39 As evidenced in the earlier Madges and Daley quote located in footnote 23 of this chapter. Madges and Daley, Many Marks, 1.
chapter 3, where an appeal is made to engage with the marks theologically in an effort to move beyond the interdenominational impasse on dialogue and to reclaim the critical theological function of the marks.

These identified tensions present a problem for the twenty-first-century church because, as Schillebeeckx rightly notes, the ‘four properties’ stand as a ‘summons’ to all the churches. While the expression of one, holy, catholic and apostolic will never be fully realised this side of the eschaton, it is the church’s responsibility in every generation to continue to find means and methods for accepting both this gift and its associated task and to realise some form of visible representation of this in the here and now. Therefore the church of the twenty-first century needs to find a way to engage with the marks of the church so that they can be embraced by all ecclesial expressions instead of serving only some ecclesial traditions.

Thus some form of fresh engagement with the marks is necessary.

Moltmann, in discussing the use of the marks, adds:

If we see them as conditions (criteria) of the true church, then we look for what distinguishes it from the false church, and ask what the premises are for fellowship between the different churches. If we see them as the signs (signa) or characteristics (notate) of the church, then we ask about the form by which it can be recognized in the world and their character as testimony. It is therefore important to substantiate these statements about

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41 Realistically we need to anticipate (and accommodate) the response of those churches that refuse to engage with this process. However, although their reaction may be against creedal formulaires, presumably their aversion is not against Scripture. Nor would they have an aversion to the concepts of ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’, especially if the two most contested marks (‘one’ and ‘apostolic’) were understood to be about unity in Christ rather than about a specific denomination or other authority being lorded over all others, and as long as ‘apostolic’ is about teaching what the apostles taught and not solely about succession. Of interest to note, however, are the attempts made by the World Council of Churches document *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, which argues that both apostolic teaching and succession are recognised as equal rather than as one being subordinated in favour of the other. Therefore the succession model is seen as one way the church has, and continues to express, the idea of ‘apostolic’. World Council of Churches, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*: Faith and Order Paper No. 111, the ‘Lima Text’ (Geneva: WCC, 1982), §§34–38, pp. 28–30.
the church theologically and fully if we are to legitimate their use and avoid one-sidedness. The goal of this thesis – to investigate the marks of the church both historically and theologically before offering a way to move past the impasse on dialogue and institutional barriers.

1.2: The Research Question:

Can the classical marks of the church have a continuing and contemporary relevance for the church in the twenty-first century?

It is important to clarify that the marks of the church are themselves not in question. The classical marks have a reputable biblical and historical standing that attests to their transcendent and dynamic nature. Concern arises, however, over how the church of the twenty-first century is to understand, engage with and appropriate these historic attributes. It is at this point that engaging with the marks in a fresh and dynamic way could prove useful. This thesis aims to create a paradigm of ‘gift and task’ through which the marks of the church could be historically understood,


43 Of noted interest, various theologians have proffered additional marks. Luther included baptism, the cross, prayer, praise, thanksgiving and discipleship through suffering. Walther von Loewenich, Luther’s Theology of the Cross (Belfast: Christian Journals, 1976), 127. In discussing the ‘practical marks’ of the church, Bloesch suggests the Pietists would include the ‘fellowship of love’, ‘urgency of mission’, and ‘good Samaritan service’ to their list of marks; the Anabaptist would suggest the primary marks of the church are ‘peace, suffering, spiritual faithfulness, and separation from sin’; the Pentecostals would focus on ‘signs and wonders’; Bonhoeffer would add the need to live a life in ‘solidarity’ with other believers and with one’s neighbours as one practises ‘mutual confession of sins’ and ‘intercessory prayer’; and liberation theology would attend to ‘solidarity with the poor’, ‘sensitivity to oppression’, and the ‘search for justice and peace’ as primary ‘marks’. Bloesch, The Church, 104–7. In the same work, Bloesch also helpfully adds a section on the marks of the ‘false church’ or the ‘anti-marks’ of the church (109–13). More recently Madges and Daley’s Many Marks lists thirty-four marks of the church. Nevertheless, it is important to reiterate that the original four classical marks of the church are not being refuted, but rather stand as the primary consensus.
contextually assessed and theologically reclaimed in order that the current and future church may find a way forward. Viewing the marks of the church as gift and task is not new in and of itself. Various theologians have offered this concept as a helpful tool in order to accommodate the tension between the ‘already’ and the ‘not yet’ aspects of the marks of the church.

However, the aim of this thesis is to take the conception of ‘gift and task’ one step further to create a communicative, analytical and theological paradigm in which to engage with the marks of the church helpfully in the twenty-first century. Creating a paradigm that can offer the church a way forward through the interdenominational and institutional impasse is required to produce suitable outcomes that can address the diversity of expression found in the ecclesial field concerning the marks of the church. The inability to transcend difference is due in part to the marks of the church being treated statically (e.g. by their being concretely defined and permeated with denominational division) instead of dynamically. A static approach has put up barriers to open dialogue, creating additional stumbling blocks with regard to the marks concerning literacy, their profile, and fresh engagement with them. The end result is that the marks of the church for the most part sit as an under-utilised resource that has been relegated to
divisional definitions or weekly rote recitation. The marks of the church could be utilised as an effective means for authenticating and demarcating the nature and mission of the church of the twenty-first century. They carry the history of already having been utilised by the church during times of tension and transition to combat heresy, to demarcate the church in the midst of plurality, to challenge the church in regard to her mission, and to

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44 Further discussion on gift and task will be undertaken in chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis.
bear witness to God’s authorship and ownership of the church. Creating a paradigm based on ‘gift and task’ offers a new and constructive process that can serve as a communicative and analytical tool that: (1) creates a fresh way to discuss the marks of the church as it seeks to address current tensions; and (2) enables self-examination for the present and future church.

1.3: The Significance of the Present Study

The marks of the church present a problem to the church today, because they are often stated dogmatically by some denominations yet not fully understood or even accepted by other denominations. The marks are declared as attributes of the church but are not always evidenced as visible realities. The marks themselves have held a historic position for centuries without being refuted and yet questions surround their contemporary currency, usage and profile. This highlights an obvious question: If the marks of the church have held a position of significance within the church’s history, why is there no apparent felt need in the twenty-first-century ecclesial community to engage with them in a fresh way? For church leaders, academics or theologians in the twenty-first century simply to be able to define the marks historically or to understand and differentiate the denominational viewpoints does not value, engage or appropriate the marks of the church as the defining and directing attributes that they are. Nor does it value the marks or pay homage to them simply to recite them weekly by rote. These approaches are far too limiting, exhibiting reductionism in action as they can only treat the marks as static and dogmatic. The interdenominational impasse on the marks has affected the ability of the
church to translate the marks into a usable format across the body of Christ and the church would appear to be debilitated in its efforts to address this. If current methods of engagement with the marks of the church are no longer worthwhile, then the church must find a new way to uphold, value and engage with the marks lest the church lose a vital part of its self-understanding and direction for mission. There must be a move beyond staid and dogmatic approaches toward innovative initiatives. Fresh engagement with the marks must be employed to keep the church on the cutting edge of ecclesial praxis and faithful to its nature and mission.

To declare in the twenty-first century that the church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic is a bewildering and perplexing statement that raises more questions than it answers. Therefore, research on the marks has significance because, despite their longstanding history and links to the early church, without careful attention to them, the potential exists for their value to be neglected and lost. Further, if, as I argue in chapter 3 of this thesis, there has been a loss of critical theological function on the marks, then not only is there a need to reclaim the marks theologically but there is also a need to investigate the consequences for ecclesiology and praxis that have resulted from the church losing its critical theological function of the marks. This thesis then offers a fresh approach that views the marks of the church through a communicative, analytical and theological paradigm of ‘gift and task’ that addresses the identified tensions within, and the concerns of, the twenty-first-century church and points toward a greater understanding of their significance.
1.4: Thesis Outline

Having presented the tensions and concerns surrounding the classical marks of the church, the remainder of this thesis sets out to investigate the marks historically and theologically before offering a fresh way of engaging with the marks through a ‘gift-task’ paradigm. Therefore in chapter 2 I will discuss the marks of the church through the terrains of history from their early patristic conceptions through to their twenty-first-century context. In chapter 3, I will consider the marks of the church theologically through a case study of Karl Barth’s contribution to the marks in relation to the triune God. In chapter 4, I will discuss and identify the fundamental elements required to develop a gift-task paradigm as communicative, analytical and theological. In doing so I will draw from the communicative social theories of Henry Wieman and Jürgen Habermas and outline the analytical aspect of the paradigm that considers what can be learnt from the historical overview of the marks. In chapter 5, these three elements (communicative, analytical and theological) will be drawn together more fully in a concrete and specific proposal of the gift-task paradigm. The ‘testing’ of this paradigm, in chapter 6, will be achieved by engaging with the views of various denominationally affiliated contemporary theologians concerning their perspective on the classical marks of the church. This work is undertaken in

45 By way of differentiation, I will use ‘gift and task’ to refer to the already established conception of the marks of the church. When discussing my proposed paradigm I will use ‘gift-task’. This gift-task paradigm is an original work. While theologians have utilised ‘gift and task’ as a means to discuss the marks of the church, I am unaware of any work in which gift and task are brought together in a communicative and analytical paradigm. I am further unaware of any other theological work in which Wieman and Habermas are brought together to discuss the marks of the church – or any other theological issue. However, in my research I did locate one work within the field of psychology that combined the processes of these two authors for the purpose of discussing the concept of ‘self’. For more information on this, see Paul Rasor, ‘Intersubjective Communication and the Self in Wieman and Habermas’, American Journal of Theology and Philosophy 21, no. 3 (September 2000): 269–87.
order to determine what value the paradigm might add to their understanding of the marks just as the paradigm is also tested for its value as a beneficial tool in the process. In chapter 7, I will conclude the thesis by summarising the work done, considering its benefits and limitations, and offering suggestions for further study on the classical marks of the church.
Chapter 2

The ‘Marks of the Church’ through the Terrains of History

Theological and academic literature from the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has noted that, regarding the marks of the church and their history, two main historical time periods can quickly be identified where the marks appear more prominent: (1) during the fourth century, in which the marks emerged as a cohesive unit, as outlined in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed; and (2) during the sixteenth-century European Reformation, when the marks of the church underwent review by the Protestant Reformers. However, a closer look (as will be shown in this chapter) reveals that, although the marks may have received greater attention during the fourth and sixteenth centuries, it should not be assumed that the marks lacked prominence during other times. Rather the marks of the church have been utilised as a resource by the church during times of tension and transition throughout various eras. Granted each period presented its own sociopolitical concerns that caused treatment of the marks to vary in how they were appropriated and utilised, a closer look at church history, specifically in relation to the development of the marks, reveals that the marks have enjoyed a continued presence within the life of the church.

That being established, for the purposes of this chapter I will briefly discuss the historical development of the marks, starting with their patristic renderings before engaging with their fourth-century arrival, their medieval perspective, their sixteenth-century enhancement, and their twentieth-century ecumenical hopes, before describing the marks from a twenty-first-century perspective, noting the most pressing denominational differences. The purpose of this is twofold: (1) to gain a better historical understanding
of the treatment of the marks; and (2) to use this information as a foundational directive in how contemporary church can find ways to engage with the marks, learning from past approaches that will aid in creating the analytical aspect of the gift-task paradigm.

2.1: The Patristic Period: Early Conceptions

We catch a glimpse of the earliest usage and understanding of the marks of the church by looking at the period just prior to their inaugural appearance as a cohesive unit. Ignatius of Antioch, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, ‘exhorts believers’ that they should ‘run together in accordance with the will of God’, suggesting that their happiness is found as they are ‘joined to him as the Church is to Jesus Christ, and as Jesus Christ is to the Father, that so all things may agree in unity’.1 The directive in his Epistle to the Magnesians is that they ‘be established in faith and unity’.2 The Trallians are to ‘continue in unity and love’, and the Philadelphians are told to ‘avoid schisms’ and are instead ‘exhorted’ to ‘unity’.3

Irenaeus of Lyons in Against Heresies dedicates a section to the ‘unity of the faith of the church’.4 He writes:

the Church, having received this preaching and this faith, although scattered throughout the whole world, yet, as if occupying but one house, carefully preserves it. She also

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believes these points [of doctrine] just as if she had but one soul, and one and the same heart, and she proclaims them, and teaches them, and hands them down, with perfect harmony, as if she possessed only one mouth.\(^5\)

Cyprian of Carthage in *On the Unity of the Church* determines that the ‘church is one’, because God ‘set forth unity’ in that ‘He arranged by His authority the origin of that unity’.\(^6\) Going further in his efforts to combat heresy and schism (using unity as a means to avoid schism), Cyprian appeals to the apostle Paul in Ephesians and links ‘unity’ with ‘apostolicity’. He questions the ‘faith’ of those who ‘do not hold this unity of the church’ but who ‘strive against’ and ‘resist the Church’.\(^7\) He appeals to Scripture, including Paul’s letters, in regard to unity, stating ‘the blessed Apostle Paul teaches the same thing, and sets forth the sacrament of unity, saying, “There is one body and one spirit, one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God”’\(^8\). Cyprian further contends that it is the ‘bishops who preside in the Church’ and therefore who ought to therefore firmly ‘hold and assert’ this unity so that they may ‘also prove the episcopate itself to be one and undivided’.\(^9\)

Cyprian was not the first to make this link. Ignatius had earlier combined unity and apostolicity: ‘Wherefore it is fitting that ye also should run together in accordance with the will of the bishop who by God’s


\(^7\) Ibid.

\(^8\) Ibid. While Cyprian identifies Paul as the author of Ephesians, modern scholarship debates whether Paul or someone using the pseudonym ‘Paul’ wrote Ephesians. For further discussion on this, see Frank Theilman, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), pp. 1ff.

appointment rules over you’. Yet it is Clement of Rome who makes the earliest and possibly first signal in setting forth the concept of what would later develop into the understanding of ‘apostolic succession’. Keeping with the theme of ‘unity’, Clement opens his first epistle to the Corinthians with ‘praise’ for ‘breaking forth of the schism among them’. He later addresses the issue of ‘blameless’ men who have been removed from their positions despite having fulfilled their roles ‘blamelessly and holily’. He contends that they be reinstated as they ‘cannot be justly dismissed from the ministry’ because they were ‘appointed by’ the apostles or ‘afterwards by other eminent men’. He suggests that the apostles through revelation ‘knew’ that ‘there would be strife on account of the office of the episcopate’ and therefore ‘appointed those [ministers] already mentioned, and afterwards gave instructions that when these should fall asleep, other approved men should succeed them in their ministry’.  

While the theme of catholicity is less developed, it too makes an early appearance in Ignatius’s letter to the Smyrnaeans, in which he states:

‘Where the bishop is present, there let the congregation gather, just as where

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10 Ignatius of Antioch, Epistle to the Ephesians, chap. IV, pp. 50–51.
11 ‘Apostolic succession’, as taught by the Roman Catholic Church, is considered to be the uninterrupted transmission of spiritual and temporal authority from the apostles (especially Peter) through successive popes and bishops. This concept is denied by most Protestants. Nevertheless, Anglican ecclesiology would appear to fall into both camps. As Paul Avis points out: ‘Anglicans consistently define themselves as both catholic and reformed. On the one hand, they affirm the ecumenical creeds of the early Church and continue the threefold ministry of bishops, priests (presbyters) and deacons from patristic times … But, on the other hand, Anglicanism has been permanently shaped in crucial ways by the Reformation. It affirms the centrality of Scripture … upholds justification by grace through faith … ordained ministers are free to marry … ordains women as deacons and priests (and in some provinces as bishops) … Anglicanism therefore bears the essential marks of reformed Christianity’. Paul Avis, The Christian Church: An Introduction to the Major Traditions (London: SPCK, 2002), 141–42, italics in original.
13 Ibid., chap. XLIV, pp. 17–18.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church’.  

In order to refute heretics Irenaeus appeals to ‘catholicity’ in Against Heresies by dedicating a chapter entitled: ‘The truth is to be found nowhere else but in the Catholic Church, the sole depository of apostolical doctrine. Heresies are of recent formation, and cannot trace their origin up to the apostles’.  

Combining the concepts of ‘catholic’ and ‘holy’, the letter entitled The Martyrdom of Polycarp is addressed to ‘the Church of God which sojourns at Smyrna, to the Church of God sojourning in Philomelium, and to all the congregations of the Holy and Catholic Church in every place’. The author refers to a prayer of Polycarp’s in which he is said to have prayed for the ‘whole Catholic Church throughout the world’.  

Apart from the Martyrdom of Polycarp’s mention of ‘holy’ as connected to the church, the writings of the Shepherd of Hermas has multiple and frequent references to the ‘holy church’. This work is broken into sections of ‘visions’, ‘commandments’ and ‘similitudes’, and presents not only an exalted view of the church, but also a sincere desire for its members to maintain moral purity. Cyril of Jerusalem, in discussing the

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17 Irenaeus, Against Heresies, bk. 3, chap. IV, p. 417.  
19 Ibid., §8, pp. 151–52.  
‘holy’ church, says it is ‘catholic’ because ‘it extends over all the world’. He adds that if one is ever ‘sojourning in cities’, they should ‘inquire … not merely where the Church is, but where is the Catholic Church. For this is the peculiar name of this Holy Church’.

From this brief sketch of a handful of patristic writers one can see that the concepts of ‘one’, ‘holy’, ‘catholic’ and ‘apostolic’ were already beginning to be formulated within the early church. While at this point there is no single agreed-upon definition for each of these terms, one can glean a sincere desire among the patristic writings for unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity to be indicative descriptors of the church, even if the empirical evidence of the time suggests that these concepts were more ‘ideals’ than realities, given the many schisms that were occurring within the early church. Nevertheless, these four terms – not yet considered to be the ‘marks of the church’ – were gaining currency within the early church, as is demonstrated by the patristic literature of that period. While the individual words (later to be considered the marks) were primarily utilised as descriptors of the church, there is also evidence to support their future use and further development as apologetic tools used to address schism and

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21 Although Cyril of Jerusalem (c.315–386) is dated later than the early church fathers, he is included here to round out the thinking that was taking place at the time up to or near the appearance of the Nicene Creed in 381.


23 Ibid., §26, p. 140.

24 Stephen Pickard, *Seeking the Church: An Introduction to Ecclesiology* (London: SCM, 2010), 126, suggests that the earliest use of marks was primarily ‘descriptive’ in an effort to state what the ‘one Church was in Christ’.

25 As noted by Jay: while the patristic authors were primarily concerned with theological issues relating to the ‘Person of Christ in relation to the doctrine of God’, and would appear to not be specifically addressing the ‘nature of the Church as a particular theological problem’, these ‘articles of Christian faith … are all integrally related’ and will be ‘later drawn together in the creeds’. Eric G. Jay, *The Church: Its Changing Image through Twenty Centuries* (London: SPCK, 1977), vol. 1, p. 29.
heresy. Apart from the example already offered of Irenaeus’s use of ‘catholicity’, he also appeals to ‘apostolicity’, suggesting that the church holds the ‘apostolic tradition’. Following on from Clement’s lead, then, Irenaeus presents the next building block in the move towards what will later develop into the understanding of apostolic succession. This understanding becomes more pronounced after the four terms become fully established as ‘marks of the church’.

2.2: The Late Fourth Century: Welcoming the ‘Marks’

The full confession of ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ emerged from the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE and was further developed before it became part of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed in 381 and then ratified at Chalcedon (451). The birth of the marks eventuated because the councils were in a period of church development that involved self-examination and critique as it attempted to determine and answer the questions of ‘who’ or ‘what’ or ‘where’ is the church. That the marks had begun to be accepted as part of the church’s self-understanding has already been established, as is evidenced within the patristic writing of that time. It is obvious that

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26 Unity comes from being tied to the canon of faith, which the church holds. See ibid., 58, 67.
27 See ibid., 43.
28 Avery Dulles, A Church to Believe In: Discipleship and the Dynamics of Freedom (New York: Crossroad, 1984), says that: ‘The Council did not use the four adjectives of the creed as notes to be verified by empirical reason but as attributes to be accepted in faith’ (59). Quoting Vatican II, Lumen Gentium, no. 8, he notes: ‘the Constitution on the Church speaks of the “sole Church of Christ which in the Creed we profess to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic”. The Church and its attributes, therefore, are not fully visible’ (60).
29 Charles Van Engen, God’s Missionary People: Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1991), 36.
Augustine of Hippo found value in the contents of the creeds and intended their continued use in the body of Christ. This is witnessed in his teaching of the ‘catechumens’, where the creed is described as being a ‘symbol of faith … in which you express your belief’. ‘Competentes’ were told to ‘learn’, ‘rehearse’ and ‘remind’ themselves of it ‘daily’, allowing it to be their ‘wealth’ and a ‘daily clothing’ of their ‘soul’. The marks, being contained in the creeds, therefore would have been included in this process of learning and considered to be of great value to the teaching and understanding of the church. Church unity was of prime concern, as was the concern for foundational doctrinal consensus. For Augustine the majority of his writings are focused on refuting the Donatists, and his teaching often uses one of the various marks, with ‘unity’ (or ‘one’), not surprisingly, being of primary use to him. He charges the Donatists with being

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30 Although Augustine’s time period extends past the fourth century and into the fifth, he is included here because he is one of the most prolific writers on the church in this period. His adult conversion to Christianity in 387 falls within the period immediately following the council in 381, from when the ‘marks’ appeared as a cohesive unit.


33 Ibid.

34 For more works by Augustine, see his comprehensive treatment in Augustine, The Anti-Donatist Writings, in A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, ed. Philip Schaff, series 1, vol. 4, St. Augustin: The Writings Against the Manicheans and Against the Donatists, trans. J. R. King (Buffalo: Christian Literature Company, 1887), esp. 369–651, entitled: ‘The Anti-Donatist Writings’, which include: On Baptism, Against the Donatists, 411–514; Answers to Letters of Petilian, Bishop of Cirta, 519–628; and The Correction of the Donatists, 633–51. Donatism (named after Bishop Donatus Magnus) was a movement in the fourth-century African church that had developed a rigid view of holiness specifically to do with the sacraments and the need for the worthiness of the minister in administering them. Donatists took a hard line against any ‘lapsed’ clergy or laity, citing that any such ‘traditor’ could not be a member of the church and that anyone who had anything to do with them would also lose their right standing of holiness and cease to be a member of the church. For further reading, see Jay, The Church; Alister E. McGrath, Christian Theology: An Introduction, 4th ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007); John N. D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1978).
‘schismatics’ that ‘tear in pieces Christ’s body, which is the Church’.\textsuperscript{35} He tells them that he ‘grieves’ that they are ‘severed and separated from the Catholic Church, which is spread through the whole world’.\textsuperscript{36} This, in part, gives an initial clue as to how the term ‘catholicity’ was being utilised at that time by Augustine – geographically. The fact that ‘apostolic succession’ is also on his mind can be gleaned from another writing in which he understands that the church’s catholicity consists of being in communion with the episcopal see of Rome:

Having therefore laid aside that question as one on which there was a doubt, I asked how they could justify their separation of themselves from all other Christians who had done them no wrong, who throughout the world preserved the order of succession, and were established in the most ancient churches, but had no knowledge whatever as to who were traditors in Africa; and who assuredly could not hold communion with others than those who they had heard of as occupying the episcopal sees.\textsuperscript{37}

‘Holiness’ was also a subject familiar to Augustine. In contrast to the Donatists, who maintained that the present church was without ‘spot or wrinkle’, Augustine’s approach was one of a mixed church that ‘tolerated’ the sinful without ‘consenting to or condoning’ their sins.\textsuperscript{38} Instead, he affirms that ‘The Lord knoweth them that are His’ and ‘who are the called


\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., Letter XLIV, chap. 3, §5, p. 287. ‘Traditor’ is a Latin term meaning ‘one who hands over’ and refers to those who betrayed their fellow Christians by handing them over for persecution or to those who had handed over sacred texts to be burned. The Donatists argued against any traditors being returned to positions of authority in the church.

Augustine’s treatment of holiness is the first of its kind and one that would serve to provide the foundation for the later works of Calvin. In response to the Donatists, Augustine appealed to the use of the four marks and thus further developed the understanding and use of the marks during that period. Augustine’s desire was for church unity and he was willing to go farther in pursuit of ‘oneness’ than the Donatists were willing to go in their preference for ‘holiness’. While Augustine’s concept of ‘unity’ was still linked to unity to the church in Rome, he also saw unity tied to those who love God and their fellow Christians.

In considering the use of the marks during this period, we see that the church was experiencing challenges with unity (oneness) and the authoritative use of scriptural understanding (orthodoxy). During this period understanding of the marks seems to have vacillated between that of

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40 Specifically noted in Calvin’s doctrine of predestination and its link to Augustine’s stance that ‘the Lord knoweth them that are his’. Ibid.

41 Prior to Augustine, Optatus (370), Bishop of North Africa, also devoted much time to refuting the Donatists. For further reading, see Jay, *The Church*, 82–83.

42 Augustine, *Letters*, Letter XLIII, chap. VIII, §21, pp. 282–83. After spending much of point 21 outlining the faults of the Donatists, Augustine finishes by saying in essence – despite all this – have unity with them: ‘have fellowship with them, not in their deeds, but in the altar of Christ; so that not only do they avoid being defiled by them, but they deserve commendation and praise according to the word of God, because, in order to prevent the name of Christ from being reproached by odious schisms, they tolerate in the interest of unity that which in the interest of righteousness they hate’ (283).

43 Augustine, *Ten Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff, series 1, vol. 7, *St. Augustin: Homilies on the Gospel of John; Homilies on the First Epistle of John; Soliloquies*, trans. H. Browne (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1888), Homily X, §3, pp. 520–29. ‘Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth Him that begat … Therefore, he that loves the sons of God, loves the Son of God, and he that loves the Son of God, loves the Father; nor can any love the Father except he love the Son, and he that loves the sons, loves also the Son of God. What sons of God? The members of the Son of God. And by loving he becomes himself a member, and comes through love to be in the frame of the body of Christ, so there shall be one Christ, loving Himself. For when the members love one another, the body loves itself … When therefore thou loveth members of Christ, thou loveth Christ; when thou loveth Christ, thou loveth the Son of God; when thou loveth the Son of God, thou loveth also the Father. The love therefore cannot be separated into parts’ (521).
‘descriptors’ of the church and statements to be made in faith, on one hand, and statements of self-examination and critique, on the other. Furthermore, the marks were often employed as apologetic tools in order to address schisms and heresy. Eventually this apologetic approach would increase so that the marks would become boundary-maintaining markers, but at least at this point, the concern was for unity of the church and the maintaining of Truth. A form of apologetic use evidenced during this period was the preference to hold one mark in priority over the other three. This was most clearly demonstrated by the Donatists, who held that holiness should be the key feature of the church. This was a theme that had previously gained profile in the writings of the Shepherd of Hermas and was also picked up by the Montanists, who favoured rigorous discipline; the Montanist movement was supported by church father Tertullian, who agreed that the ‘holy church’ must exclude sinners. The issue is not that the Donatists (or Montanists) had a concern for holiness. The issue that arises is the way in which the mark of holiness was prioritised above the other three in an effort to exclude from the church those whom they deemed not holy enough or not holy in the right way. The Donatists’ prioritisation of the mark of holiness revealed their static and particular treatment of the marks, in which they favoured one mark to the neglect of the other three marks.

44 Pickard, *Seeking the Church*, 126, suggests that the earliest use of the marks was ‘primarily descriptive’ in an effort to state what the ‘one Church was in Christ’. Van Engen, *God’s Missionary People*, 61, says: ‘In the early Church’s self-perception unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity were assumed criteria by which to measure various errors as they appeared. Later confessions fixed them as points of reference by which to measure truth’.

45 Pickard, *Seeking the Church*, 126, suggests that the use of the marks in an ‘apologetic manner’ leads to understanding them as ‘boundary markers’ – a concept that is sharply employed during the sixteenth-century Reformation.

46 Jay, *The Church*, 39, suggests that by the Shepherd of Hermas ‘stressing holiness as an essential mark of the Church [this] tends to neglect other important aspects of its nature’.

47 Ibid., 56.
This treatment of the marks was limiting and saw the marks being used as a tool against the rest of the church (i.e. the body of Christ) instead of as a gift for the whole church. This use of the marks as a tool for division becomes a predominant theme in later church history, when those who hold the greatest power will utilise the marks as boundary markers in order to exclude one group of people or another. This move will come to the fore in the next instalment of church history, in which the marks will be treated as a possession of the church institution and utilised as statements of self-justification for the institution and its leaders.

2.3: The Medieval Period: The Marks as Institution

By the time the church reaches the medieval period, it has evolved into a highly structured organisation focused on the doctrine of the papacy. It was at Chalcedon (451) that Pope Leo I presented a ‘firm first draft for the doctrine of the papacy’ that laid the groundwork for the ‘Bishop of Rome’ as having the *plenitude potestatis* (plenitude of power).48 Eventually the Bishop of Rome was seen as supreme over all the church and all the temporal affairs of humankind, having the right to depose and judge, but being judged by none in return. The concept of ‘apostolic succession’ was in full form, with the pope being considered the ‘Vicar of Christ’ (Fourth Lateran Council, 1215) over the ‘one universal Church of the faithful, outside which there is absolutely no salvation’.49 By the time Pope Boniface VIII’s bull *Unam Sanctam* was published (1302), the marks of the church

48 Ibid., 97–98.
were a taken-for-granted statement of self-justification, declared about the institutional church without any further concern for self-examination. As stated within the bull of Boniface: ‘There is one holy Catholic apostolic Church ... outside of her there is no salvation or remission of sins’. Van Engen writes:

Augustine’s day marks a watershed period when the Church’s self-understanding moved from categories of self-examination and criticism to categories of self-congratulation and static definition, culminating in the triumphalism of the Council of Trent where there was near-identification of the Roman Church with the Kingdom of God, and a celebration of the fact that the four attributes (one, holy, catholic and apostolic) were to be identified within the Holy Roman See alone.

To sum up the use of the marks during this period: the marks had been declared as dogmatic statements of self-justification and were seen as residing in the institution and in the pope. During this period the marks were treated statically and not appealed to dynamically. In other words there could be no fresh expression or contextual understanding sought on the marks. Definitions and understanding of the marks were solely institutional and therefore the marks were stagnant. They were understood as an indicative (gift) of the institutionalised church, as something which it already possessed and therefore they were disregarded as an imperative (task). However, there were challengers to this institutional understanding of the church, for example, the Waldensians, who, in their effort to challenge institutional authority over the church, preached without a ‘licence’ and therefore were directly opposing conceptions of apostolic succession. Robert Grosseteste spoke out against papal ‘dispensations’ and ‘provisions’ and instead insisted on bishops who would provide true


'pastoral care’. In essence he was demanding that the church be ‘one, holy catholic and apostolic’ in its practice. Along similar lines of appeal to the marks, Pierre D’Ailly insisted that the church’s unity is found in Christ, which would mean that unity would remain even if there was no pope. Unfortunately, during the medieval period, the power of papal authority was too entrenched to see any real engagement with the marks in a dynamic way. Instead the papacy had been set up in such a way as to declare that the marks resided in a person – namely the pope, the Vicar of Christ, and therefore it was understood that the visible church was already one, holy, catholic and apostolic. It would not be until the sixteenth century that the Reformers would fully challenge the papal authority that existed at the time and go on to develop the idea of the ‘invisible’ church against the Roman claim that the ‘visible’ hierarchal church centred upon the papacy as the true church.

2.4: The Sixteenth Century: The Marks as a ‘Reformed’ Idea

Regarding the sixteenth century, there is general agreement among contemporary theologians that, while the early church was content to limit

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52 Compiled from Jay, *The Church*, 124–26. See also Van Engen, *God’s Missionary People*, 61: ‘With time, however, credal signs began to be considered properties (*proprietas*), then criteria, and finally the marks of the church (*notae ecclesiae*) – the recognizable elements of the Roman Church which constituted the basis for defending the status quo. They were misused to declare that only the Roman See was holy, perfect, complete and God-given. They formed the rationale for defending the Roman institution called “church” from the Eastern communion, the Waldensians, or any other “churches”’. Also: ‘Ultimately the ideas of unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity became self-justification rather than self-examination, support for the authenticity of the Roman Church. Eventually Vatican Council I (1869–1870) could state that the Church is in itself “a great and lasting motive for its credibility and divine mission”’ (61).

53 For more discussion on the Reformer’s view on the ‘visible’ and ‘invisible’ church, see Jay, *The Church*, 182ff. Jay also includes a helpful discussion on Thomas Aquinas’s understanding of the marks in his work ‘Exposition on the Apostles’ Creed’, in which, according to Jay, ‘the tone is devotional, rather than dogmatic’ (119–20).
itself to these four attributes, the sixteenth-century Reformers were not.

Their reaction was in direct response to the claims being made by Rome that they were ‘the only true Church … one body with the ancient Church of the Fathers’ and therefore the rightful bearers capable of ‘renewing and restoring the face of the Christian Church – one, holy, catholic and apostolic’.

The Reformers were concerned with identifying the true church and therefore questioned a community’s ability to conform externally and institutionally to the marks without its members having a personal relationship with Jesus. Therefore, the Reformers offered the *notae ecclesiae*, specifically: ‘the true preaching of the Word’ and ‘the proper administration of the sacraments’ (with observance of church discipline) as being the markers of the true church.

Calvin wrote that: ‘Wherever we see the word of God sincerely preached and heard, wherever we see the sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ, there we cannot have any doubt that the Church of God has some existence’. The Reformers’ biblical and spiritual understanding of the marks was ‘logocentric’, by which the church received its ‘identity and mission from

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the Word’. Avis notes that for the Reformers, when it came to the gospel message they were ‘immovable and undivided’. This principle alone ‘provides the distinctive Reformation concept of the Church, informing and inspiring not only the doctrine of the marks of the true Church, but also the Reformers’ teaching on the ministry and their view of mission’. Within Reformation theology and ecclesiology, it is the combination of ‘Word’ and ‘Sacrament’ that brings unity and joins together the multitude of diversity within the church universal and through which salvation is received. In Calvin’s thinking, diversity is expected and accommodated as long as ‘they have the ministry of the word, and honour the administration of the sacraments, they are undoubtedly entitled to be ranked with the Church’. Furthermore, drawing from the apostle Paul, Calvin stated that ‘difference of opinion as to these matters which are not absolutely necessary, ought not to be a ground of dissension among Christians’. Taking this thinking a step further, the ‘radical reformers’ rejected both these approaches to defining or demarcating the ‘true church’ and instead pushed forward their...
own view, in which ‘the true church’ was identified essentially as ‘people standing in voluntary covenant with God’. 63

During this period there was a shift away from the creedal marks towards the Reformation ‘marks’ of Word and Sacrament. 64 Commenting on that period retrospectively, Van Engen notes the gravity of this shift in the resulting loss of function of the marks:

The issue at stake in this very important distinction is the function of these “attributes” of the church. One, holy, catholic and apostolic reflected an ecclesiology in which everything was decided simply on the basis that a local church existed and by virtue of that existence possessed a number of unassailable “attributes”. There was no thought as to whether these attributes actually functioned in the life of the church … The Reformers wanted to point to something behind and beyond the four attributes to the Center, to Jesus Christ, to whom the Church owed its life and nature. Since the four “attributes” had lost their testing function, Word and sacrament were needed to bring back a reference to the one Ground of the Church’s being and truth. 65

Berkouwer adds that the use of ‘the notae [the Reformation ‘marks’] brings up the question of what actually happens in and with the Church’ and in doing so the Reformers were, in essence, bringing ‘a new element into ecclesiology’. 66 While it was hoped that the shift to the notae ecclesia would aid the church in its effort to distinguish the true church from the false, unfortunately the Reformation ‘marks’ (Word and Sacrament) soon became the ‘means for destroying unity, true holiness, and catholicity’ and ‘they too became dogmatic, polemical tools for differentiating one church as “true” and another as “false”’. 67 Pickard notes that ‘the measure of the

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63 Grenz, Theology, 469. See also G. C. Berkouwer, Studies in Dogmatics: The Church (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 14.
64 Clowney adds: ‘The marks of the church, as developed during the Protestant Reformation, centred on the church as apostolic’. The Church, 73, italics in original.
65 Van Engen, God’s Missionary People, 62–63, italics in original. See also Berkouwer, Studies in Dogmatics, 13–15, whom Van Engen is drawing from quite heavily in this section; and Pickard, Seeking the Church, 126–29.
66 Berkouwer, Studies in Dogmatics, 15, 13, respectively.
67 Van Engen, God’s Missionary People, 63, 64.
Church became a highly charged political matter to do with power and control. In this context, fixity of the marks became critical so that clear lines of division could be determined.\(^{68}\) Interestingly, ‘despite the differences in interpretation which appeared in respect to the four words’, the Reformers did not discard the creedal marks or ‘opt for other attributes’.\(^{69}\) Instead, even after the Reformation, ‘there is a common attachment everywhere to the description of the Church in the Nicene Creed: one, holy, catholic and apostolic’.\(^{70}\) This suggests that even despite the division at this point, the four creedal marks were seen to have a continuing value and to be inherently linked to the church, revealing a dynamic and transcendent nature that goes beyond division. That being said, it is important to note as Avis does that the Reformers,

… would stress much more than Roman Catholic or Orthodox theologians that these are eschatological dimensions of the Church and to one degree or another unrealised on earth, though they are to be sought and striven for. Having accepted without question the credal marks of the Church, the Reformers would add the important qualification that it is one thing to describe the nature of the Church as holy, catholic, etc, but quite another to say where that true Church is actually to be found.\(^{71}\)

Moltmann, in discussing the Reformation and classical marks, can be seen to follow along with this line of thinking when he suggests that:

A church in which the gospel is purely preached and the sacraments are rightly used is the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. The two Reformation signs of the church really only show from within what the traditional attributes of

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\(^{68}\) Pickard, *Seeking the Church*, 127, where he further suggests that the use of the marks as ‘boundary markers’ is a concept that is sharply employed during the sixteenth-century Reformation.


\(^{70}\) Ibid. Avis concurs and notes the following: And again, if the Reformers were asked what they made of the creedal marks of the Church – unity, holiness, catholicity, apostolicity - they would answer with the whole Christian tradition that these are the essential notes or characteristics of the Church (Avis, *The Church*, 8).

\(^{71}\) Avis, *The Church*, 8.
the church describe from without, so to speak … There is no real
difference here; there is only a mutual complementing.²²

Nevertheless, the end result of the Reformation and post-Reformation periods was that the marks had become dogmatic and polemical tools in
church differentiation. Therefore, the identified problem, as rightly pointed out by Van Engen, was that, because the Church had ‘lost their self-examining, dynamic function’ and as such their ‘objectivity to maintain a constantly-reforming ecclesiology’, ‘Christians had no bases on which to evaluate oneness, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity in actual experience’.⁷³ Further still, ‘there was a growing suspicion that a one-nature perspective was not adequate’.⁷⁴ In discussing this new autonomous condition that existed within ecclesiology at that time, Jay foreshadows what was to come when he writes:

the fragmentation of Christian people into small separated sects can lead to disinterest in the unity of Church; the claim to autonomy and the emphasis on the personal aspect of Christianity can lead to indifference to the note of catholicity; concentration on personal holiness can lead to contempt for those who do not attain to the standard set by the group, and weakens the sense of missionary responsibility which is essential to apostolicity.⁷⁵

After the division of the Reformation, treatment and use of the marks stagnated. It was not until the rise of the twentieth-century ecumenical movement that the marks of the church were once again both implicitly and explicitly brought into the foreground.

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²³ Van Engen, *God’s Missionary People*, 64.
²⁴ Van Engen, *God’s Missionary People*, 64.
2.5: The Twentieth Century: The Marks as an Ecumenical Hope

In the twentieth century, it was hoped that the various ecumenical endeavours would lead the way in addressing and resolving some of the issues of division in regard to the body of Christ. Apart from the combined missionary hopes of the world missionary conference held in Edinburgh in 1910, the twentieth century saw the rise of a concerted movement towards unity with the formation of the World Council of Churches and a variety of other more local, bipartisan ecumenical groups. These joint ventures of the ecumenical movement echoed the first councils of the early church in their discussions on doctrine and theology. Hopes were high as the church began engaging in the task of being ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ as Christians broke down denominational barriers in order to pray and work together in answer to Jesus’ prayer in John 17:20–21.

Specific to the marks of the church, the World Council of Churches (WCC) engaged in a ten-year study entitled Confessing the One Faith: An Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic Faith as It Is Confessed in the

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77 The World Council of Churches (WCC) is the broadest and most inclusive among the many organised expressions of the modern ecumenical movement, a movement whose goal is Christian unity. The WCC brings together churches, denominations and church fellowships in more than 110 countries and territories throughout the world, representing over 500 million Christians and including most of the world’s Orthodox Churches, scores of Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist and Reformed Churches, as well as many United and Independent Churches. At the end of 2012, there were 345 member churches. While the bulk of the WCC’s founding churches were European and North American, today most member churches are in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, the Middle East and the Pacific.
Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381). The hope was that, by drawing upon the ecumenical nature of the creed, the ‘way might be opened for churches to confess together the same apostolic faith of which the creed is an expression’. However, regardless of the extensive attempts of the WCC at academic discussion through its many working groups and working papers, this endeavour interestingly discovered that, despite their ecumenical nature and their seemingly ecumenical positioning across the majority of the Christian community, there remained a lack of adequate grounds for reaching consensus on defining the marks of the church. One author suggests that this work by the WCC, rather than building community, might have actually highlighted the many differences between the groups:

These conflicting perspectives – to some extent manifest within individual traditions as well as among them – have long been with us. In many Christian communions a particular view of these centuries has been passed down and received as a constituent part of denominational identity. The modern ecumenical movement has tended to soften some of the conflicts among these received views. But when discussion is focused on the Nicene Creed, an integral part of the historical sweep of these four centuries, the varied perspectives come sharply to the fore again.

Another significant blow to the ecumenical movement was the release of the Roman Catholic document entitled Dominus Iesus (2000). Whether one

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80 See e.g. the denominational differentiation on the term ‘apostolic’ (World Council of Churches, Confessing the One Faith, §241, as well as the following commentary on it, pp. 77–78).


82 Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Dominus Iesus: On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church (2000), http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html, accessed 8 July 2012. This document’s topic concerns the roles of Christ and the church in effecting salvation amongst those who are not believers in the Christian faith. However, it is the use of its word ‘subsists’ and its
considers this document a fresh opening of old wounds that draws sharp boundaries around what designates a ‘proper church’ (in which the Roman Catholics are ‘in’ and others are ‘out’), or whether it was simply an internal document that contained no ‘new teaching’, is debatable. Regardless of where one stands on the debate, the effects of it are clear to the ecumenical movement: it was a setback. Edward Schillebeeckx, adopting a ‘post-ecumenical standpoint’ states ‘precisely in our time Christians live in a period in which the Christian ecumenical approach is encountering greater difficulties and frustrations (at least at the official level on the different Christian and confessional churches) than were present at a recent earlier stage of the ecumenical movement’. He later adds, concerning the entire ecclesial body and specifically the Roman Catholic Church: ‘at present there is not only an ecumenical standstill and polarization between the churches but also malaise and polarization within the Roman Catholic Church’. This possibly suggests that Christians are finding more reasons to worship as separately identified groups than as one unified body of Christ. This is not to dismiss the efforts of many well-meaning people from across the different denominations who have worked tirelessly for decades to make progress. Unfortunately institutions are slow to change, tend to entrench cognates (found in nos. 16 and 17) that has caused the most controversy, because it would appear to negate any church but the Roman Catholic Church as valid. Specific text to this effect reads: ‘Therefore, these separated Churches and communities as such, though we believe they suffer from defects, have by no means been deprived of significance and importance in the mystery of salvation. For the spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as means of salvation which derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church’ (no. 17).

Ibid. See also Gerard Mannion, Ecclesiology and Postmodernity (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2007), esp. his chapter entitled ‘The Church and the Religious “Other”: Hermeneutics of Ecclesial Identity in Postmodern Times’, 75–101, where he discusses the document Dominus Iesus in light of reaction to it from other denominations and its place in postmodernity.


Ibid., 198.
their views and are good at handing on their particular non-negotiable lines to their people, making any progress very difficult. However the point being made is that the attempts to overcome division concerning the marks have not succeeded in accomplishing this task and the resulting effects of these failed attempts at ecumenism unfortunately become the backdrop for contemporary division. Therefore, at the end of the twentieth century and as the church moves into the twenty-first century, the predominant theme concerning the marks is the preference for an institutional handling of them in which denominational boundary lines are drawn and creedal churches move to defining, understanding and appropriating the marks in line with their particular institutions. This institutional handling treats the marks statically and, as will be seen, the marks will be expressed ecclesially in the twenty-first century in two main ways: lack of consensus in defining the marks, and loss of critical theological function.

2.6: The Twenty-First Century: The Marks as Division

Preference and priority to view the marks of the church from a particular institutional point of view has ensured that not only is there a loss of critical theological function for the marks, but also that this further appeal to find a denominationally based consensus hampers the dialogue that can exist between the churches. By way of example, what follows are brief descriptions of each of the marks, noting the most obvious denominational differences and concerns from a twenty-first-century perspective. 

86 For a more detailed look at the various denominations’ theological viewpoints, see Avis, Christian Church; and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical, and Global Perspectives (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2002).
When Evangelical theologian Donald Bloesch asks if the oneness of the church refers to the church as ‘an institution’ or the ‘invisible fellowship of the saints on earth and in heaven’, his forthright question reveals the contrasting and competing denominational understandings of church unity. The traditional Roman Catholic position has been ‘institutional’ in that it ties unity to fellowship with the Bishop of Rome.\(^{87}\) More fully, as *Lumen Gentium* highlights, the church is both a ‘visible society’ and a ‘spiritual community’ in which one becomes ‘united with Christ’ through being ‘fully incorporated into the society of the church’.\(^{88}\) This was, in part, the essence of the Reformers’ insistence on the need for an individual to have a personal relationship with Jesus rather than membership of a particular church.

Flowing from this insistence, the traditional Protestant position has been to minimise the status and standing of an institutional hierarchy and instead to opt to interpret church unity as both spiritual and invisible.\(^{89}\) Calvin’s theology saw the *visible* church as divided but the *invisible* church (that is, the entity made up of God’s true elect) as one.\(^{90}\) The unintended consequence of this position was giving licence to a number of ‘free-churches’ who deprioritised the need to identify with or participate in the broader body of Christ.\(^{91}\) Apart from local congregations acting in isolation from one another, causing division to the body of Christ, there also exists

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\(^{88}\) *Lumen Gentium*, nos. 8, 14.


\(^{91}\) ‘Free churches’ refers to those churches that share an organised structure of congregationalism and are offshoots of the Reformation, such as some Protestant, Reformed, Wesleyan, Holiness, Pentecostal and Anabaptist traditions. While these churches are grouped together under the same category of ‘free churches’, their theological differences from one another (and at times within the same denomination) cover a broad spectrum.
the longstanding denominational barriers to unity such as not ‘celebrating communion in each other’s churches’, lack of consensus on a ‘common date for Easter’, and failure to recognise another church’s rites of initiation.\textsuperscript{92} In considering the reality that ‘the church is at once, one and many’, Berkouwer points out that the church has never ‘become completely comfortable with our many churches’ because a ‘plurality of churches suggests a plurality of gods’.\textsuperscript{93} As an Orthodox Presbyterian, Edmund Clowney would challenge this statement and say that sharing in the Lord’s supper and baptism is an act of unity – even if some churches do not recognise the sacraments performed by others.\textsuperscript{94} Other theologians maintain that despite the plurality of churches, unity does not itself preclude diversity.\textsuperscript{95} The identifiable issue is that when churches present as multiple and at times competing denominations, this challenges the concept of ‘oneness’ across the ecclesial landscape and in the broader context of society. As the WCC’s Faith and Order Paper No. 153 rightly posited, ‘in the eyes of many the division within and between the churches destroys the credibility of the teaching of any of these churches’.\textsuperscript{96} Reformed Church minister Berkouwer offers a sober reminder that when the church fails to act in unity, it fails to live up to the responsibility given to it in Jesus’ prayer of John 17 that it be ‘one’ so that the world might know that God has sent him.\textsuperscript{97} Berkouwer concludes that the ‘severance of unity is a catastrophe for

\begin{footnotes}

\textsuperscript{93} Berkouwer, \textit{Studies in Dogmatics}, 31.

\textsuperscript{94} Clowney, \textit{The Church}, 80.


\textsuperscript{96} World Council of Churches, \textit{Confessing the One Faith}, §217.

\textsuperscript{97} Berkouwer, \textit{Studies in Dogmatics}, 43, 44.
\end{footnotes}
the world … John 17 says as much, but we are so accustomed to disunity that we are in danger of becoming immune to its warning’.  98

Generally denominations would agree to the holiness of the church. Furthermore, denominations would appeal to the need for holiness amongst their members and for the most part agree that it is a work of sanctification that takes place as individuals remain in communion with God. The distinctions however would appear to lie in regard to the tension between the ‘visible’ and the ‘invisible’ church, specifically the tension between belief in the fact that the church is holy (as a given) versus the empirical evidence that would suggest otherwise. This distinction gives rise to differences in theology regarding where the priority lies as to whether holiness should be defined with a corporate understanding or as a personal piety; that is, whether or not ‘holiness’ is ascribed to the church regardless of the actions of its individual members or whether ‘holiness’ is linked to the sanctification of its individual members. For example, Miroslav Volf writes:

Although the sancta ecclesia ought to live ‘without spot or wrinkle’ (Eph. 5:27), its ecclesiality does not depend on the holiness its members can exhibit, but rather exclusively on the presence of Christ sanctifying them … The church is not a club of the perfect, but rather a communion of human beings who confess themselves as sinners and pray: debita dimitte. 99

Along the same lines but with a nuanced understanding, David Carter, writing on the Methodist position, notes the ‘holiness of the Church’ is seen to be ‘residing in the objective means of grace’, which continues ‘to work

98 Ibid., 46.
99 Volf, Miroslav, After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 148; debita dimitte (forgive us our trespasses/sins). This is an interesting statement coming from Volf, who is usually characterised by a ‘free church’ position. In this statement, Volf would appear to be taking a more traditional point of view. Nevertheless, Volf is often characterised as the ‘theologian of the bridge’, given his preference for finding ecumenical ground on a variety of theological issues.
even in an imperfect church’. Carter argues that Wesley ‘stressed that the Church was holy in all its members, albeit in varying degrees, and that no person who lacked holiness could be a true member of the Church’. Taking his argument that the church is holy and the means of holiness for individuals a step further, Carter draws upon the work of Benjamin Gregory. He states that Gregory taught that the work of the church is to ‘present every man perfect in Jesus Christ’ and that Gregory’s ecclesiology has an ‘eschatological sense’ in which the church is understood as ‘an agent in the universal work of redemption’ whose ‘vocation’ is to ‘promote holiness’.

The traditional Roman Catholic position stated unequivocally is that ‘the Church … is believed to be indefectibly holy’. Regarding its members, the document *Lumen Gentium* adds:

> The followers of Christ are called by God, not because of their works, but according to His own purpose and grace. They are justified in the Lord Jesus, because in the baptism of faith they truly become sons of God and sharers in the divine nature. In this way they are really made holy. Then too, by God’s gift, they must hold on to and complete in their lives this holiness they have received.

In contrast to the Roman Catholic position, Kimberley Alexander, examining the early Pentecostal discussions on holiness, concludes that ‘the holiness of the Church is directly related to, if not dependent upon, personal holiness’. Arguing that the North American Pentecostal movement was a

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101 Ibid., 56.
102 Ibid., 56–57.
103 *Lumen Gentium*, no. 39.
104 Ibid., no. 40.
result of its predecessor, the American Holiness movement, which was born out of the Wesleyan revival, she suggests that, despite their rejection of ‘creedalism’, the early Pentecostals had a ‘clear understanding of the holiness of the church’ – even referring to themselves as ‘the holiness people’.\(^{106}\) In addition to being a ‘holy people’ they understood themselves as a community charged with the task of ‘working with God’ and ‘through participation in the life of God’ they could experience God’s holiness working in them, thus revealing the link between personal (individual) and communal holiness.\(^{107}\) While this understanding of sanctification would not necessarily be in contrast to mainline denominational thinking, it is the Pentecostal position that a specific individual’s measure of ‘holiness’ can affect the overall holiness of the church that bears the difference.

It is in the confession of holiness more so than the confession of any other mark that the tension between the ideal church and the empirical church is most apparent, because it is clearly evidenced within history that the church’s ‘true nature and vocation’ has again and again been disfigured by sin.\(^{108}\) Berkouwer contends that the church’s confession of and claim to holiness is influenced by the New Testament picture, ‘where the Church is spoken of lyrically as the holy people, the temple of the Spirit, the bride, the body of Christ’.\(^{109}\) Budde, picking up on the Reformational marks, points out that the church ‘reflects God’s holiness’ and comprises ‘faithful

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\(^{106}\) Ibid., 270, 271.
\(^{107}\) Ibid., 271, 275.
stewards of God’s gifts to the church: word and sacraments, which are, in Orthodox phraseology, “God’s holy gifts for God’s holy people”.’\(^{110}\)

The distinction and tension being identified are those between the ‘visible’ church and the ‘invisible’ church, with the Pentecostal position stressing the need for the visible church to be holy and the traditional church appealing to the ‘invisible’ position, claiming that the church is holy regardless of its members. This difference in the approach to holiness cannot simply be brushed aside and overlooked but instead needs to be addressed. If the church is to be ‘holy’, how is the tension in the empirical evidence that suggests otherwise addressed? If the church is holy, where does this holiness come from? It must be initiated from outside the church, ascribed to it and subsequently sustained for it – lest the church be able to create and maintain its own holiness. This gives the first clue that there has been a loss of critical theological function on the marks.

While scholars agree that *catholic*\(^{111}\) comes from the Greek word *καθόλου*, which means ‘referring to or directed towards the whole, general’, disagreement arises in discussions on how this term is to be applied to the church today.\(^{112}\) Drawing on the works of Dulles, Rausch, Küng and others, the concept of catholicity in its most basic sense refers to ‘the true Church’ as an ‘inclusive community’ that is ‘found in all places’ as it consists of many local congregations that make up the larger body of Christ to which

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\(^{111}\) Some churches have rejected the use of the term ‘catholic’ due to its often-assumed association to, and as being synonymous with, the Roman Catholic Church. They instead substitute ‘Christian’ or ‘universal’ for ‘catholic’ and thereby maintain a necessary distance between the two terms.

all are joined together, despite their diversity, in the reconciling unity of faith and the Spirit.  

Denominations, however, vary in their interpretation of this mark. Some would contend that the Roman Catholic position tends to understand ‘catholicity to simply consist of membership and loyalty to an institution’. Certainly while sections of the Catechism would lend themselves to a traditional and institutional understanding of catholicity as linked to those churches that are in communion with their bishops and the Bishop of Rome, other sections provide a much more fully developed and ecumenical understanding of catholicity. Beyond the institution, in Roman Catholic understanding, a church is understood to be ‘catholic’ because ‘Christ is present in her’ and because ‘she has been sent out on a mission to the whole of the human race’; a task in which each particular church participates as ‘legitimately organized local groups of the faithful’. ‘Catholicity’, in these terms, incorporates a sense of ‘apostolicity’ and ‘unity’ that goes beyond simply institutional understandings. Following on from this comment, Markham as an Anglican theologian and ethicist, notes that while ‘it is true that the Roman Catholic Church does claim to be, by virtue of history and size, a visible reminder of

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113 Dulles, Church to Believe In, 539–40, lists ‘five usages’ of the word ‘catholic’; Rausch Truly Catholic Church, 140, asserts that the word ‘catholic’ is used in three main ways; Küng, The Church, 300–1, lists four ‘negative propositions’. See also Schillebeeckx, Church, 168, 169; Dulles, Church to Believe In, 56; Markham, Understanding Christian Doctrine, 163; Clowney, The Church, 90–98; Inbody, Faith of the Christian Church, 261; Markham, Understanding Christian Doctrine, 163; and Berkouwer, Studies in Dogmatics, 105–30.

114 Inbody, Faith of the Christian Church, 261. Johnson, The Creed, 268, argues that the ‘combined term “Roman Catholic” is an oxymoron since Roman is localised and catholic is universal’.


116 Ibid., nos. 830, 831, 832.
the universal Church’, ‘all Christians in all denominations can recognize the catholicity of the Church’.\textsuperscript{117}

Rausch comments that ‘some traditions express their catholicity through membership in world confessional families such as the Anglican Communion, the Lutheran World Federation and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches’.\textsuperscript{118} The shared Presbyterian–Methodist position understands ‘the local congregations, along with Presbytery and Synod and Annual Conferences of the denomination, to be the church in fullness’.\textsuperscript{119} For their part the Anabaptists refine their understanding to suggest that ‘each local congregation’ is ‘the church in the fullness’.\textsuperscript{120} Inbody takes a more holistic approach, believing that catholicity relates to ‘most Christians [who] confess the church to be catholic or ecumenical in the sense that it inhabits the whole world and that the body consists of people from every political, economic, racial, and cultural group of every society’.\textsuperscript{121}

Rausch, critiquing Volf’s ‘free church’ perspective, highlights a danger in seeing ‘catholicity’ as an ‘eschatological notion’ in which the claim is made that ‘each local Church is catholic in the full sense … constituted in the Spirit’ and having ‘the fullness of salvation’.\textsuperscript{122} The principal fear is that ‘any group of Christians could claim to be a catholic Church, without any visible relation to a global Christian community’.\textsuperscript{123} But Volf clarifies his position by stressing that ‘each church should exhibit external marks of catholicity’, namely an ‘openness to other churches,

\begin{itemize}
\item Markham, \textit{Understanding Christian Doctrine}, 163.
\item Rausch, \textit{Truly Catholic Church}, 142.
\item Inbody, \textit{Faith of the Christian Church}, 261.
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid.
\item Rausch, \textit{Truly Catholic Church}, 141.
\item Ibid.
\end{itemize}

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117  Markham, \textit{Understanding Christian Doctrine}, 163.
118  Rausch, \textit{Truly Catholic Church}, 142.
120  Ibid.
121  Ibid.
122  Rausch, \textit{Truly Catholic Church}, 141.
123  Ibid.
loyalty to the apostolic tradition, and a universal openness towards all
human beings who profess faith in Christ’. The bottom line is that
‘catholicity’ is, at the very least, twofold in that the church needs to be
inclusive to all and in relationship with the larger body.

Markham feels that the difficulty with ‘catholicity’ is that believers
are called upon to be ‘inclusive’ while, both ‘historically and still today
there are many Christians who are excluded’. Johnson points out that the
difficulty in fulfilling the ‘ideal’ of this mark is ‘the profound human
tendency to gather with the like-minded, and therefore to form “the church”
on the basis of similarity rather than difference’. The church must resist
the urge to turn into a ‘club’ where only the ‘right sort’ of people are
deemed acceptable. After all, catholicity, asBloesch rightly points out, is
expressed as a ‘dynamic of love … reaching out to all and excluding
none’.

The final of the four marks set out in the Nicene Creed is
apostolicity. The WCC’s work, Confessing the One Faith, succinctly
identifies the current distinctions in the understanding of this mark by the
various Christian traditions: ‘Some put the emphasis on succession in
apostolic teaching. Others combine this with the recognition of an ordered
transmission of the ministry of word and sacrament. Others again …

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124 Volf, After Our Likeness, 274–78.
125 Inbody, Faith of the Christian Church, 261, suggests that ‘any church, including a local
congregation, which does not intend to be catholic in the sense that it invites all manner
of people – people of differing sexes, races, classes, sexual orientation, national origin,
intelligence, skills, even odors – is not the church’.
126 Markham, Understanding Christian Doctrine, 163.
128 Markham, Understanding Christian Doctrine, 163. Markham adds that ‘certainly those
writing from the vantage point of certain theologies (Feminist, black, womanist, gay
and lesbian, Hispanic) are right to insist on inclusivity’.
129 Bloesch, The Church, 102.
130 Berkouwer points out that ‘the Nicene Creed is the only ancient creed of the Church to
primarily as the unbroken succession of episcopal ordinations’. Rausch highlights that while ‘Christian traditions agree that the Church today must be in succession with the apostles’, in the post-Reformation period significant disagreement is apparent in ‘how’ this apostolic succession should be realised. Joseph Ratzinger (now Pope Emeritus in the Catholic Church) identifies the ‘tradition’ of the *successio apostolica* as the ‘key question in the Catholic/Protestant debate’. The Roman Catholic Church asserts that ‘there should be an unbroken link between a bishop and priest today, and the first apostles’. Orthodox and Anglican traditions have generally ‘emphasized apostolicity in terms of succession in the historical episcopal office’, although, as noted by Rausch, ‘Orthodox theology’ tends to place more emphasis on the ‘eschatological approach’. During the Reformation and as a consequence of this break with the episcopal ordering of the church, Calvin’s teaching on apostolicity meant ‘conformity with the teaching of the apostles’. This eventually became the ‘basic position of the mainline Protestant and Evangelical churches’ – that ‘apostolic succession was understood in terms of succession in apostolic faith and

131 World Council of Churches, *Confessing the One Faith*, §241 commentary, p. 78.
135 Rausch, *Truly Catholic Church*, 143. As will be seen in chap. 6 of this thesis in more specific discussion on the Orthodox view of the marks, apostolicity is linked not only to eschatology but to the role of the bishop and to the centrality of the Eucharist in Orthodox ecclesiology.
136 Ibid.
Notably, some Roman Catholic theologians have shifted in their description of this classical mark towards a more ‘Protestant’ view. In contrast to the traditional episcopal understanding of this mark, Robeck observes the ‘personal empowerment’ that has come to ‘Pentecostals, Charismatics and many other independent denominations’ through the opening up of the ‘possibility that God can choose today to use any individual in the service of the Church in any way God chooses to do so’.

He further suggests that this ‘seems to be more in keeping with the Apostolic Tradition than that which is held in many other Christian groups’. Johnston approves of this trend, arguing that the ‘radical, prophetic sense of apostolic’ is also important as it seeks to challenge ‘tradition and precedent’ maintaining priority over genuine ‘movements of the Spirit by which God [seeks] to lead the church to a greater maturity’. He additionally notes that the ‘mark of apostolicity is a necessary ferment of renewal’, in which the church should ‘seek the truth that God is revealing at every moment through the working of the Holy Spirit in the lives of people’.

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137 Ibid.
138 By way of illustration, see Dulles, *Church to Believe In*, in which he suggests that the church is essentially apostolic when it remains in visible continuity with its own origins. It is a continuity that includes certain institutional elements (apostolicity in doctrine, sacraments, and ministry), but is not under obligation to adhere to ‘archaic forms’; rather, to be truly apostolic means ‘to be faithful to the apostolic teaching, as set forth in the apostolic writings’ (50, 56).
141 Johnson, *The Creed*, 274.
142 Ibid.
2.7: Summary: The Marks and the Current and Future Church

As can be seen in this brief sketch on the status of the marks in the twenty-first century, the marks have been treated as institutional property, they have followed the way of the institution, and they have become associated with division. This institutional handling, where denominational preference has taken priority, has ensured that there has been a loss of critical theological function of the marks and has reinforced the denominational division between the churches. It is their denominational distinction that renders the marks ‘unusable’ by some congregations, because the marks are used as apologetic boundary markers instead of as inclusive terms (attributes).\textsuperscript{143}

The difficulty for the church in regard to the marks would seem to lie in the church’s inability (or perhaps unwillingness) to discuss the marks in a way that can transcend the denominational divisions that exist. This has resulted in a denominational impasse on dialogue, and has further implications for the literacy, profile, and fresh engagement that the marks could enjoy.\textsuperscript{144}

This is a loss to the church, which alerts us to the necessary task of finding a way to move beyond these denominational and institutional barriers.

Succinctly stated then, along with the division and institutional handling, the problems for the twenty-first-century church have to do with (1) static treatment of the marks, (2) issues with dialogue and (3) a loss of critical theological function of the marks.

\textsuperscript{143} E.g. I am thinking of Roman Catholics, Anglicans or Lutherans who have their own form of self-understanding that is dictated by denominational institutional structures, forms and processes that not only define who they are, but additionally define themselves in distinction to other denominations.

\textsuperscript{144} A further contributing factor to this lack of usability is the rejection of the use of formalised creeds by some Reformation offshoots. Together, the denominational packaging and the rejection of creeds has ultimately ensured that some ecclesial expressions within the body of Christ are either unaware of, or at the very least confused about, how to navigate and engage with the marks of the church in the twenty-first century.
The marks of the church as one, holy, catholic and apostolic could be a beneficial resource to the current and future church in helping it to maintain its nature and mission. Yet for that to be the case, the marks would need to be freed from the institutional handling of them that treats them as boundaries that promote division. In an effort to combat the institutional handling of the marks, Karl Barth appealed to their theological nature and grounded the marks within the triune God. Therefore it would be a helpful endeavour to do a case study of, and learn from, Barth’s work on the marks in his *Church Dogmatics*, in which he locates the marks of the church theologically. To this I now turn.
Chapter 3

The Marks of the Church and the Triune God:

A Case Study in Karl Barth’s *Church Dogmatics*

At the end of chapter 2 of this thesis I argued that the twenty-first-century, static treatment of the marks has reduced the understanding of them to one that is primarily institutional and denominational. I made an appeal to engage with the marks instead on theological grounds. The need for this appeal is twofold: (1) to get beyond the denominational and divisional impasse on dialogue, and (2) to reclaim the critical theological function of the marks. In this chapter, I will explore the theological function of the marks by doing a case study on Barth’s contribution, in which he locates the marks of the church within the triune God. Setting the marks amongst the triune God suggests that ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ can be found first within the nature and being of God. This understanding has profound significance for ecclesiology and its practices, because it would suggest that the marks derive from God and the church’s task is to correspond to them as divine attributes. This understanding of locating them within the triune God also suggests something of how the marks are sustained. I will argue that the church is understood as one, holy, catholic and apostolic not simply because the early church fathers chose to describe it that way, but rather because its being and nature is reflected in its marks that come from God’s own being. To aid in this task I will draw from the work of Karl Barth’s *Church Dogmatics*, focusing predominantly on selected volumes and sections.

Within this chapter, in section 3.1, ‘The Marks in relation to Jesus and Mediated by the Holy Spirit’, I outline Barth’s foundational understanding
of the church. This is followed by section 3.2, ‘Barth’s Understanding of “One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic”’, in which the marks are located and founded within the triune God. In section 3.3, ‘The God Who Seeks and Creates Fellowship’, I further argue that the significance of the marks’ being located in Jesus is directly related to God’s loving action of ‘seeking and creating fellowship’ with humanity. In section 3.4, ‘The Correspondence of the Church’s Nature to that of Christ’, I utilise the work of Kimlyn Bender’s Karl Barth’s Christological Ecclesiology, specifically his understanding of the ‘correspondence motif’ present in Barth’s work. Bender argues that correspondence is first and foremost a ‘Christological notion’, and that it refers ‘to the manner in which Christ’s life mirrors and indeed represents the divine life of God in its own proper sphere of being and activity’. Furthermore, this christological correspondence is followed by an ecclesiological one in which the church is to bear within its life an imitation and representation of what has been modelled. The argument here is that the church’s corresponding nature is to be ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ in imitation of the divine Godhead. In the final section of this chapter, section 3.5, ‘Critical Engagement with Barth’s Ecclesiology’, I critically engage

1 See Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, 4 vols., ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1936–75), vol. IV, bk. 1, §62, The Holy Spirit and the Gathering of the Christian Community, specifically his section on ‘The Being of the Community’, in which his discussion on the marks of the church is located. Hereafter Church Dogmatics is abbreviated CD.

2 See Barth, CD, vol. II, bk. 1, §28, The Being of God as the One Who Loves in Freedom. This section is further broken down into three subsections that discuss and develop this statement: (1) The being of God in act (§28.1), in which Barth argues that ‘God is who He is in the act of His revelation’ and that ‘when we ask questions about God’s being’ we need to remember that ‘God is who He is in His works’; (2) The being of God as the One who loves (§28.2), where Barth offers four elucidations about that love; and (3) The being of God in freedom (§28.3), where Barth puts forth that the being of God in freedom is ‘absolutely God’s own’ and ‘in no sense dictated to Him from outside’, but rather is ‘His own choosing, and deciding, willing and doing’, in which He can choose to be transcendent or immanent in His relationship with the distinct other (p. 301).

3 Kimlyn J. Bender, Karl Barth’s Christological Ecclesiology (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2005), 7.
with Barth’s ecclesiology by identifying and discussing some of the charges made against Barth’s ecclesiology.

This chapter then locates the marks of the church within the triune God for the purpose of further informing ecclesiology and its practices. The content of this chapter also prepares the way for creating a framework for understanding the marks through a lens of ‘gift and task’, a topic to be discussed in the next chapter. Finally, as will be seen in chapters 4 and 5, the contents of this chapter will also outline the necessary theological element that will be required in preparation of the gift-task paradigm.

3.1: The Marks in relation to Jesus and Mediated by the Holy Spirit

Barth’s discussion on the church is located in §62, The Holy Spirit and the Gathering of the Christian Community. In his opening statement, Barth immediately places the church under the headship of Christ as mediated by the Holy Spirit:

The Holy Spirit is the awakening power in which Jesus Christ has formed and continually renews His body, i.e. His own earthly-historical form of existence, the only holy catholic and apostolic Church. This is Christendom, i.e. the gathering of the community of those whom already before all others He has made willing and ready for life under the divine verdict executed in His death and revealed in His resurrection from the dead. It is therefore the provisional representation of the whole world of humanity justified in Him.4

After a discussion on the ‘Work of the Holy Spirit’ (§62.1),5 Barth sets out to discuss the ‘Being of the Community’ (§62.2). It is in this second

5 In this section Barth outlines the work of the Holy Spirit as it relates to what is done in Christ. As summed up by Bromiley: ‘In this work the Spirit is the Spirit of God, the Spirit of God who acts in Jesus Christ, the Spirit who is sent by the Father and the Son to bear witness to the grace of the Son and the verdict of the Father, and thereby to awaken
subsection that discussion concerning the marks of the church occurs. In this same passage, prior to discussion on the marks, Barth outlines his thinking regarding the being of the church. Barth makes it clear from the outset that ‘the Christian community and Christian faith belong to the substance of the one confession which has its centre in Jesus Christ’. Further, this community exists ‘only as it is gathered and lets itself be gathered and gathers itself by the living Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit’. In describing the church’s being, Barth suggests that ‘we must abandon the usual distinctions between being and act, status and dynamic, essence and existence’. Rather ‘its act is its being, its status its dynamic, its essence its existence’. In Barth’s conception this is because the church is the ‘earthly-historical form of existence of Jesus Christ Himself’, that is, ‘His body, created and continually renewed by the awakening power of the Holy Spirit’.

This has significance. First, because Barth describes the church simultaneously as the ‘earthly-historical form’ of Jesus himself and as the ‘one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church’. Second, because this community does not belong to itself or for its own purposes. Rather ‘it lives with Him as His people, His fellowship, His community’ and, further, it ‘can only follow the movement of His life’ and thus ‘in that way attest in its

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7 Ibid., 651.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid., 661.
11 Ibid., 643.
own activity’ through ‘His activity’. Consequently, it lives as a community whose continual renewal comes through and from Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

This understanding of the being of the church is foundational to Barth’s understanding of the marks of the church. It means that the marks are understood not only as residing in Jesus but any further ‘movement’ of them (i.e. moments of action, when they occur) will follow after Jesus’ own. It is here that another theme can be identified in regard to Barth’s understanding of the marks of the church – that of ‘gift and task’ (this theme will become more evident as each of the marks is discussed). Nevertheless, this is not to imply that the church has to ‘present and maintain and carry through to success its own cause’. Rather, since the community exists only because Christ exists, he is its ‘head’, and the One who ‘constitutes and organizes and guarantees the community of His body’. Therefore any discussion concerning the marks of the church must be viewed through this conception of Christ as the head of the church, its centre and what constitutes its being and action. As shall be seen in the following discussion, because Barth does locate the marks of the church within the being of Christ, the marks are not only valid: they are essential to the church. This is especially so if the marks are viewed as both ‘a gift and a task’ in which the church through its corresponding nature is to emulate the gift it has been given in its ecclesial task. In this case, the marks of the church would go beyond merely making a statement about the church: they also serve as a challenge and charge to the church. This is significant for ecclesiological orthodoxy and praxis, because ‘the gathering of this community’ is the

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12 Ibid., 662.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
provisional representation of the whole world of humanity justified in Him’. With the discussion on the being of the church now outlined, Barth begins his discussion on the marks.

3.2: Barth’s Understanding of ‘One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic’

3.2.1: Oneness

Barth sums up the basis of his understanding of ‘oneness’ of the church in his opening statement by simply stating:

The Christian believes – and there is – only one Church. This means that it belongs to the being of the community to be a unity in the plurality of its members, i.e., of the individual believers assembled in it, and to be a simple unity, not having a second or third unity of the same kind side by side with it. The statement follows necessarily from all that we have seen concerning it. In all the riches of His divine being the God who reconciled the world with Himself in Jesus Christ is One. Jesus Christ, elected the Head of all men and as such their Representation who includes them all in Himself in His risen and crucified body is One. The Holy Spirit in the fullness and diversity of His gifts is One. In the same way his community as the gathering of the men who know and confess Him can only be one.

Barth locates the unity of the church within the three Persons of the Trinity.

God the Reconciler is one, Jesus the head of the church is one, and the bestower of gifts on the church, that is, the Holy Spirit, is one. This oneness remains even though the church has two natures: visible and invisible.

For this reason – the visible and invisible Church are not two churches – an earthly-historical fellowship and above and behind this a supernaturally spiritual fellowship … The visible lives wholly by the invisible. The invisible is only represented and to be sought out in the visible. But neither can be separated

15 Ibid., 643.
16 Ibid., 668–69.
from the other. Both in their unity are the body, the earthly-historical form of existence of the one living Lord Jesus Christ.  

Even amongst the multiplicity of churches there is unity, because Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit is in the midst of every community ruling the church and churches as the basis and guarantee of the unity of the church.

And we can name only one authority which is fundamentally indispensable, necessary to salvation, infallible and unconditionally effective to guarantee its existence as such in the geographically separate communities: The Lord who attests Himself in the prophetic and apostolic word, who is active by His Spirit, who as the Spirit has promised to be in the midst of every community gathered by Him and His name. He rules the Church and therefore the Churches. He is the basis and guarantee of their unity.

Barth understands that within the universal church (and given its visible/invisible nature) there do exist many local communities and congregations, but he is quick to point out that the unity they share is to be found in the basis that Christ is their head. Any other form of church would mean a ‘plurality’, which would mean a ‘co-existence of Churches which are genuinely divided’. He adds that ‘the existence of this kind of plurality of “Churches” is in conflict with both Ephesians 4 and the credo unam ecclesiam’. Barth concludes that there is no ‘legitimate’ basis upon which churches can be genuinely separated, stating that:

17 Ibid., 669.
18 Ibid., 675.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.; credo unam ecclesiam (I believe one church). The fact that Barth chooses to retain the original Latin credo (I believe) and not credamus (we believe) likely has more to do with his desire to remain faithful to the original text than it being a statement of rejection to the corporate idea. Of interest to note, however, and as pointed out by Schaff: The Greek reads the plural (πιστεύομεν), but the Latin and English versions have substituted for it the singular (credo, I believe), in accordance with the Apostles’ Creed and the more subjective character of the Western churches. Philip Schaff, ed., The History of the Creeds, vol. 1. of The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1878), §8, p. 28. For more on this, see John N. D. Kelly, Early Christian Creeds, 3rd ed. (Harlow, UK: Longman, 1972); Jaroslav Pelikan,
There is no justification theological, spiritual or biblical for the existence of a plurality of Churches genuinely separated in this way and mutually excluding one another internally and therefore externally. A plurality of Churches in this sense means a plurality of lords, a plurality of spirits and a plurality of gods’.  

This means that, regarding the unity of the church, unity exists and will continue to exist, because the church’s unity is found in Jesus. In Barth’s theology, church division can be possible only where sin is present since, ontologically, it is impossible to rend the community as it is the body of Christ. Barth states: ‘in view of the being of the community as the body of Christ it is – ontologically, we can say – [division is] quite impossible; it is possible only as sin is possible’. Barth reasons that this disunity is a ‘scandal’ and ‘the matter demands always, and in all circumstances, unam ecclesiam’. Further, when an individual or group of individuals withdraws for whatever reason from all other churches, this is to ‘abandon’ the ‘hope of the community’, because ‘we are either in the communio sanctorum or we are not sancti’. Therefore to act in disunity not only reveals the sinfulness of the community but also its lack of holiness.

Barth would argue that there is a deeper issue at stake concerning this lack of unity, that is, a lack of lordship: ‘Where the Church is divided in the way which now concerns us, the division reaches right down to its invisible being, its relationship to God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit’. This lack of

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21 Ibid., 675–76. G. C. Berkouwer, Studies in Dogmatics: The Church, trans. James E. Davidson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 31, says this similarly, noting that the church has never ‘become completely comfortable with our many churches’ because a ‘plurality of churches suggests a plurality of gods’.  


23 Ibid.  

24 Ibid., 678; communio sanctorum (communion of saints); sancti (holy).  

25 Ibid.
lordship in the church results in an ‘external division’ that can be overcome only by ‘a healing of both its visible and invisible hurt’.  

Therefore Barth would suggest that what is required is for the church to first be healed of its invisible hurt by turning to its Lord, and then it needs to be healed of its visible hurt by turning to other churches and finding true unity through Jesus Christ. The ordering of this is important, because ‘what is demanded is the unity of the Church of Jesus Christ, not the externally satisfying co-existence and co-operation of different religious societies’.  

Once again, Barth makes it obvious that the unity of the church is located and founded in Jesus Christ and therefore the hope of sustained unity amongst the churches must start here. In an effort to combat institutional division, his recommendation is that ‘the divided Churches should honestly and seriously try to hear and perhaps hear the voice of the Lord by them and for them, and then try to hear, and perhaps actually hear, the voice of others’.  

For it is when this takes place that the church can truly realise that it can abandon ‘its claim to be identical with the one Church in contrast to the others’, because this ‘claim has been dashed out of its hand by the One who is the unity of Church’. This is because ‘the unity of the Church … is not under the power of any man because the living Lord Jesus Christ in His own power is Himself this unity’.  

One final point to note in Barth’s understanding of church unity is the necessary requirement of faith. This faith needs to be ‘strong and certain and genuinely critical’ in order to see the ‘unity of the Church of Jesus

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26 Ibid.
27 Ibid., 679.
28 Ibid., 682.
29 Ibid., 684, emphasis added to original.
30 Ibid., 682.
Christ in its disunity’. To have faith in the unity of the church ‘can never be the work of a feeble or uncertain or uncritical faith’. Linking faith to unity that is based on the lordship of Jesus Christ, Barth closes the section with a positive appeal:

And, above all, we must not cease to move further along this way – which means, that we must not be afraid to enter the way of the *credo unam ecclesiam* at its very beginning, at the acknowledged centre of every Christian community, and therefore at the lordship of the One to whom the Church belongs, whose body it is, who is Himself its true unity.

### 3.2.2: Holiness

In regard to the holiness of the church, once again Barth returns to his foundational understanding that the marks are to be found within the Godhead’s being and task. Any holiness that the church can claim to possess is not initiated in and of itself, but rather is ascribed to it:

We cannot believe in the Church – the holy Church – as we believe in God the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. According to the third article we can believe only in God the Holy Spirit, and as we know and confess His work we can also believe the existence of the holy Church … If it is seriously true and can be known in faith, the holiness of the Church is not that of the Holy Spirit but that which is created by Him and ascribed to the Church. It is He who marks it off and separates it. It is He who differentiates it and singles it out. It is He who gives it its peculiar being and law of life. It is holy as it receives it from Him to be holy.

Having first pointed to the works of, and relationship between, God and the Holy Spirit as the source and location of the church’s existence, but also of its holiness, Barth continues the argument and now includes the person of Jesus as the source of the church’s holiness: ‘What else can the holiness of

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31 Ibid., 679.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid., 685.
34 Ibid., 686.
the Church be but the reflection of the holiness of Jesus Christ as its heavenly Head, falling upon it as He enters into and remains in fellowship with it by His Holy Spirit?

Barth understands that this is because it is Jesus who ‘is the One … originally differentiated and singled out as the eternal Son of God appointed the Reconciler of the world with God’. The community’s existence is in regard to the earthly-historical form of his existence, pointing out that as it is ‘gathered and built up and commissioned by the Holy Spirit it becomes and is this particular part of the creaturely work acquiring a part in His holiness, although of and in itself it is not holy’. Barth is eager to ensure that his readers be well informed that the church’s holiness exists only because the church is united to Jesus Christ, its head. This polemic prepares the pathway through which Barth can continue to outline that this holiness is from the works of, and relationship that exists amongst, the three Persons of the Godhead. In this, the church can be certain of its holiness because the source from which it is obtained (Jesus) ensures that its holiness is characteristically ‘indestructible’ and ‘infallible’. Further, the church can have confidence because ‘the community is (in the sense which we have sketched) holy, and holy with a final and categorical definitiveness, inviolably and unalterably’. This discussion (that the holiness of the church is indestructible, infallible and final) opens up to the next stage of Barth’s thinking, in which he will argue that the church cannot lose its holiness any more than it can lose its identity and cease to be the church, which is set apart from the world and sanctified. The church,

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35 Ibid., 687.
36 Ibid. Barth would understand that both Jesus and the church are singled out and differentiated. The church is differentiated and singled out by the Holy Spirit and as an act of correspondence in which the church can only follow its Lord and head.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid., 689.
39 Ibid., 686.
because it is from Jesus Christ, because it is His body, it cannot cease to be this, it cannot become something else, it cannot be subjected to another law than that which is laid upon it. It has not taken it upon itself to be holy, and it cannot set aside its calling. It has it from God and no man can take it from it.  

Barth is clear to point out that he is not naïve in the shortcomings of the visible institution. He notes that the church ‘may deny its Lord and fall from Him’ and that it ‘may degenerate’. It may also be ‘sick or wounded’. Further still, ‘it has always needed, and it always will need, self-examination and self-correction’. Yet, despite all of this, ‘as the body of this Head it cannot die’, since the ‘authority and power of God are behind it … it will never fail’. As his ‘earthly-historical form of existence … it can as little lose its being as He can lose His’. In fact so bound is the church’s holiness to Christ that Barth warns that no one should criticise the church because, in doing so, they maybe be criticising Christ himself. Nor should one church judge another.

On this basis its judgment cannot become a judgment which rejects the other Church altogether as a Church of Jesus Christ. For only Jesus Christ Himself can pronounce this judgment on it. Pronounced by another Church which itself lives by His holiness, it is not merely presumptuous but worse, for it means that the rejecting Church runs the most serious danger, and has perhaps already fallen victim to it, of rejecting in the rejected Church Jesus Christ Himself and the holiness in which He allows it to participate … the holiness of the community has to be understood wholly as the reflection of the holiness of Jesus Christ and therefore only as a gift of His Holy Spirit.

40 Ibid., 689.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid., 691.
43 Ibid., 690.
44 Ibid., 691.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid., 693.
Barth makes two final interrelated points in regard to the church’s holiness – that of its passivity in receiving it and its required action of obedience to it. Drawing from Luther, Barth states that ‘Christian holiness is not active, but passive holiness’. He explains that although the church ‘does exist in activity’ and is ‘directed in accordance with its own law … it is not the Church which makes its special activity holy’.48 While human activity can have the ‘character’ of being holy in that it witnesses to Christ, this ‘character is always dependent upon the answering witness of the One whom they aim and profess to attest’.49 In this Barth understands that ‘in respect of its holiness the community is bound to Him’.50 Regardless of the activity and whether it is in ‘great things’ or ‘small’, it can be never ‘be holy of itself’, but it can be holy only in ‘the presence and gift of His Holy Spirit’, through which the works ‘are directly His own work’.51 This is quite simply because ‘He is always the Subject, the Lord, the Giver of the holiness’ in regard to the church.52 Nevertheless, Barth does not understand this passivity in receiving holiness as an avenue for neglecting the church’s requirement to respond with obedience and action corresponding to Christ’s holiness. Rather, in keeping with his understanding on the being of the church in which it attests its own activity through his activity,53 and through which the marks can be understood as gift and task, Barth outlines that:

in its human doing and non-doing, in its common action and the life of all its members it is continually confronted with His presence as the Holy One, it is continually exposed to His

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47 Barth directly quotes Luther: ‘christiana sanctitas non est active, sed passive sanctitas’ (Christian holiness is not active, but passive holiness). Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid., 693–94.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid., 694.
52 Ibid., 693–94.
53 Ibid., 662.
activity, it is continually jolted by Him, it is continually asked whether and to what extent it corresponds in its visible existence to the fact that it is His body, His earthly-historical form of existence.  

The church should understand this holiness of Christ its head as ‘the imperative and standard of its own human activity’.  

The church cannot look at Christ and his holiness ‘without being summoned to a very definite expectation and movement’. He reiterates that when it comes to the church receiving this holiness, it ‘is not given to it as a kind of umbrella under which it can rest’, but rather it is ‘a pillar of cloud and fire like that which determined the way of the Israelites in the wilderness, as the mystery by which it has to direct itself in its human Church work’. Therefore when it comes to the ‘question of holiness’, it is answered by a ‘question of obedience’ as the church ‘cannot answer this question of its holiness by any answer of its own’, because ‘it can never make itself holy by its human Church work’. The church’s holiness then, not only resides in Christ its head, but the church can respond to what Christ does only as it follows his movement.

3.2.3: Catholicity

Barth’s understanding of catholicity refers to an ‘identity’ and a ‘continuity’ that are ‘maintained’ in ‘all differences’. As it is applied to the church, catholicity refers to a character that remains the same in all places, is ‘recognisable in this sameness’, and carries an ‘essence’ that ‘never has

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54 Ibid., 700–1.
55 Ibid., 701.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
altered and never can or will alter’.

Despite being ‘surrounded by a continually changing landscape’ in which its form ‘is itself continually subject to change’, the catholic church will remain and ‘can never become anything other than itself’, because it is ‘obliged and summoned always to be the same and continually to maintain itself as the same in forms which are always new’. In other words, despite changes in context, culture and times in history in which the church must live and navigate, there is a ‘character of this sameness’ that ‘exists and shows itself to be the true Church, the Church of Jesus Christ’. It is this ‘catholicity’ or ‘character of sameness’ that reveals the church as the true church. Barth is quick to point out that what ‘makes the Church the true Church’ has nothing to do with any ‘historical’ or ‘modern’ forms of church. Instead it has an ‘abiding possession’ that is ‘superior to every yesterday and to-day and is therefore the criterion of its catholicity’. It is this catholicity that allows the church to be ‘one and the same in essence in all places, in all ages, within all societies, and in relation to all its members’. Before naming this ‘abiding possession’ that ensures this characteristic ‘catholicity’ within the church, Barth clarifies that, ‘just as without faith we cannot see unity or holiness, so without faith we cannot see its catholicity’. Further, any church that believes that it can see and maintain its own catholicity acts in arrogance.

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60 Ibid., 702.
61 Ibid., 704.
62 Ibid., 702.
63 Ibid., 705.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid., 707.
66 Ibid., 708.
because the catholicity of the church resembles its ‘unity and holiness’ in that ‘the Church has no control over it’. 67

Its being as ecclesia catholica, that fact that everywhere and at all times and in relation to all other societies and to all its individual members it is one and the same, is actual in the fact that it is the body, the earthly-historical form of the existence of Jesus Christ. Therefore catholicity as its own actuality is grounded in Him as its Head. It falls upon it as the reflection of the light which gives light in Him. It comes to it in the event of His living word and work by the Holy Spirit, in its visitation by and encounter with Him. He is the man who maintains His sovereign identity both here and there, yesterday and to-day, within and on behalf of all historical forms, in the case of all individual Christians. The community is catholic as He lives and speaks and acts in His community. 68

The church is ‘catholic’ because it is the ‘earthly-historical form’ of the ‘man who maintains His sovereign identity both here and there, yesterday and to-day’. 69 Barth reiterates that the church’s catholicity is not found in ‘anything resulting from its labor and conflict which makes it the true Christian community’ but in him alone, ‘the Son of God who gathers and protects and maintains it, His work and His Spirit’. 70 Jesus is thus identified as the ‘source and norm’ for the church’s catholicity. 71 Further, in being identified as such, the catholic church can stand in contrast to the ‘false’ church.

He, the living Son of God, is Himself its identical and continuing and universal essence, maintaining and asserting itself in all dimensions. He is the source and norm of its identity: the veritas catholica. He constitutes the community the true Church and as such marks it off from the false. 72

67 Ibid., 708, 710.
68 Ibid., 710; ecclesia catholica (catholic church).
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid., 711.
71 Ibid., 712; veritas catholica (catholic truth).
72 Ibid.
Therefore, because the church has been ascribed this catholicity as a gift, it is now the task of the church to participate in the maintaining of this identity through faith and obedience. First the ‘true Church’ is ‘humbly content to be thrown back entirely upon faith in respect of its truth’ as it ‘confidently’ exists ‘in this faith as the true community of Jesus Christ’. 73 Second, through obedience the church participates in its tasks of service, holding Christ at the centre of its existence and witness.

And if in anything at all, then in this clear knowledge of its limit it will be catholic – in its satisfaction with Jesus Christ Himself, in the fact that it will not give to its activity any other character than that of a diaconate or witness in His service, that it will be zealous and loyal in this character. 74

Barth unreservedly concludes that when it comes to the catholicity of the church, this ‘mark’ follows along the same foundational path of faith as its two predecessors, in which:

As He makes it one and holy, so He makes it universal. And therefore faith in Him, which can never cease to be a busy faith, is the only effective and not really passive but supremely active realization of the credo catholicam ecclesiam. 75

3.2.4: Apostolicity

Barth opens the discussion on ‘apostolic’ with this succinct summary of his understanding on this mark along with its position and relationship to the other three marks:

credo apostolicam ecclesiam. It is excellent that in the creed of 381 after una, sancta, catholica there appeared for the first time a fourth predicate … All four predicates describe the one being of the Christian community. But we can and should read and understand them as mounting to a climax. Una describes its singularity. Sancta describes the particularity which underlies

73 Ibid., 708.
74 Ibid., 712.
75 Ibid.; credo catholicam ecclesiam (I believe the catholic church).
this singularity. *Catholica* describes the essence in which it manifests and maintains itself in this particularity and singularity. And finally *apostolica* does not say anything new, in relation to these three definitions, but describes with remarkable precision the concrete spiritual criterion which enables us to answer the question whether and to what extent in this or that case we have or have not to do with the one holy catholic Church. The criterion is not sociological or juridical or psychological, but spiritual. The word *credo* is still in front, and must not be forgotten. Even the criterion that the Church is apostolic, with all that that involves, can be known only in faith, and cannot be seen except in faith.\(^76\)

In this quote Barth highlights two of his main points concerning the mark of ‘apostolic’ which will form the foundation from which he will build and set the direction he intends to take in the discussion that follows. The first point he makes is that the four marks are linked to one another and that together they ‘describe the one being’ of the church. The second point he makes is in regard to the nature of this mark (apostolic) having both a ‘spiritual’ and a ‘concrete’ criterion. It is from this second point that Barth will hold the majority of his discussion on the mark of ‘apostolic’, especially as it relates to its concrete criterion. Barth highlights early that this mark (or predicate as he refers to it) of apostolic is different from the other three. He states that:

‘In attempting to fill out the first three terms we could point only to Jesus Christ as the Head of the community which is His body, and therefore to the work of the Holy Spirit’.\(^77\) He notes that ‘apostolic’ offers an additional feature in that it is also a ‘concrete criterion’.\(^78\) Apart from assisting in locating the ‘true Church’ (as opposed to the false) in the midst of many churches, this concrete criterion also provides a means of self-examination.

Barth asks:

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\(^76\) Ibid.; *una* (one), *sancta* (holy), *catholica* (catholic), *apostolica* (apostolic).

\(^77\) Ibid., emphasis added to original.

\(^78\) Ibid., 713.
Above all, what is the standard by which we can be certain of our own cause, our own standing in the true Church, our preference for this or that place in the true Church? What is the standard by which, with equal decision on the left hand and on the right, and with a good conscience, we can publicly take our stand in this place and not in that? It is here that the predicate ‘apostolic’ comes in. It gives us a concrete criterion, the one and only _notae ecclesiae_.

As a concrete criterion then, Barth is highlighting the concept of ‘task’. In this way he understands the apostolicity of the church as being linked to the apostles and to their ‘instruction’ and their ‘direction’, in which there is a ‘listening to them’ and an ‘accepting of their message’. Further, it is from within this that ‘apostolicity’ can be recognised, because ‘the predicate apostolic, and especially this predicate, describes the being of the community as an event’. It is an event that concretely witnesses to Jesus as the ‘community of Jesus Christ’ and that takes part in this movement. Yet this is not to suggest that ‘apostolic’ is only a concrete criterion. Rather, Barth quickly points out that understanding ‘apostolic’ as a concrete criterion is only ‘truly helpful’ when it is not ‘deprived’ of its ‘character as a spiritual criterion’.

And it is and is known as the true Church by the fact that where it exists as such it finds itself in this movement. This movement is a very concrete but a spiritual process. It is definitely distinguished from other such movements. It is the work of the

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79 Ibid., 714, noting that Barth has not chosen to use this phrase, _notae ecclesiae_ (mark of the church), to refer to the Reformation marks but instead is holding to the classical marks.

80 Ibid. Regarding the apostles: ‘For them their discipleship, apostolate, authority, power and mission was not an end in itself. From first to last – at this point we are forced back to our key thought – it was absolutely a matter of their service, their ministry as heralds. As their distinctive title ‘apostle’ shows us, they were sent out to preach the Gospel in the world, a light which had been kindled to give light to all that are in the house (Mt. 5:15) – nothing more…. Their being and their work both point beyond themselves. Their field is the world, and they are only sowers who pass over it’. Ibid., 724.

81 Ibid., 714.

82 Ibid., 715.

83 Ibid., 714.
Holy Spirit, and as such it can be known in its concrete distinction only by the Holy Spirit and therefore in faith. Apostolicity can be expressed in a community concretely (as a task), but it is also received in faith (as a gift) as the community is empowered by the Holy Spirit and governed by Jesus Christ. Barth’s concern is that any institution or human-made ritual would seek to lay claim to this mark as if it were its own possession and thus seek the apostolicity of the church solely on ‘historical or juridical grounds’. Here Barth is directly challenging the notion of apostolic succession. His concern is that ‘one or many exalted members of the community’ (that is, in this case, some forms of the institutionalised church) have attempted to do with ‘legality and ritual’ what can be accomplished only through the work of the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ. Barth asks: ‘But how can apostolic authority and power and mission, how can the Holy Spirit be transferred, when obviously apostolicity is His work and gift’? Here again, Barth is pointing out the spiritual criterion of apostolicity, thereby locating it within the being and action of the divine Godhead. Further, Barth makes it very clear that when it comes to apostolicity both the Holy Spirit and Jesus participate, and this action is done in freedom.

Just as Jesus Christ is a free subject when it takes place that the apostles become apostles, it is again an event in which Jesus Christ is a free subject and His Spirit moves where He will when the apostolic community comes into being and exists as such.

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84 Ibid., 715.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid., 717.
87 Ibid.
88 This draws out Barth’s trinitarian thinking. See Barth, CD, vol. II, bk. 1, §28: God is listed as the one who loves in freedom. See also ibid., §31, The Perfections of Divine Freedom.
89 Barth, CD, vol. IV, bk. 1, §62, p. 718.
With the foundation of the distinction between concrete and spiritual apostolicity firmly set, Barth now turns his focus to place Jesus at the centre of the discussion. He asks how the ‘apostolicity of the Church’ can ‘consist as a criterion of its catholicity, holiness and unity’. He determines that:

One thing is clear, that it belongs together with its character as the body, the earthly-historical form of the existence of Jesus Christ in this interim period. If, apart from His hidden being at the right hand of the Father, in which He is the Head of His body, He also exists in this interim period in earthly-historical form in His community in the world, then it belongs to this that He gives Himself to be known in this earthly-historical form to it and to the world through it.\(^90\)

Having turned the focus towards Jesus, Barth continues in his discussion weaving back and forth between the concrete criterion and the spiritual criterion in discussing various aspects of apostolicity as it relates to the church. In sum, the church is apostolic when it is (1) obedient in witness;\(^91\) (2) empowered by the Holy Spirit;\(^92\) (3) grounded in Scripture;\(^93\) and (4) looking towards the living Jesus.\(^94\)

\(^{90}\) Ibid.
\(^{91}\) ‘In this matter there is only one true succession, and even on the part of the Church it is the succession of service. If the community is really to find itself and to act in line with Jesus Christ and His apostles, there is only one attitude, and that is the attitude of subjection and obedience.’ Ibid., 720.
\(^{92}\) ‘There can be no supposed human control over the Holy Spirit. But in the measure that it does learn and practice it in this school the Church acquires and has the true power which in exemplary form is effective and visible in the apostles as the servants of Jesus Christ, and therefore something of the power of the one great servant of God the attest ing of who has taught them obedience, who Himself is the man who instructs and guides and corrects and qualifies them in this school.’ Ibid.
\(^{93}\) ‘The apostolic community means concretely the community which hears the apostolic witness of the New Testament, which implies that of the Old, and recognizes and puts this witness into effect as the source and norm of its existence. The apostolic Church is the Church which accepts and reads the Scriptures in their specific character as the direct attestation of Jesus Christ alive yesterday and to-day, respecting them as the canon and following their direction.’ Ibid., 722.
\(^{94}\) ‘It is a witness, and as such it demands attention, respect and obedience – the obedience of the heart, the free and only genuine obedience. What it wants from the Church, what it impels the Church towards – and it is the Holy Spirit moving in it who does this – is agreement with the direction in which it looks itself. And the direction in which it looks is to the living Jesus Christ.’ Ibid., 723.
Barth concludes with a discussion in relation to the apostles pointing out that they were obedient in service as they were sent out to preach the gospel, a message that pointed beyond them. In this way the church emulates the apostles in being ‘sent’ in an ‘outward movement’ pointing beyond itself. Further, it recognises at all times that, as apostolic, the ‘true Church’ is governed by him ‘since he is not absent but present in their midst’ and therefore the church ‘and its administration can always be recognized by the fact that this is taken into account’. Apostolicity therefore is both a spiritual and a concrete criterion. Concretely it can assist the church in determining whether in its task it is reflecting that it is one, holy, and catholic. Spiritually, ‘apostolic’ can be located only in Jesus Christ as ‘His work and gift’, thereby locating apostolicity within the divine being and action of Jesus.

To sum up this section, having grounded the marks of the church in Christ, it can be affirmed that the marks (at least in Barth’s theology) belong to the triune God. This means that the marks have a validity and standing that goes beyond being a human construct and are instead divinely ordained. If Jesus within his being and nature bears the essence of ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’, then so will his church. Yet it is not simply that the church

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95 ‘As an apostolic Church the Church can never in any respect be an end in itself, but, following the existence of the apostles, it exists only as it exercises the ministry of a herald.... But it cannot forget that it cannot do these things simply for its own sake, but only in the course of its commission – only in an implicit and explicit outward movement to the work with which Jesus Christ and in His person God accepted solidarity, for which He died, and in which He rose again in indication of the great revelation of the inversion accomplished in Him.... As His community it points beyond itself.’ Ibid., 724–25.

96 ‘In the obedience to Him which Scripture attests to be necessary, His community may prefer this or that form, but as it does so it will always be aware that it is only He who has the right and the power to govern the Church, not any man or men, even as His representatives.’ Ibid., 723.

97 ‘None of these terms can be applied to anything but the divine operation which takes place in the church.’ Barth, CD, vol. IV, bk. 2, §67, The Holy Spirit and the Upbuilding of the Christian Community, 617.
will contain these characteristics, but that the church will exhibit these characteristics. Since Jesus is in the midst of his community, the community not only possesses the marks found within his nature but it should therefore reveal the marks in its practice. This understanding is often expressed in the concept of gift and task and will be more fully discussed in the next chapter of this thesis.

What, then, is the significance of Jesus’ bearing within his nature, and being, the essence of the marks? This question is directly related to the concept of correspondence. Although this theme will be more fully developed in the section 3.4 of this chapter, suffice it to say here that correspondence is specifically a ‘Christological notion’ first and foremost and that it refers ‘to the manner in which Christ’s life mirrors and indeed represents the divine life of God in its own proper sphere of being and activity’. The understanding is that Jesus within his actions demonstrates what he sees the Father doing (John 5:19). The question that then arises is ‘what is it that the Father does’ that Jesus demonstrates? Barth in his treatment of the doctrine of God suggests that God is the ‘being who loves in freedom’ and in doing so ‘seeks and creates fellowship’ with humanity. This will be the topic of the next section, in which I will specifically address the concept of ‘seeking and creating fellowship’ as that action of God that Christ emulates in his expression of ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’.

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99 Jesus gave them this answer: ‘Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does’.
100 See Barth’s work in CD, vol. II, bk. 1, §28.
3.3: The God Who Seeks and Creates Fellowship

When Barth presents God as the being ‘who loves in freedom’, the focus of his discussion is on the ‘essence’ of God, or that which ‘makes God God’. For the essence of God can be ‘seen in His revealed name and His being and therefore His act as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit’. Barth continues that it is ‘from this name of His we have to conclude what and how He is in His act and therefore in His Being’, because ‘this name definitely has this primary and decisive thing to say to us in all its constituents – that God is He who, without having to do so, seeks and creates fellowship between Himself and us’. It is this statement of ‘seeking and creating fellowship’ that becomes a predominant theme through which God is revealed as the ‘being who loves in freedom’. Barth finds that this seeking and creating fellowship is an act that is solely motivated by and from God and towards humanity. It is out of an ‘overflow of His essence that He turns to us’ not as an ‘obligation’ but as it is ‘rooted in Himself alone’. God already exists in fellowship as part of the Trinity, but now out of the overflow of that revelation God seeks to create fellowship with humanity despite our distinctive otherness. This is the ‘conduct’ of God’s action, that it:

establishes and embraces the antithesis between the Creator and His creatures. It establishes and embraces necessarily, too, God’s anger and struggle against sin, God’s separation from sinners, God’s judgment hanging over them and consummated on them. There is death and hell and eternal damnation in the

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101 In developing this section I will draw from Barth’s work in CD, vol. II, bk. 1, §28, The Being of God as the One Who Loves in Freedom.
102 Ibid., 273.
103 Ibid.
104 Ibid.
105 Ibid.
106 Ibid., 273–74.
scope of this relationship of His. But His attitude and action is always that He seeks and creates fellowship between Himself and us.  

In other words, God not only ‘seeks’ fellowship but God also ‘creates’ the necessary conditions in order to ensure that that fellowship can occur. It was in this ‘primal decision’ that ‘God did not remain satisfied with His own being in Himself. He reached out to something beyond, willing something more than His own being’. The crux of the discussion is found in the following passage:

> If it is right and necessary to bring together the purpose and meaning of this act in order to understand it, and therefore to understand God, we must now say that He wills to be ours, and He wills that we should be His … He does not will to be without us, and He does not will that we should be without Him … He does not will to be Himself in any other way than He is in this relationship. His life, that is, His life in Himself, which is originally and properly the one and only life, leans toward this unity with our life.

Following on then, ‘seeking and creating fellowship’ is an act initiated by God as an overflow of God’s essence but it is an action that will find its fulfilment in and through Jesus Christ: ‘This seeking and creating finds its crown and final confirmation in the future destiny of mankind as redeemed in Jesus Christ, in his destiny for eternal salvation and life’. This then is the link between the ‘essence of God’ and the outworking and establishing of that fellowship with humanity – that God would and does reveal Godself as the God of fellowship who will ‘seek and create’ ways in which to establish that fellowship, starting first with Godself out of God’s essence.

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107 Ibid., 274.
109 Barth, CD, vol. II, bk. 1, §28, p. 274. The ‘act’ of God is that God is revealed in love. Discussing this section of CD, Bromiley adds: ‘God is who he is in his act, and in his act he is who he is’. Bromiley, Introduction, 70.
and then continuing in that process through the election of Jesus for humanity. Therefore, what Jesus sees the Father doing is ‘seeking and creating fellowship’.

It is here that I will argue that God’s act of seeking and creating fellowship reveals an understanding of what it is to be ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’. God is revealed as the One who is so concerned with seeking and creating fellowship with humanity that God establishes and creates the conditions by which God can be in fellowship with the distinctive other. God wills so desperately to be for and with humanity that God will not allow God’s transcendence to get in the way of God’s immanence. The point is that God is the Author and Creator of true fellowship and that the depth of that fellowship comes through God’s self-motivated love. It is this action that is continued in the sending of Jesus. This idea then is not generated from human thinking, but rather it is initiated from God in God’s being and action. That seeking and creating fellowship is God’s idea that Jesus then emulates in a corresponding action to the Father’s action. Further still, Jesus models this action as part of his own being, that the characteristics of one, holy, catholic and apostolic are part of his divine nature that make up his desire to seek and create fellowship in obedience to the Father as an example for the church to follow in corresponding action. It therefore becomes a contention of this chapter that the marks, apart from being a statement of faith made about the church, are a model for the church, directing it in its nature and mission in ‘seeking and creating fellowship’ within itself and with the secular ‘other’ outside the church in a pattern that emulates God’s own action and desire for fellowship.
How is this statement, that ‘God’s love is concerned with seeking and creating fellowship’, relatable to the marks of the church? I would argue that God’s ‘love’ is catholic; that God’s act of ‘seeking’ is apostolic; that to ‘create’ fellowship requires holiness; and that ‘fellowship’ is about unity (oneness).

3.3.1: God’s ‘Catholic’ Love

The love of God has shown itself to be ‘catholic’ in that it is completely and totally inclusive of the distinctive ‘other’. God’s love is such that it does not require or need the object of God’s love to be ‘worthy’ of that love, because God’s love in and of itself is more than enough. Additionally, this love is ‘eternal’, ‘everlasting’; it is from the beginning to the end. It stretches across time, maintaining its essence in all circumstances, reaching out to all and excluding none. This love has a ‘continuity’ that is ‘maintained’ in ‘all differences’.111 In Barth’s theology, ‘catholic’ refers to the character that never changes.112 In this way God’s love can be trusted as the everlasting and eternal source that reaches out to all and excludes none.

3.3.2: God’s Seeking as ‘Apostolic’

God’s seeking can be likened to ‘apostolic’ in that in God’s seeking God sends Godself out looking and searching for the ‘other’ in order to bring God’s message of love (reconciliation).113 God wills to be for humanity. This movement is self-motivated and comes from God’s desire to be ‘with us’ and ‘not without us’.114 God sends Godself in an outward movement to

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111 Barth, CD, vol. IV, bk. 1, §62, p. 701.
112 Ibid., 710.
113 For more on this, see Barth, CD, vol. IV, bk. 1, §59, *The Obedience of the Son of God*, 157: ‘the way of the Son of God into the far off country’.
find that which lies beyond Godself, the ‘other’ – in order that God might create fellowship with it. God in this ‘seeking’ sends out God’s love.

‘Apostolic’ is understood as ‘seeking’ or ‘sending’ in this sense, not as ‘in line’ with or subject to the apostles, but rather in terms of its root meaning of ‘sent’, ‘messenger’. God in this action is the Sender, the Sent and the Sending.\textsuperscript{115} The author of Hebrews reminds us that Jesus himself was an apostle.\textsuperscript{116}

\textbf{3.3.3: Seeking and Creating Is about Making the Other ‘Holy’}

Creating is about ensuring that God has established all the necessary conditions for fellowship to exist. This includes making the ‘other’ holy in order that he or she might be taken up into God’s fellowship.\textsuperscript{117} God’s action of ‘throwing a bridge across a crevasse’ includes ‘election’, where the ‘other’ is reconciled, justified and made holy.\textsuperscript{118} Despite being distinct from this ‘other’, ‘alien’, ‘hostile’ one, God ‘seeks’ this ‘other’ and then makes it holy for the purposes of fellowship. God offers it God’s eternal and everlasting love. ‘Creating’ is about holiness, otherwise how can God take the ‘other’ up into God’s fellowship without first making it holy?


\textsuperscript{116} Heb 3:1: ‘Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest’.

\textsuperscript{117} Robert Price, \textit{Letters of the Divine Word: The Perfections of God in Karl Barth’s ‘Church Dogmatics’} (New York: T&T Clark/ Bloomsbury, 2011), 22–23: ‘It is only after the human creature has been loved by God in Christ, only after “the justification of the ungodly”, that the creature becomes (again in Christ) lovable’.

\textsuperscript{118} Barth, CD, vol. II, bk. 1, §28, p. 278.
3.3.4: ‘Unity’ in Fellowship

I would argue that unity is about fellowship. True unity of the church is about the ‘other’ being taken up into the fellowship of the triune God. There is a ‘singularity’ despite the ‘plurality’ that exists. Further, this fellowship is at a depth that humanity cannot create or sustain on its own. The church cannot create or sustain unity; ‘unity’ exists because of the original and true fellowship (unity) found within the triune God.

This loving that is concerned with ‘seeking and creating fellowship’ has much to say to ecclesiology in terms of its orthodoxy and its practices. Further, this act of the divine Being who ‘chooses’, ‘wills’, and ‘desires’ to be ‘with us and not to be without us’ offers to the church a way to exist and be sustained in its efforts to be the ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ community. Jesus acts in a way corresponding to that of the Father, in that his concern for ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ is a concern that originates in an effort to emulate God’s action of ‘seeking and creating fellowship’. Jesus models for the church the action of correspondence and this will be the content of material considered in the next section of this chapter.

3.4: The Correspondence of the Church’s Nature to that of Christ

In the introduction of this chapter I highlighted Bender’s argument that correspondence is a ‘Christological notion’ followed closely by an ecclesiological one. That is, the church’s call is to bear in its life that which

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119 Barth, CD, vol. IV, bk. 1, §62, p. 675. Also reminded in ibid., 678: we are either the communion of saints or we are not holy.

120 Barth, CD, vol. II, bk. 1, §28, p. 274.
Christ mirrors and represents of the divine life of God. It is specifically the motif of correspondence that will guide the rationale of the discussion that follows in this section. How is the church to respond and appropriate the developed themes of ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ and the ‘One who loves in freedom’?

It is within the church’s nature and mission (being and act) to emulate the being and action of Jesus and God as empowered by the Holy Spirit. Drawing from the correspondence motif is helpful because it reveals further insights into the church’s being and action. Therefore in this section I will define and discuss the correspondence motif as it relates to Jesus, the church (and the danger when the church does not correspond), and the importance of correspondence in the life of the church, considering specifically how that applies to the marks of the church in relation to seeking and creating fellowship.

Barth’s understanding of Jesus’ correspondence to God is located in his discussion on ‘The Royal Man’, which examines the ‘kingly office’ of Jesus Christ. Specifically, Barth ‘considers what it means that the royal man is a reflection of God in correspondence with his purpose and work’. To be sure:

The royal man of the New Testament tradition is created ‘after God’ (κατὰ θεόν). This means that as a man He exists analogously to the mode of existence of God. In what He thinks and wills and does, in His attitude, there is a correspondence, a parallel in the creaturely world, to the plan and purpose and work and attitude of God.

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121 See Barth, CD, vol. IV, bk. 2, §64, *The Exaltation of the Son of Man*. For the purposes of this discussion within this chapter, the sole concern regarding treatment on the ‘royal man’ will be limited to the content relating to correspondence.


123 Barth, CD, vol. IV, bk. 2, §64, p. 166.
For Barth this highlights the understanding that ‘we know God in Jesus Christ alone’ since, in short, ‘He reflects God’.\textsuperscript{124} Barth continues: ‘In Him the will of God is done on earth as it is in heaven … He does that which is demanded and expected in the covenant as the act of human faithfulness corresponding to the faithfulness of God’.\textsuperscript{125} Therefore, Jesus is God in action. Jesus can be seen doing what God does because he is concerned with and for the concerns of God. If this is the case then when Jesus is represented as ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’, then it naturally suggests that God also must first be represented in this same way. Part of the argument of this chapter has been that God’s love is demonstrated in God’s action of ‘seeking and creating fellowship’, in which God can be seen as ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’. Nevertheless, if God in God’s love is ‘concerned with seeking and creating fellowship’, then Jesus’ action must in some way represent this same concern.

To begin a discussion on the church’s nature corresponding to Christ, it is important to reiterate Barth’s understanding of the church. Bender writes:

Barth’s understanding of the nature of the church is predicated upon a highly dialectical notion of the church as a \textit{mystery}, the union of an invisible event and a visible institution, an inner spiritual reality and a historical social form. In this union the two aspects of the single reality of the church are neither separated nor confused, with the latter existing in dependence upon and correspondence to the former.\textsuperscript{126}

Bender argues that, for Barth, ‘the true church exists only as a unity of event and historical manifestation in dialectical relation – the historical and enduring existence of the church exists insofar, paradoxically, as it is an


\textsuperscript{125} Barth, CD, vol. IV, bk. 2, §64, p. 167.

\textsuperscript{126} Bender, \textit{Barth’s Ecclesiology}, 192, italics in original.
ever-new event’. He states that ‘the first without the second would be a platonic conception of an invisible church that is disembodied, and thus not incarnate’ and that ‘the second without the first leads to a loss of the church’s very essence and can only be seen as an empty shell, a visible though dead and false church’. This is a concern and a danger that can be present when a church’s life does not correspond to Christ. The end result is that ‘the unity of the church with her Lord ceases’ and ‘the church is no longer addressed by her Lord and renewed by his Spirit’. Even if the ‘outer, visible, historical and institutional form of the church’ exists, ‘this church is no longer the true church’, it is ‘instead a “nominal church”, or “apparent church” (Scheinkirche), an ecclesiastical shell from which the life has fled (Kirchenschein)”.

The church is therefore ‘an event and a history’ that needs to be renewed by being in relationship with God (event) and by hearing the voice of Jesus, otherwise the institution (its place in history) will fail to exist as a true church. So there is a danger for the church that does not act in a way corresponding to Christ its head: it can lose its way. This means that the church needs to concern itself with the things that concern Christ and to not concern itself with the things that do not concern Christ. What is Christ’s concern? To correspond to the Father. What is the Father’s concern? God’s love is concerned with ‘seeking and creating fellowship’ with humanity.

This christological correspondence is followed by an ecclesiological

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127 Ibid., 156.
128 Ibid., 157.
130 Bender, Barth’s Ecclesiology, 155–56. See also Barth’s discussion on the ‘apparent Church’. Barth, God Here and Now, 91ff.
131 Bender, Barth’s Ecclesiology, 155.
132 Barth, God Here and Now, 76.
correspondence in which the church is to attempt to bear within its life an imitation and representation of its head and Lord. Nevertheless, it is important to note, as Bender does, that:

There is nothing insufficient in the divine activity that requires completion in a human act, but the human act does by grace accompany and serve the divine activity as a witness, taking the form of obedience rather than disobedience.

Correspondence is important because it gives further insights into the church’s nature and mission, that is, its being (which is derived from God) and its action (to emulate Christ as Christ emulates God). The church follows Jesus as Jesus follows God and thereby appropriates this understanding of ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ through ‘seeking and creating fellowship’. This understanding has validity because: (1) the work of the church can follow after only Jesus’ pattern and (2) it highlights that the church is sustained by his indwelling presence. Barth notes:

God can allow this other which is so utterly distinct from Himself to live and move and have its being within Himself. He can grant and leave it its own special being distinct from His own, and yet even in this way, and therefore in this its creaturely freedom, sustain, uphold and govern it by His own divine being, thus being its beginning, centre and end. God can in fact be nearer to it than it is to itself. He can understand it better than it understands itself. He can inspire and guide it at a deeper level than it knows how to do itself – infinitely nearer, better, more deeply, yet not in dissolution but in confirmation of His own divine singularity and again not in dissolution but in confirmation of the singularity of the creature. The fact that God can do this is His freedom in immanence.

It has already been well established that God’s love is concerned with seeking and creating fellowship, yet as is highlighted in this quote, God’s desire for fellowship goes beyond the initial seeking and creating and

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133 Bender, Barth’s Ecclesiology, 7.
134 Ibid.
extends itself to ‘sustain’, ‘uphold’, ‘govern’, ‘inspire’, ‘guide’ at a ‘deeper level’ than the other ‘knows how to do itself”.\textsuperscript{136} It stands to reason therefore that God will be interested in any fellowship that concerns God, because God is the Author, Creator, Initiator and Sustainer of true fellowship. God does not and will not leave God’s church alone in its efforts to seek and create fellowship, but rather, remains present in its midst. Therefore, because it is God’s desire to seek and create fellowship, and because God has set up all the conditions necessary to establish and maintain fellowship, it stands to reason that in this God has provided the basis of what it means for the church to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic. If God is the One who seeks and creates fellowship first and foremost, then any attempts on the part of the church can only be secondary in action. Indeed Barth locates the divine immanence as outworked in Jesus, the head of the church, who is the ‘crown of all relationship and fellowship between God and the world’.\textsuperscript{137}

Barth writes:

Thus in spite of the almost confusing richness of the forms of divine immanence we are led to recognize a hierarchy, a sacred order, in which God is present to the world. We have only to grasp the fact that Jesus Christ is the focus and crown, and not merely the focus and the crown of all relationship and fellowship between God and the world, but also their basic principle, their possibility and presupposition in the life of the Godhead.\textsuperscript{138}

Therefore, relationship and fellowship created and sustained in Jesus becomes the way forward and the test by which every relationship is measured. If, as I have argued earlier in this chapter, ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ is about ‘seeking and creating fellowship’ between God and

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid., 318.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid.
humanity (amongst the churches and with the ‘other’) then the test for that fellowship is Jesus Christ. Following on from this, for the church to be the true church, it must recognise Jesus as its head and Jesus as God.

Evangelical theologian Robert Price makes an interesting and telling observation when he notes:

Barth’s opening statement of §28, ‘God is’, is first elaborated as ‘God is the one who loves in freedom’ and then resolved, in praise to the simple but climactic claim, ‘God is Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ is God’.\(^\text{139}\)

By way of conclusion to this discussion on correspondence, because Jesus is the head of the church and Jesus lives in correspondence to God’s being and action, if the marks are highlighted and grounded in Jesus, they are also located in God, because Jesus does not do anything but that which he sees his Father doing. It was the Father’s love, concerned with seeking and creating fellowship, that sent Jesus. Jesus, filled with the same concern, sends his church empowered by the Holy Spirit to be ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’. As the church emulates the action of the Godhead in ‘seeking and creating fellowship’, it expresses the gift and task of the marks within its own nature and mission.

3.5: Critical Engagement with Barth’s Ecclesiology

When it comes to unravelling the mystery of the church, one immediately comes to the realisation that ecclesiology is a ‘derived’ system that depends

on other theological doctrines to aid in its development and understanding. Hunsinger, writing on Barth, states:

No one ever seems to have had a stronger sense that in Christian theology every theme is connected to every other theme. It is as if he envisioned the whole subject of Christian theology as forming one great and many-faceted crystal. He would as it were, take the great crystal in his hands and say, ‘Now we are going to look at the basic structure of the crystal through this facet, this particular doctrine, of the Christian faith. Notice how it connects not only with those facets which adjoin it, but also with those more remote and those on the opposite side. Above all, notice that the light which infuses the whole is the very light which refracts through this facet as well.’ Having conducted this examination, Barth then turns the great crystal in his hands and directs our attention in a similar way to yet another facet of the whole. The technique of allusion and recapitulation thus expresses his profound sense of the interrelatedness of all Christian doctrines. The task of theology, in this view, is to describe as carefully as possible, from many different angles, the network of interconnections which constitute the great crystal in its totality.

Yet Barth was not without his critics – when he wrote or now. Those who challenge Barth’s theology do so on a variety of fronts and while it is not useful to engage with all of them properly here, it is important to address those who critique him in regard to the direct concerns of this thesis, namely, ecclesiology. These criticisms concern two main areas. I will start with critiques of Barth’s christological foundation for ecclesiology, then I will work through a set of charges against his notion of ‘divine/human agency’ in his ecclesiology. I will conclude the chapter, with help from Bender, on the importance of Barth’s ‘correspondence motif’ as a way of answering his critics, and on Barth’s contribution to the marks as both gift and task.


It is well evidenced that Barth viewed theology through a christological lens. There is also no surprise that Barth emphatically stated that ‘all ecclesiology is grounded, critically limited, but also positively determined by Christology’. Therefore when it comes to dealing with Barth’s understanding of ecclesiology, including the concerns of his critics, we must start where Barth starts – with his christology. Bender posits that Barth’s mature ecclesiology has a ‘Christological logic that governs its inner shape, structure, and content’. Therefore, while Barth’s ecclesiology can be ‘examined in light of other central doctrines such as election and reconciliation, it is preeminently the Christological aspects of these doctrines that influence and shape Barth’s ecclesiology’.

Marc Cortez, in his article, ‘What Does It Mean to Call Karl Barth a “Christocentric” Theologian?’, helpfully points out that the term ‘christocentric’ in itself is ‘subject to a variety of interpretations’, revealing an ‘ambiguity’ in the understanding of this term, which, ‘unless [this is] clarified, hinders its usefulness as a theological descriptor’. Apart from offering definition of this term specific to Barth, Cortez presents five guiding principles to help readers understand Barth’s ‘unique brand’ of christocentrism; thus it always involves ‘both a veiling and unveiling of the knowledge of Christ’, a ‘methodological orientation’, a ‘particular Christology’, a ‘Trinitarian focus’, and an ‘affirmation of creaturely

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143 Bender, *Barth’s Ecclesiology*, 2.
144 Ibid.
145 Marc Cortez, ‘What Does It Mean to Call Karl Barth a “Christocentric” Theologian?’ *Scottish Journal of Theology* 60, no. 2 (2007): 127–43, at 128. As for the reasons for variety in interpretation, Cortez identifies differences due to formal and material understandings and interpretations as well as variance in methodology (128–30). Further to this he notes that ‘christocentric’ is not a term limited to Barth’s theology but a method that has been utilised by other theologians such as Ritschl, Harnack, Hermann and Schleiermacher (129).
The concern is that a misreading of Barth’s christocentrism reduces Barth’s theology to a solely ‘christomonistic’ understanding that ‘focuses so completely on the ontological and epistemological centrality of Jesus Christ’ that all other theologies and doctrines are ‘subsumed under the totalism of Barth’s christology’. Johnson staunchly defends Barth on this matter, suggesting that Barth himself ‘denied any “christomonism” that would make the deity of Christ such an all-encompassing factor in the event of salvation that it simply eliminated any genuine human action’.

Realising the need for a clear understanding of Barth’s ‘christocentrism’ and drawing from Bruce McCormack, Cortez suggests that Barth’s ‘particular form of christocentrism’ was a ‘methodological rule’ in which Barth ‘presupposed a particular understanding of God’s self-revelation in reflecting upon each and every doctrinal topic, and seeks to interpret those topics in light of what is already known of Jesus Christ’.

Bender states that, regarding Barth’s ecclesiology, ‘three primary elements comprise the Christological logic’. He identifies these three elements as: (1) the ‘Chalcedonian pattern’, (2) the ‘anhypostasia-

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146 Ibid., 127, 143.
147 Ibid., 130. William Johnson, The Mystery of God: Karl Barth and the Postmodern Foundations of Theology (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 204n2, defines ‘christomonism’ as the ‘position that makes Jesus Christ the sole subject of salvation and human appropriation of salvation a mere appendage to Christ’s primary work’. He notes, as others do, that Barth’s ‘prominent critic’ on this matter was G. C. Berkouwer and his work in The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth, trans. Harry R. Boer (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1956). See also Tom Greggs, ‘Jesus is Victor: Passing the Impasse on Barth on Universalism’, Scottish Journal of Theology 60, no. 2 (2007): 196–212. Greggs highlights Berkouwer’s charge that Barth was ‘inconsistent’ on his denial of universalism, because he understood Barth’s doctrine of election to include the eventual salvation of all (203).
148 Johnson, Mystery of God, 102. In regard to divine and human reality and against ‘christomonism’, Barth wrote: ‘It does not mean that Jesus Christ has merged into world-occurrence and world-occurrence into Him, so that we can no longer speak of them as separate things. This would be Christomonism’. CD, vol. IV, bk. 3, p. 713.
150 Bender, Barth’s Ecclesiology, 3.
151 Bender states: ‘The Chalcedonian pattern is comprised of a unity, a differentiation, and an asymmetrical creation between the divine and human natures of Christ … This
enhypostasia formula’, and (3) the ‘motif of correspondence’. This is important because, as will be seen, each of these elements helps to identify how Barth’s theology, although appearing to be simply christocentric, in fact points to the centrality of the triune God. This point is most clearly demonstrated in the correspondence motif, in which Christ emulates God. Johnson adds that Barth’s ‘so-called “christocentrism” … stresses the positive content of divine revelation’ and ‘accentuates God’s gracious determination to be “for” and “with” human beings in Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit’. Challengers to this type of theology view Barth’s work as a ‘narrowing of everything’ to a christology that ‘vitiates creaturely history and agency of real meaning’. Conversely Johnson argues that ‘christocentrism stands for a widening in which all our preconceived notions of who and what God is must be thoroughly reconstructed in the light of Jesus Christ’.

pattern serves as the constitutive paradigm for understanding the formal relation … between the divine and human natures of Christ … and also serves as the regulative pattern for all divine and human relationships’. Bender, *Barth’s Ecclesiology*, 3–4.

Following on from the ‘asymmetrical’ relationship between Christ’s natures, Bender states: ‘Barth’s anhypostatic-enhypostatic Christological formula allows him to speak of a true unity of the Word and flesh in Christ and of the Creator with the creature, without sacrificing the distinction and superiority of the divine to the human on the one hand or the integrity of the creature on the other’. Bender, *Barth’s Ecclesiology*, 5, italics in original.


It is at this point that opening discussion on Barth’s treatment of the Trinity and charges of his inadequately developed pneumatology must be considered. While the secondary charges of the effect of his ‘underdeveloped’ or ‘inadequate’ pneumatology will be more fully engaged with later in this section, it is important to note here that despite Barth being considered as the theologian in the twentieth century who put Trinity back on the agenda, there are those who disagree that his theology is indeed trinitarian.\textsuperscript{158} Robert Jenson suggests that ‘long stretches of Barth’s thinking seem rather binitarian than trinitarian’.\textsuperscript{159} Jenson’s argument in part seems to focus on Barth’s preference for a Western view of the filioque in which the Holy Spirit is seen as in close relation to only the Son.\textsuperscript{160} Jenson argues that Barth’s theology is inadequate, given that ‘the “inner-divine” fellowship of Father and Son in the Spirit is explicitly described as “two-sided”, since the Spirit is the fellowship itself’.\textsuperscript{161} Mostert adds that ‘this is exactly the kind of position that has reinforced Eastern suspicion of the christocentrism of the West’.\textsuperscript{162}

Yet Bromiley would argue that the focus of Barth’s theology, despite its christocentric nature, ‘remains constantly and consistently on God … even Christ’s centrality is meant to point to (and not away from) the centrality of the triune God’.\textsuperscript{163} Johnson summarises the relationship: ‘Even though God abides apart from us (\textit{extra nos}), God is nonetheless “for” …


\textsuperscript{159} Jenson, ‘You Wonder’, 296. See also Tracey Mark Stout, \textit{A Fellowship of Baptism: Karl Barth’s Ecclesiology in Light of His Understanding of Baptism}, Princeton Theological Monograph Series (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010).

\textsuperscript{160} This is a theme noted in Mostert, ‘Barth and Pannenberg’.

\textsuperscript{161} Jenson, ‘You Wonder’, 300.

\textsuperscript{162} Mostert, ‘Barth and Pannenberg’, 93.

\textsuperscript{163} Bromiley, \textit{Introduction}, xi.
and “with” us in Jesus Christ (pro nobis), and is also at work “in” us and “among” us by the power of the Holy Spirit (in nobis).\textsuperscript{164} Johnson therefore concludes that, according to Barth, ‘one cannot focus on Jesus Christ in himself … without understanding his life as caught up in a more dynamic Trinitarian movement of God’s Word and Spirit’.\textsuperscript{165}

Certainly within the previous discussion concerning the marks of the church, Barth’s work is seen to identify the marks as being located with the divine Godhead. Jesus may be identified as the head of the church, but it is God who sends Jesus to be the head and the Holy Spirit who is the awakening power within the church. This leads to discussion of the charge that Barth has an ‘underdeveloped’ pneumatology and the related concern of ‘divine and human mediation’. Of specific interest within this discussion is the role of divine and human mediation in regard to sacraments, church structure and ecclesial abstractness.

Mangina is clear in his charge against Barth’s theology, stating that it has a ‘Christocentric understanding of salvation’ and is ‘flawed in its failure to acknowledge the Holy Spirit as a distinctive divine economy’ by ‘bringing history to a close’ in the cross.\textsuperscript{166} He consequently argues that Barth has ‘short-circuited’ the Holy Spirit’s work in ecclesial practices, ensuring that the ‘Spirit can only appear as a predicate of Christ’s reconciling work’ instead of as ‘an agency of its own’.\textsuperscript{167} The issue at hand is the concern for a ‘concrete pneumatology where the Spirit works in the

\textsuperscript{164} Johnson, \textit{Mystery of God}, 51.
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid., 13. See also George Hunsinger, \textit{Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth} (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 148–85. Barth writes: ‘Within the deepest depths of deity, as the final thing to be said about Him, God is God the Spirit as He is God the Father and God the Son. The Spirit outpoured at Pentecost is the Lord, God Himself, just as the Father and just as Jesus Christ is the Lord, God Himself’. Barth, CD, vol. 1, bk. 1, §12, p. 466.
\textsuperscript{166} Mangina, ‘Bearing the Marks’, 270.
\textsuperscript{167} Ibid.
concrete practices and structures of Christianity’.\(^{168}\) This is precisely the issue that Lösel takes up in his quest to determine the role of the Holy Spirit’s guidance in ecclesial authority and structures.\(^{169}\) Borrowing from Barth, Lösel locates Scripture as the ‘critical principle’ in the church’s apostolicity, but questions the ‘gaps’ left open by Barth’s lack of ‘eucharist-liturgical’ appreciation.\(^{170}\) He therefore appeals to Kasper’s ‘threefold understanding of the church’s apostolicity in terms of succession, tradition and communion’ as a means of locating a ‘concreteness’ in ecclesiology that he suggests seems to be lost in Barth’s preference for an abstract rendering of the church.\(^{171}\) Further to his claim, he proffers that ‘Barth’s insistence on divine freedom … over the church has critical implications for his understanding of the church’s apostolicity’.\(^{172}\)

Mangina sharpens the point being made, stating that ‘while Barth emphasizes the church’s task as a witness to Christ, it is not clear that the church as a configuration of human practices makes much difference to this task’.\(^{173}\) Picking up Healy’s argument, he argues that Barth’s ecclesiology ‘oscillates between the poles of the essential (Christ is his body, the church) and the merely accidental and empirical’.\(^{174}\) While Yocum concurs that Barth’s later writings (especially the fourth volume of Church Dogmatics, ‘The Doctrine of Reconciliation’) ‘distinguish sharply between divine and human action without affirming of them any causal relation or temporal coincidence’, he also notes that Barth was a theologian of his era, reacting

\(^{168}\) Stout, *Fellowship of Baptism*, 66.

\(^{169}\) Lösel, ‘Guidance from the Gaps’.

\(^{170}\) Ibid., 140, 142.

\(^{171}\) Ibid., 144.

\(^{172}\) Ibid., 142. To be sure, Lösel does take issue with Kasper’s ‘subordinated role of scripture’, ‘lack of critical principle in Catholic ecclesiology’ and ‘overemphasis on ecclesial authority’. Ibid.

\(^{173}\) Mangina, ‘Bearing the Marks’, 278, italics in original.

\(^{174}\) Ibid., italics in original. See Healy, ‘Logic of Barth’s Ecclesiology’.

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to the ‘social and theological context of the 1950’s’.\footnote{Yocum, \textit{Ecclesial Mediation}, 97, 99.} He highlights Barth’s efforts aimed at addressing contextual issues and what Barth believed to be ‘fundamental errors’ in both Roman Catholicism (such as ‘the \textit{ex opera operato} theology of sacraments’, the ‘infallibility of the Church’s teaching office’ and the ‘hierarchical constitution of the Church’) and ‘cultural Protestantism’ (in which Barth was concerned over the ‘secularized state of the Church’ and its insular tendency, leading it to neglect its task of being a ‘witness to the world’).\footnote{Ibid., 99–102. Yocum identifies ‘three lines of polemic’ within Barth’s work, listing them as: ‘Barth’s response to the existential theology of Rudolph Bultmann’, ‘against certain aspects of Roman Catholicism’, ‘against cultural Protestantism’. Ibid.} In other words, while Mangina and Healy (et al.) are concerned with establishing whether or not the church (the divine and human organisation) plays a role in the outworking of salvation (e.g. as a means of grace), Barth was concerned that the institution of the church was declaring spiritual liberties and responsibilities that could be effected only through the work of Christ.

Greggs interestingly notes that the concern of Barth was not to replace the person of the living Christ with any ‘principle’\footnote{Greggs, ‘Jesus Is Victor’, 196–212.} A ‘living Christ’ can lead and guide his church but any institutional form of church with its fallible nature would ultimately only seek to serve its own institutional purposes. Greggs suggests that ‘the particularity of the person of Jesus Christ guards the freedom and sovereignty of God’\footnote{Ibid., 207.} Although Greggs makes this statement in the context of salvation, drawing from this concept and applying it to ecclesiology ensures the proper placement of Jesus as the head of the church rather than any human-made forms of ecclesial structure or liturgy. It is Jesus in the midst and presence of his community, together
with the power of the Holy Spirit, who guides, leads and directs his church. It is essential that the church look to its living Lord Jesus, because ‘a principle may well dissolve’ or ‘be doubted’ or leave ‘room for other interpretations’ but the living person of Jesus Christ can and will speak to the church who hears and heeds his voice.\textsuperscript{179} Barth himself states that ‘truth’ is not ‘an idea, principle, or system … nor is it a structure of correct insights, nor a doctrine’, even if it was a ‘correct doctrine’.\textsuperscript{180} Barth warns that ‘falsehood loves to take the garb of doctrine, idea, principle and system’ and therefore ‘the more divine an idea pretends to be’, ‘the more we have cause to suspect that what is trying to claim and enslave us is an idea, principle, system or doctrine of falsehood’.\textsuperscript{181} He reminds us that ‘Jesus Christ in the promise of the Spirit as His revelation in the sphere of our time and history is the truth’ and that ‘He cannot be enclosed or confined in any doctrine concerning Him, not even the most correct Christology’.\textsuperscript{182} The church therefore looks to its head, the living Lord Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{183} The church therefore cannot be reduced to an abstract ecclesiology (as Healy, Mangina, Lösel, et al. charge Barth with), because it takes its proper shape and form, nature and mission from the living Lord, who is its true sacrament

\begin{footnotes}
\item[179] Ibid., 209, 205, respectively.
\item[180] Barth, CD, vol. IV. bk. 3, §70, The Falsehood and Condemnation of Man, 375.
\item[181] Ibid., 376.
\item[182] Ibid.
\item[183] Ibid.
\item[183] Barth, CD, vol. IV, bk. 1, §62, p. 643. ‘The Holy Spirit is the awakening power in which Jesus Christ has formed and continually renews His body, i.e., His own earthly-historical form of existence, the one holy catholic and apostolic Church. This is Christendom, i.e., the gathering of the community of those whom already before all others He has made willing and ready for life under the divine verdict executed in His death and revealed in His resurrection from the dead. It is therefore the provisional representation of the whole world of humanity justified in Him.’ Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
and who is awakened by the Holy Spirit, urging it always to point beyond itself.\textsuperscript{184}

Bender validates that there is ‘indeed some truth in the charge that for Barth redemptive history is portrayed as coming to a close with the cross … and this in turn seems to undermine a significant role for the church and its activity in history’.\textsuperscript{185} Yet he adds that this critique can be valid insofar as one is prepared to negate Barth’s ‘rich notions of witness and correspondence’.\textsuperscript{186} Cortez concurs, arguing that Barth’s theology was a ‘particular christology’ that could not be reduced to a system or principle but instead involved ‘a particular understanding of God’s self-revelation’ that further ‘reveals the centre of theology to be the relationship between God and man revealed in Christ through his concrete existence’.\textsuperscript{187} In this way Cortez argues that Barth’s theology and particularly his christology did not denigrate the Trinity or negate ‘creaturely realities’.\textsuperscript{188} Despite Yocum’s criticisms of Barth, he positively affirms Barth’s concern for mediation of divine revelation. He states that the ‘history of Jesus Christ creates genuinely free and autonomous human agents whose faith is a matter of

\textsuperscript{184} See Healy, ‘Logic of Barth’s Ecclesiology’, esp. 263, where he explicitly states: ‘My central criticism [of Barth’s decision to ‘bifurcate’ the church into two separate entities of human and spiritual] is that the result is a strong tendency towards an abstract and reductionistic ecclesiology’. Mangina, ‘Bearing the Marks’, 284–85, suggests that Barth ‘refuses to acknowledge the visible church by itself as the concrete’ but rather the ‘true church’ can consist in only both the visible \textit{plus} the divine action and therefore Barth’s theology fails to be ‘historically and socially situated’. While Lösel, ‘Guidance from the Gaps’, 146–47, can affirm Barth’s theological positioning on the ‘visible and invisible church’, his concern is that Barth becomes abstract in his definition by asserting that the ‘invisible church’ can be perceived only ‘through faith by looking at the visible church’ and in doing so Barth fails to address ‘how the will of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit is mediated to and perceived by the church’. Yocum, \textit{Ecclesial Mediation}, 118–22, picks up all three of these arguments (Healy’s argument, in which abstract and reductionist approaches limit Barth’s ecclesiology, and Mangina’s and Lösel’s arguments regarding visible/invisible church) and further expounds them, suggesting there is a lack of ‘biblical exegesis’ grounding Barth’s ecclesiology and therefore a ‘narrowness in the vision of the Church offered’. Ibid., 119.

\textsuperscript{185} Bender, \textit{Barth’s Ecclesiology}, 278.

\textsuperscript{186} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{187} Cortez, ‘What Does It Mean’, 137.

\textsuperscript{188} Ibid., 141.
knowledge, which elicits and shapes action’. More specifically, however, ‘it creates human agents who have available to them the freedom to do what is good’, that is, ‘to live in a way that answers the act of God in Jesus Christ with corresponding obedience and gratitude’.  

Mangina asks a crucial question: How does the community learn what service to Jesus entails? In this question he is enquiring as to the ‘oft-stated criticism that Barth’s ecclesiology lacks concreteness’. In response to this move Bender would redirect Mangina (and any other critics of the same ilk) to the ‘twelve forms of ministry’ found in Barth’s *Church Dogmatics*, suggesting that ‘if Barth’s ecclesiology is criticized for its emphasis upon formal relations and sparse description of specific practices, such a criticism should only be made after a thorough examination of Barth’s descriptions of precisely such practices’. Bender concedes that ‘Barth’s ultimate criterion for the church’s identity is theologically described in terms of God’s action in Christ through the Spirit to call the Christian community in existence’, but he points out that the ‘divine action calls into existence a particular fellowship with particular forms of ministry’. Bender offers a second response to the critiques that Barth’s ecclesiology ‘lacks concreteness’, insisting that Barth maintained the need for contextual ministry that arises from ‘particular circumstances’ and

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190 Ibid.
191 Mangina, ‘Bearing the Marks’, 279.
192 Bender, *Barth’s Ecclesiology*, 274. Mangina instead turns to the work of Stanley Hauerwas, whom he claims ‘offers an important resource for filling in this lacuna in Barth’s work’, because Hauerwas’s ‘concreteness from below’ allows him to ‘focus much of his attention on the church and on issues of Christian formation, e.g. the virtues requisite for discipleship’. Ibid., 282, 285.
194 Ibid.
195 Ibid., 275, italics in original. Bender is drawing from Barth, CD, vol. IV, bk. 3, §72, p. 864.
therefore the ‘theologian cannot … prescribe a timeless system of such
practices’.  

It is of interest to note that in considering the ‘concreteness’ of Barth’s
ecclesiology, both Mangina and Lösel investigate the mark of ‘apostolicity’
for its scriptural basis and cite it as the only concrete example of Barth’s
ecclesiology. As was evidenced earlier in this chapter, ‘apostolicity’ is
identified in Barth’s work as both a ‘spiritual’ and a ‘concrete’ criterion of
the church and is grounded within the triune God. It was also noted that the
church is considered ‘apostolic’ when it is ‘obedient in witness’,
‘empowered by the Holy Spirit’, ‘grounded in Scripture’, and ‘looking
towards the living Jesus’. Additionally, it was also revealed that the four
marks describe the ‘one being of the Christian community’, but that
‘apostolic’ as a concrete criterion helps to determine the extent to which the
other three marks are expressed. Given this fuller treatment of the mark
of ‘apostolicity’, I would charge back that to limit the understanding of this
mark in this way is a form of reductionist ecclesiology in and of itself that
has severe implications for the broader ecclesial context. As I will further
argue later in this thesis, it is when the marks are held together in tension
and balance that they function most effectively as they illuminate and
inform each other.

There is one other criticism that needs to be addressed before I close
this section. Healy in his article raises the question of the ‘holiness’ of the
church, or more specifically whether ‘sin’ can be attributed to the church at
all. His concern is couched in the midst of discussion about the true and the

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196 Bender, *Barth’s Ecclesiology*, 275.
197 See section 3.2 in this chapter, ‘Barth’s Understanding of “One, Holy, Catholic, and
Apostolic”’.
false church. Healy suggests that Barth speaks of the ‘true’ church in a conceptual way (as the body of Christ) and of the ‘false’ church (*Scheinkirche*) as the ‘sinful human phenomenon’ that is ‘visible to all people with or without faith’.

Further, this *Scheinkirche* (false church), despite its ‘human agency’, can become at times the ‘true church’ but only by the ‘divine occasioning and fashioning of this human action’. Yet he posits that ‘if the true church’s identity is that of an abstract subject, the question immediately arises as to how we can discuss the sinfulness of the church *qua* church’. His argument is that Barth ‘usually relates sinfulness to the church’s *scheinbare*’ (false aspect), but this contradicts Barth’s position of the Church as the ‘Body of Christ’ because the body of Christ ‘does not sin’. Therefore when the ‘church’ does sin, ‘it cannot be the action of the Body of Christ’: it must be ‘some other entity, namely the false church’ that would in these instances make the true church either ‘non-existent or else perhaps existent in another place’. He concludes then that for Barth, ‘sometimes at least the unfaithful Bride of Christ is a different entity than the true body of Christ’.

Bender challenges Healy’s point by suggesting that Healy ‘tends to equate the visible church of witness with Barth’s concept of *Scheinkirche*, though these are of course not the same’. Bender clarifies that:

> it is not that the true church is invisible and the false church visible; the true church is the visible church as it is called and

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200 Ibid. Again Healy is drawing from Barth, CD, vol. IV, bk. 2, §67, p. 617.
202 Ibid.
203 Ibid.
204 Ibid.
205 Bender, *Barth’s Ecclesiology*, 272n5.
joined to its Head, and the false church is the church that no longer heeds the voice of its Lord.\textsuperscript{206}

Nevertheless, Bender does concede that Barth is ‘not always clear’ in his ‘actual exposition … between the church’s sinfulness and its obedience’.\textsuperscript{207}

Yocum points out that the ‘true church is marked by divine and human action’ but that does not negate the fact that ‘we need a way to take account of the Church as an assembly of those not yet fully redeemed … whose patterns of actions and customs are marked by grace and marred by sin and imperfection’.\textsuperscript{208} He offers that Barth’s ecclesiology does account for the \textit{ecclesia peccatrix} and therefore the ‘true church must be identified as both the Church whose sinfulness is overcome by the action of Jesus Christ, and the Church which still sins’.\textsuperscript{209} He clarifies that, within Barth’s account, what has been misinterpreted is the eschatological dimension of the church’s existence in favour of a reduction of it in terms of the visible and invisible church.\textsuperscript{210} Barth himself presented the church in eschatological terms when he stated that ‘the community “without spot or wrinkle” (Eph. 5:27) is the community with which Jesus Christ “will be revealed in glory” (Col. 3:4), never and nowhere the community in the midst of world history rushing toward its end’.\textsuperscript{211}

It is at this point that again I would appeal to a fuller treatment of the marks of the church in response to the understanding that the church is at once holy and sinful. In his treatment of the marks Barth presents the church’s holiness as not its own, for this is ‘ascribed’ to it by the Holy

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{206} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{207} Ibid, 272.
\item \textsuperscript{208} Yocum, \textit{Ecclesial Mediation}, 118.
\item \textsuperscript{209} Ibid.; \textit{ecclesia peccatrix} (sinning church). Yocum is drawing from Barth, CD, vol. IV, bk. 1, §62, p. 659; vol. IV, bk. 2, §67, p. 618.
\item \textsuperscript{210} Yocum, \textit{Ecclesial Mediation}, 118.
\item \textsuperscript{211} Barth, \textit{God Here and Now}, 84–85.
\end{itemize}
Spirit, who ‘commissions’, ‘gathers’ and ‘builds up’ this community, who, through their ‘creaturely work’, ‘acquire a part in His holiness’.\(^\text{212}\) Barth’s notion of correspondence yet again is an answer to his critics (as Bender reminds us).\(^\text{213}\)

Significantly for this thesis, a theme throughout Barth’s work on the marks is that of ‘gift and task’, in which all of the marks are seen as being grounded in Jesus and ascribed to the church in faith as a gift, yet they present a task that must be engaged. As previously noted, the church cannot look at Christ and his holiness ‘without being summoned to a very definite expectation and movement’.\(^\text{214}\) The church’s holiness ‘is not given to it as a kind of umbrella under which it can rest’, but rather it is ‘a pillar of cloud and fire like that which determined the way of the Israelites in the wilderness, as the mystery by which it has to direct itself in its human Church work’.\(^\text{215}\) Yet this summoning to a very definite expectation and movement is not limited solely to the attribute of holiness. Indeed each of the marks summons the church to the associated task they present in a corresponding fashion. This concept of gift and task will be more fully addressed in the next chapter, where I will bring together the necessary elements required to construct the ‘gift-task paradigm’. The paradigm will draw from work already completed in this thesis on the historical and theological understanding of the marks and will be undertaken in an effort


\(^{213}\) Bender, *Barth’s Ecclesiology*, 273: ‘Barth speaks of the church as corresponding even in its visibility to Christ. Yet he can also speak of the church as sinful and contrary to Christ’. Bender admits that this presents a ‘deep and enduring tension’ but rather than it being a matter of ‘contradiction’, it is a matter of ‘imperfect and varying correspondence’. In this way it can still ‘preserve Barth’s critical dialectic that rightfully guards the distinction between divine and human action while shining a light upon the church’s intractable sinfulness’.

\(^{214}\) Barth, CD, vol. IV, bk. 1, §62, p. 701.

\(^{215}\) Ibid.
to address the twenty-first-century concerns regarding dialogue and engagement with the marks.

At this point in the thesis, having outlined the tensions and concerns surrounding the marks within the twenty-first-century context (chap. 1), examined the marks historically (chap. 2), and reclaimed the marks theologically (chap. 3), it is now time to reflect upon this information and consider how it might be useful to the development of the gift-task paradigm.

In the remaining part of this thesis I will outline and discuss the necessary elements of the gift-task paradigm (chap. 4), before I more fully and concretely develop the gift-task paradigm as a communicative, analytical and theological tool (chap. 5). Following this it will be necessary to ‘test’ this tool against current academic literature on the marks (chap. 6), before offering concluding discussion as to the benefits and limitations of the gift-task paradigm and options for further study (chap. 7).
Chapter 4

The Marks through the ‘Gift-Task’ Paradigm:

Fundamental Elements

As outlined in the introductory chapter, this thesis aims to create a paradigm of ‘gift and task’ through which the marks of the church can be historically understood, contextually assessed and theologically reclaimed. This is in order that the current and future church can find a way helpfully to engage with these historic attributes so that it honours and appropriates them in good ecclesial praxis.

The value of engaging with the marks theologically has already been established and discussed previously in this thesis. Argument has been made that in the twenty-first century the marks have been defined along institutional and denominational lines. The result of this is that the marks have lost their critical theological functioning for the contemporary church and therefore they need to be theologically reclaimed. Hence, including a theological element will be necessary in the construction of a paradigm based on gift and task.

Yet for this paradigm to be effective it would also need to be able to address the twenty-first-century concerns and tensions surrounding the marks. These include issues regarding the inability of the contemporary church to transcend denominational and institutional divisions and the current impasse on dialogue surrounding the marks. Therefore the paradigm would have to include a communicative element within it. This element would need to include two dimensions of communication: vertical and horizontal. Vertical communication would include a ‘listening’ to God and being led by the Holy Spirit. Horizontal communication would include
communication that takes place within the immediate context of the local church, and the larger body of Christ, and that extends beyond the boundaries of the church.

Additionally, the paradigm would need to contain an analytical component that addresses the requirement of the church to be able to diagnostically self-examine as it considers its own current actions within the larger framework of church history. Not only would this analytical portion need to include the self-examination of the church within the local context, but it would also need to be theologically grounded, historically informed and open enough to allow for scrutiny outside its local context and denominational bounds. The rationale for including both communicative and analytical portions to the paradigm has already been established in the introductory chapter of this thesis. At this point, what is required is to identify clearly and outline what the communicative and analytical elements for creating such a paradigm might entail. Accordingly I will consider the (1) value of ‘gift and task’, before I (2) enlist the work of two social theorists and their communicative models. I will finish the chapter by (3) addressing the type of analytical element required for the paradigm.

4.1: The Value of Gift and Task

Discussion on the marks of the church brings into focus the conceptualised ideas (and ideals) and the concrete realities of the church. Wrapped up in the dialogue are discussions related to the church’s identity, nature and mission. This extends the conversation to include concepts concerning the ‘visible/invisible’ church, the tension of the ‘already and not yet’ and sets
the church within an historical timeline that includes the past, present and future. In discussing the marks and in an effort to address the noted tensions, theologians past and present have often utilised a favourable concept that understands the marks of the church simultaneously as a ‘gift’ to be received and as a ‘task’ to be accomplished.¹ Van Engen notes: ‘If the four words are understood as both gifts and tasks, we are no longer restricted within the confines of an institution which may or may not reflect the Nicene and Reformation qualities’.² Further, a ‘gift and task’ understanding is consistent with the widely held view that the church is in a state of being already and not yet.³ The church is already one, yet it is

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² Van Engen, God’s Missionary People, 65.

divided; holy, yet sinful; catholic, yet parochial; and apostolic, yet unfaithful.\(^4\) In other words there is an understanding that the church is in a state of being ‘on the way’ (\textit{via}).\(^5\) Therefore the marks are experienced both as a present reality and as a future promise that will not be realised fully until the eschaton.\(^6\) If ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ would seem to present an ‘ideal’ form of church, it also presents a goal for the contemporary church to create a visible representation of ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’. The marks stand as a reminder to the entire ecclesial community of its combined heritage, its current common nature, and its shared future. Furthermore the church is understood as ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ because these attributes reflect some aspect of the triune God and have been awarded to the church as a ‘gift’ from God. This means that the marks are ascribed to the church even when the current church is not evidently one, holy, catholic and apostolic, because it still reveals and witnesses that these attributes ‘flow from and illustrate the Church’s dependence on God’.\(^7\) This in turn reveals their transcendent and dynamic nature. That is, being \textit{from} God and \textit{of} God, their source is therefore necessarily \textit{in} God and not in the church (even if they are to be appropriated as this level). God has graciously given the marks to the church as a gift and

\(^4\) Madges and Daley, \textit{Many Marks}, 3.

\(^5\) See also Berkouwer, who discusses the church as existing in a ‘state of becoming’, as he contrasts correlated terms of ‘static’/‘dynamic’ and ‘being’/‘becoming’. Berkouwer, \textit{Studies in Dogmatics}, 20–24. Van Engen opts for the terms ‘is’ and ‘becomes’ in discussing this process and suggests that the church exists in both states simultaneously: ‘the Church is already by nature what it is becoming and simply must continually change, improve, reform and emerge’. Van Engen, \textit{God’s Missionary People}, 41, italics in original.

\(^6\) Stanley Grenz, \textit{Theology for the Community of God} (Vancouver: Eerdmans and Regent College Publishing, 2000), 467–68. In contrast, Johnson boldly states that the ‘four marks of the church describe an ideal that the church has never and \textit{will never} fully realise’. Johnson, \textit{The Creed}, 275, italics added to original.

therefore they cannot be considered as something that is initiated from within the church itself (albeit a gift that the church at times in history has not always seen, appreciated or appropriated). Therefore, because God has initiated the marks and they relate to God’s own triune nature and being, they then transcend the universal church and every local congregation, including every denomination, every context, every particular experience, every generation. Likewise they can be offered as a fresh gift to every new generation in every context and in every place in history – past, present and future. Being of a transcendent nature, they exist as a constancy that is created and sustained from outside the church whilst at the same time they are indicative of the church.

Along with their transcendent nature is their continuing ability to be a source and resource to the church, revealing a dynamic nature as well. This dynamic nature of the marks refers to the fact that there is an unlimited supply of resources left untapped, ensuring that there are new ways of expressing the task of being one, holy, catholic and apostolic that go beyond weekly recitation, static definitions, and time-bound approaches. In other words, discussing the marks as dynamic is to understand that there is always more to be realised. There is always more ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ to be experienced, reached, expressed, and understood, because there is a fullness of meaning to grow into about how ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ can be expressed and understood in any given context or era.

Also inherent in the marks as gift and task is the inseparable link between ‘being’ and ‘doing’ concerning the marks. Since the marks are given to the church as a gift, engagement from the church and expression of this gift is implied. The church, containing the gift of being ‘one, holy,
catholic and apostolic’, should reflect and witness in actuality to possessing this gift. For ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ is not only a statement made about the church (as a result of the gift bequeathed to it), but a statement made to the church as a form of missional directive.\(^8\) In other words, ‘therefore church, you are to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic’.\(^9\) Hence, implied within this gift is an associated task.\(^10\) Within the indicative lies the imperative.\(^11\)

The key to the ‘gift and task’ combination is the conjunction, ‘and’. ‘Gift and task’ is an expression of balance in which gift and task are inherently linked and inseparably joined. Attempting to prioritise ‘gift’ or ‘task’ over the other, or neglecting one in favour of the other, puts the church in a dangerously imbalanced condition and risks creating scenarios whereby the full benefit of the combination cannot be realised. For example,

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\(^8\) ‘Missional’ in this case is not limited to ‘apostolic mission’ but also refers to the church’s missional requirement of existing in greater levels of oneness, holiness and catholicity.

\(^9\) Küng, *The Church*, 273, says something similar when he writes: ‘The Church is one and therefore should be one’ (italics in original). Moltmann, in discussing the marks does not talk about them as ‘gift and task’ but he refers to them as ‘statements of faith’, ‘statements of hope’, and ‘statements of action’. As ‘statements of action’ he suggests that, because the church is ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ ‘in Christ’, it ‘ought to be’. Jürgen Moltmann, ‘The Marks of the Church’, in Moltmann, *Church in Power of the Spirit*, 337–61.

\(^10\) In the same way as the gift and task conception, another regularly employed concept is the correlated German words of *Gabe* and *Aufgabe*. Theologians when discussing several biblical and theological terms have variously applied this conception. For instance, J. S. Whale in his book *The Protestant Tradition*, in the chapter entitled ‘The Paradox of *Gabe* and *Aufgabe*’ offers that the gospel message is a twofold structure (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955). First the gift of the gospel places humankind under the ‘divine judgment and divine grace of forgiveness’, and second, it ‘proclaims the moral obligation involved in the Christian’s acceptance’. The ‘divine gift (*Gabe*) involves responsive human activity (*Aufgabe*)’. Ibid., 92. Or more simply put, ‘*Aufgabe* – the new man’s moral response to God’s *Gabe*’. Ibid., 98. Whale continues in this chapter to utilise this twofold structure of *Gabe/Aufgabe* to discuss other biblical and theological terms such as ‘faith’ (93); ‘love’ (97) and ‘regeneration of the Spirit’ (98). Berkouwer in discussing the mark of ‘catholicity’ states that it needs to be understood as gift (*Gabe*) and task (*Aufgabe*) but goes no further in defining these German words. *Studies in Dogmatics*, 121.

\(^11\) The Bible presents several examples where God’s gifts and blessings carry an implicit and associated imperative, e.g. the Israelites were ‘blessed to be a blessing’, Gen 12:2: ‘I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing’. The gift of the marks of the church is no different in this respect.
if the marks of the church are engaged solely as ‘gift’ (i.e. indicative) then they run the risk of being relegated to a dogmatic declaration expressed by the church, with no further requirement for understanding or fresh revelation being passed onto the next generation.\footnote{E.g. consider the loss of theological meaning that has taken place over the use of the word ‘holy’ or ‘holiness’. The root meaning of the word ‘holy’ means ‘set apart’. It relates to the church as being set apart from the world and set apart for God. Often this mark has been limited to an understanding that sees it as a personal attribute or attainment as opposed to being a goal and gift for the church as a whole to realise.}

Potentially, the church could become apathetic and lethargic, listless in regard to the task of the marks, because no effort would be required to work for what it already possessed. A church that treats the marks in such a way would be a church that prefers the ‘invisible’ reality of church to the ‘visible’ church. Its focus would be on the eschaton, with little or no concern for the ‘here and now’. Treatment of the marks in such a way depicts the marks as completely ‘static’ in nature and thereby neglects their dynamic character. Solely static definitions do not allow for diversity or for the accommodation of a new contextual or particular ministry.\footnote{In Gal 3:28 Paul addresses three categories that should no longer divide the people of God: ethnicity, class, gender. This ‘gift’ of catholicity offered to the church is also a ‘task’, in which it is the reconciling work of Christ that has ‘brought near those who were once far off’ and through which we now have ‘peace’; thus catholicity becomes the church’s mission, in which it must live as community of reconciliation. Catholicity is revealed not only as an indicative but also an imperative that needs to be understood ‘dynamically’ rather than ‘statically’.}

Further, static definitions of the marks could be utilised as ‘boundary markers’ to exclude others by differentiating ‘who is in’ and ‘who is out’. This has already been evidenced throughout
church history, with those who are considered ‘in’ generally also considering themselves to be the ‘true church’, because they have received this gift. In actuality the ‘true church’ would be the church that not only possesses the gift but also engages in the associated task.

Equally damaging to the body of Christ is the attempt to engage with the marks solely as ‘task’. Again this is to treat the marks as static rather than dynamic, and for the most part this can be clearly evidenced in current ecclesiology whereby churches appear to be in competition with one another as they exalt their own denominational understanding over that of others.¹⁴ Along the same lines, exalting ‘task’ above ‘gift’ creates opportunity to pass judgment on those churches and denominations that they deem not to measure up (whether in this generation or a past one). Another potential risk is a preference for the local and particular over the universal. In this case, the marks are whittled down to being about a single congregation or denomination without care or concern for the larger body of Christ.¹⁵ This further supports an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ mentality and displaces the call to unity in diversity in favour of unity in uniformity.¹⁶ Another possibility that presents when there is a preference for task over gift is a tendency to value one mark over the others; and this can cause a further imbalance. For

¹⁴ Grenz, Theology, 468: ‘High church theologians tend to elevate the first mark, apostolicity, above the other three and to endow it with a special significance. They understand the apostolicity which guarantees the perpetuity of the church primarily by appeal to the idea of apostolic succession. Participants in the Western traditions have often understood apostolic succession as a historical link from the present to the first century. Consequently, the true universal church is that body whose bishops can trace their ordination from one generation to the previous generation, eventually to the first century’. Using the marks solely in this manner limits their dynamic nature.


¹⁶ This is an acute struggle faced by many congregations because preoccupation with local and immediate self-interest means they seldom look up or look out to perceive their place in the larger body of Christ. Ministry is restricted to the local congregation, with little concern for the church down the street.
instance, if the task of holiness is deemed to be the ultimate mark within a congregation, then this ecclesial community would be less likely to be an inclusive community (promoting oneness), welcoming ‘saint’ and ‘sinner’ alike. In this scenario the church would be neglecting to respond to the apostolic call. Finally, to view the marks of the church solely as task risks a scenario whereby individuals or congregations become engulfed by hopelessness as they assess that, empirically, the church appears not to be ‘measuring up’. 17

Therefore a balance in the gift and task combination would offer grace and hope to the struggling congregation whilst offering grace and humility to the proud congregation by reminding them both that it is only through the gift of God that they exist not as solo sojourners but as a part of the larger body of Christ. The conception of ‘gift and task’ is an inbuilt leveller reminiscent of the biblical promise of all being connected as one body in Christ Jesus and sharing in the same purpose and mission (Rom 12:5; Gal 3:28; Eph 4:4; 1 Cor 12:13, et al.). The church, as the body of Christ, is meant not only to embrace the gift but to enlist and engage with the task in a way that honours God. Lutheran theologian Edgar Krentz, in discussing an individual’s ‘freedom in Christ’, says that:

To be the servant of God means to have given up fully every righteousness won by self, to give God all glory. Paradoxically stated, the Christian is free precisely because he no longer

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17 This is a point noted in the work of the World Council of Churches: ‘Even among committed Christians the apparent inability of the churches to overcome their historic division seems to demonstrate that either the leadership of the churches is not authentically committed to the will of Christ for unity among his disciples or that this commandment itself is an impossible dream’. World Council of Churches, Confessing the One Faith: An Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic Faith as It Is Confessed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381), Faith and Order Paper No. 153, rev. ed. (Geneva: WCC, 2010), §217, p. 70.
belongs to himself, but is “in Christ”. This gift of freedom ties man to the giver.\textsuperscript{18}

Applied to the church this means that the church is not to serve its own institutional purposes but instead those of its master whom it is serving. This freedom is not an opportunity for the church to determine its own purpose, because it has been infused with a nature and a mission assigned by God and variously outlined (including through the classical marks of the church). Therefore, as the contemporary church accepts the gift of ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ and declares itself to be so, it receives this gift, understanding that its existence comes from God. The church does not belong to itself, nor does it live for itself. Rather, it belongs to God and exists for God’s purposes and ultimately to give all the glory to God. The gift of ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ ties the church to the task of being one, holy, catholic and apostolic, and ultimately to God, the giver of the gift.

Considering the current status of the use, profile, and empirical evidence of the marks within the twenty-first-century church, the unfortunate truth is that there appears to be unfaithfulness to the marks, with both the gift and the task being neglected. While dogmatic declarations of ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ are being asserted by some churches on a weekly basis, these same churches can find one reason or another to exclude other churches (or, conversely, cut themselves off from others), thereby negating the declaration.\textsuperscript{19} Suffice it to say, the marks of the church have been taken for granted, assumed, misused and neglected. Fryer points out

\textsuperscript{18} Krentz, “Freedom in Christ”, 42–43.

\textsuperscript{19} An example of this in the twenty-first century is the longstanding denominational barriers to unity such as not ‘celebrating communion in each other’s churches’, lack of consensus on a ‘common date for Easter’, and failure to recognise another church’s rites of initiation. Stephen Brown, ‘Churches Urged toward Visible Unity’, \textit{Christian Century} 123, no. 6 (21 March 2006), 12.
that there is a danger in not holding the task together with its associated gift. The danger, he suggests, is that an assumption is made that the gift is yours (ours) to ‘do with as you [we] please, which includes doing nothing at all’ because it has been forgotten that the gift comes with a call (task).20

Therefore, to understand the marks of the church as ‘gift’ is to understand that God graciously ascribes to the church the attributes of ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’.21 Each local representation of church is to evidence the expression of the marks, yet no one church can claim to express the marks in their fullness because each congregation must be linked to the larger body of Christ. Further, the marks are not a utopian, unrealised ideal; instead they are offered as a real gift of unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity that can be expressed only in part within the here and now but will be fully realised at the eschaton. Gift, then, is the church living under the declaration made by God as to its status, nature and mission. The church is not able to complete or sustain the marks of its own volition, but rather only through the life-giving and maintaining source of the Giver, who declares it one, holy, catholic and apostolic in the first place. The church’s rightful response to this gift is to listen to the leading of the Spirit, trusting in faith that God will sustain the church, as opposed to taking it upon ourselves as institutions to ensure that the task can be achieved without acknowledging its gift.

Linked to the indicative of the gift is the imperative of task. ‘Task’ can be more difficult to define and describe when discussing the marks due

21 World Council of Churches, Nature and Mission, §12, pp. 14–15. This was discussed in the opening remarks of chap. 1 of this thesis.
to the variation in understanding of these four terms by the differing denominations and congregations (over differing periods). Yet at the very minimum, the task element must be seen as what the church is meant to do with the gift it is given. It reflects the attempts made by ecclesial communities to achieve and express the aspects of ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’. In other words, ‘task’ implies that churches must be open to, and seek, fresh ways in which to engage with the marks in every generation and context. This goes beyond any barriers (e.g. denominations or cultures) that would close the church off from being an inclusive community that is ordained with a mission from God to share God’s truth (gospel). The marks of the church, as a gift, are realised in the task that the church engages in, in its effort to include all ecclesial communities and people beyond. Only together can the various communities declare themselves to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic and not in isolation (as has been done by various denominations one towards the other at various times in the history of the church). 22 That declaration must be made in regard to the task that it hopes to achieve in the midst of community both local and global. The marks of the church as a ‘task’ present a goal, or a direction, for the church to move in as it creates a visible representation and understanding of what it means for the church to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic. The marks of the church as ‘gift and task’ remind the community as a whole of its common heritage, nature and mission.

Yet while the conception of ‘gift and task’ presents a helpful way to understand and discuss the classical marks of the church, it is also a broad

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22 E.g. see Rausch’s commentary on this in relation to the requirement for denominations to ‘acknowledge the ecclesiality of other churches’ in order to ‘move towards greater communion’. Truly Catholic Church, 151.
conception that leaves ample room for interpretation at the ground level. The concept of gift and task itself can do nothing to ensure that denominations within the body of Christ actually engage with one another, nor can it measure the level of any engagement. Further, while gift and task as a concept does present the initial inherent question towards churches in regard to engagement (i.e. are the marks being engaged with as gift and task?), it can go no further. It does not take into consideration whether the marks are being engaged with in a manner in which they can be contextually assessed (to determine whether they are operating as statements of self-justification or self-examination), or whether the marks are being considered historically, or whether they are being appealed to theologically (in that the marks are initiated and sustained from outside the church even as they are evidenced within it). Nor can the concept of gift and task address which necessary factors would have to be considered in making these determinations. So although gift and task is a valuable concept that can relieve the tension of the ‘visible/invisible church’ and the tension of the ‘already and the not yet’ nature of the church, a further concrete structure is required to ensure that there is some measurable and/or visible representation of ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ actually being expressed.

It is my contention that building on the gift and task concept and developing it as an overarching aspect of a fuller gift-task paradigm could accomplish this. As an aspect of the paradigm, the marks as ‘gift and task’

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23 In chap. 5 of this thesis work will be undertaken to discuss and present more fully the type of dialogue required for the paradigm.

24 As highlighted in chap. 1 of this thesis, I will use ‘gift and task’ to refer to the established conception of the marks of the church. When discussing my proposed paradigm, by contrast, I will use ‘gift-task’.
would be retained for the reasons already given. Yet it is important to highlight that as an overarching aspect it will interact with the three required elements of the gift-task paradigm: the theological element can offer a necessary theological basis for locating the marks within the triune God; the analytical can explicate a basis for self-examination; and the communicative can encourage dialogue between churches because such dialogue is not restricted to finding a denominational or institutional consensus but rather appeals to a theologically contextualised one.

More specific to the three elements incorporated in the gift-task paradigm I note the following functions. The communicative element is to assist churches in their communication with each other and with God regarding receiving this gift and engaging in its implied task. The analytical element is to draw on lessons learned from church history regarding the marks of the church, and to enable churches to develop a tool to assess themselves (rather than to justify themselves) in their engagement with the gift and task of the marks. The theological element is to draw on belief and remind the church that the marks are located, grounded and sustained in the triune God, and it is to encourage churches to respond to the gift and task of the marks as a collective whole.

Having already outlined the theological element in chapter 3, in the remainder of this chapter, I will focus on outlining the communicative and analytical elements. Then in chapter 5, I will pull all three elements together in a more specific and concrete way to develop the gift-task paradigm.
4.2: Communicative Insights from Wieman and Habermas

Construction of the communicative aspect of the paradigm will draw in part from insights found in Henry Nelson Wieman’s *doctrine of creative interchange* and Jürgen Habermas’s *theory of communicative action* and these will be offered as a means and method through which the marks of the church can be viewed and understood in an effort to increase dialogue and better communication between the churches. Both authors offer models of communication that seek to discover enrichment for individuals and their communities by reaching some form of ‘mutual understanding’. 25

Wieman’s model includes both an immediate context between human subjects and an element of reaching out to a ‘divine Source’ through a process of communicative interchange that will ‘transform, create, and sustain’ individuals and their communities in ways in which they could never do for themselves. 26 Wieman offers a general theory about creativity, yet in doing so he serves the explication of the gift-like nature of the marks. As will be seen, the doctrine of creative interchange describes a process of communication that sees a continual growth of ‘good’. This growth occurs by seeking to receive from, while being engaged with, the divine ‘Source’. This concept feeds the kind of thesis that I am pursing in which the gift-like character of the marks functions as a dynamic and regenerative feature of the life of the church. Wieman’s model is exceedingly valuable in this effort by pointing to the transcendent Source that exists outside the constraints of

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25 ‘Reaching understanding’ and/or ‘mutual understanding’ is a Habermasian phrase. Wieman has a similar view in his doctrine of creative interchange, which is a two-part process of ‘understanding’ and ‘integration’. Henry Nelson Wieman (1884–1975) was a leading American religious philosopher who wrote prolifically throughout his five-decade career.

26 Wieman’s concept of creative interchange ascribes the ‘creative’ element to God, who is the never ending Source of ‘creativity’. 124
the institutional church by reminding the church that what initiates and sustains the marks exists outside itself. Therefore, it is the church’s responsibility to structure itself in such a way as to be open to this form of communication.

In the case of Habermas, his is an intersubjective communicative model grounded in the particular in which reproduction of the ‘lifeworld’ (that is, the passing on of traditions, meanings, stock of knowledge, and so forth) takes place through communicative action and where reaching ‘mutual understanding’ between participants is the goal. Habermas’s model can more readily be linked to the task aspect of the marks. As will be seen, the evident benefit of Habermas’s model is that his conception of lifeworld-system provides a structure and language in which to discuss the various conceptions and definitions of the marks. This is important because no single ‘lifeworld’ (church or denomination) can contain all that there is to know concerning the marks of the church, because this knowledge changes as the field of view or horizon changes and progresses throughout history and eras of understanding, at both the local and the global levels. Therefore, Habermas’s model proves valuable in that it offers a rationale for what a reasonable society can expect to experience and should be working towards in regard to dialogue that takes place within the here-and-now contexts of our societies. Thus, for the contemporary church it offers the opportunity for dialogue that is open, ecumenical and contextual.

I argue that there is a benefit to be gained by combining these two communicative approaches and including them in the construction of the new gift-task paradigm. This would allow for a communicative process that in essence reaches out to the universal (and includes both the transcendence
and the immanence of God) while reaching across the particular (the contextual ‘other’). As will be seen, understanding the marks of the church through a gift-task paradigm based upon Wieman and Habermas allows for a dual communication process (vertical and horizontal) to take place through ‘creative interchange’ and ‘communicative action’, where fresh understanding can be integrated with past understandings. This two-part process outlines the description of ‘reaching out’ to the transcendent (i.e. the vertical) and ‘reaching across’ to the particular (i.e. the horizontal). This indicates that dialogue concerning the marks must be vertical as well as horizontal. That is, churches must address their answerability to God as stewards of the marks even as they engage with other churches in order to reflect a visible possession and expression of them.

In what follows I will outline how each author’s communicative model benefits the paradigm before concluding the section with a summary of the conjoined communicative method.

4.2.1: Wieman and His Doctrine of Creative Interchange

At its most complex level, Wieman’s doctrine of creative interchange is an

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intricate and conceptual model aimed at providing empirical and naturalistic
evidence of the manifestation of ‘God’ at work in the lives of humankind.29
Wieman states that throughout his whole intellectual career he sought to
answer one question:

What operates in human life with such character and power that
it will transform man as he cannot transform himself, saving
him from evil and leading him to the best that human life can
ever reach, provided he meet the required conditions?30

Wieman’s response to this question was the ‘doctrine of creative
interchange’. Most often it was simply referred to as ‘creative interchange’,
although in other writings Wieman also refers to it as the ‘creative event’. 31

As described by Wieman:

Creative interchange is that kind of interchange which creates in
those who engage in it an appreciative understanding of the
original experience of one another. One gets the view point of
the other under such conditions that this original view derived
from the other integrates with one’s own personal resources.
This integration modifies the view derived from the other in
such a way that it becomes a part of one’s own original
experience.32

28 It is in the final phase of Wieman’s writings, his ‘mature’ writings, that his doctrine of
‘creative interchange’ finds its fullest and most mature description. His most definitive
work on ‘creative interchange’ comes out of two of his later books, The Source of
Human Good and Man’s Ultimate Commitment, both of which will be drawn from
heavily in this dissertation where Wieman’s works are discussed. Of notable interest,
Shaw (‘Introduction’) and Bernard Meland (‘Wieman’s Philosophy of Creativity’, in
Creative Interchange, ed. John Broyer and William Minor [Carbondale: Southern
Illinois University Press, 1982]) disagree on the number of ‘phases’ to be found in
Wieman’s work. This may be due in part to their differing approaches to it. Shaw,
looking at Wieman’s ‘concept of God’, found three phases of thought, while Meland,
looking at Wieman’s approach to ‘creativity’, found four. Regardless, both agree that
Wieman’s work on the doctrine of creative interchange is most profoundly encapsulated
in his later years, which both authors describe as his ‘final phase’.

29 Wieman often had difficulty using the word ‘God’ because he felt it was open to too
many interpretations and misrepresentations. Wieman, Ultimate Commitment, 11.
Anderson, ‘Pragmatic Theology’, 167, states that ‘pragmatic theology and natural
science meet in a “creative interchange” where the concerns of neither theology nor
science are purely disinterested’.


31 In Wieman’s writings after The Source of Human Good, he refers to the ‘creative event’
as creative interchange. See Shaw, Nature’s Grace, 63.

32 Wieman, Ultimate Commitment, 22.
This creative interchange / creative event is comprised of two primary aspects: (1) ‘understanding in some measure of the original experience of the other person’; and (2) ‘the integration of what one gets from others in such a way as to create progressively the original experience which is oneself’. This process goes beyond simply adopting the other person’s point of view; rather, the individuals involved are radically transformed into new people as they integrate the appreciative understanding of the other into their pre-existing distinctive personality. The end result of the interchange sees that ‘each participant is changed, expanded, we may even say recreated, as her own perspective widens’ and their ‘lives are transformed into a more richly inclusive whole’. Already at this level, the benefits of Wieman’s model in relation to the paradigm can be evidenced in regard to nonjudgmental discourse that is aimed at reaching a new level of understanding between two communicators. This form of communication, while at first glance may appear as simply ecumenical in nature, proves to go beyond any ‘lowest common denominator’ approach. Creative interchange seeks truly to appreciate the other before integrating this understanding into oneself and yielding to whatever new transformation that will occur. Further, Wieman’s model is not to be mistaken for any other form of human communicative process or limited to being simply a human

33 Ibid., 22–23, italics added to original.
35 I am drawing from Avis where he writes concerning ‘ecumenism’: ‘All too often it is assumed that the demands of unity … involves glossing over the differences between the churches, closing our eyes to what makes them distinctive. Difficult questions are sidelined. From this angle, the unforgivable sin is to upset one’s ecumenical partners. The common ground becomes the whole landscape … Ecumenism is regarded as a soft option, permeated by sentiment and pragmatism. The lowest common denominator approach results in ecumenical entropy – lack of energy, lack of direction, lack of movement, lack of life’. Paul Avis, The Christian Church: An Introduction to the Major Traditions (London: SPCK, 2002), ix–x.
communicative process. This is because the doctrine of creative interchange reveals that inherent in this process of ‘reorganisation’ resides a power that can transform individuals and ultimately their societies towards ‘fuller actualization’. This power is described as the ‘creative good’ and it is this ‘creative good’ that has the potential to ‘transform’, ‘create’, and ‘sustain’ individuals in a way that no human can transform, create, or sustain for him- or herself. At the core of Wieman’s ‘doctrine of creative interchange’ is the understanding that there is a direct contrast between ‘creative’ and ‘created’ good.

For Wieman it is imperative to understand that ‘created good’ is limited and temporary, while ‘creative good’ is an unlimited, dynamic, energetic source for continual growth of greater good. In contrast, ‘created good’ is a certain kind of good that is ‘replaceable’ and does not ‘retain the same character of goodness under all circumstances and conditions’. Instead its goodness is relative to time, place, person, culture,

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36 Wieman is outlining that there is a dynamic process of growth and understanding taking place. This value in Wieman’s theory cannot be overlooked or understated in the development of this paradigm.


39 On this point, Shaw notes: ‘Creative interchange as a concept of the divine operates in human life to do more than human effort alone, because it transforms the mind in ways that cannot be foreseen or contrived. Yet in this conception, God is not a supernatural being beyond the world of events, but a creativity which is manifest in certain events’. Shaw, ‘Naturalism and the Christ’, 382.

40 Henry Nelson Wieman, *The Source of Human Good* (1946; Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008), 56. In the 1995 edition of this work, Shaw adds: ‘Here we encounter that biblical paradox so much emphasized by Wieman’s neo-orthodox contemporaries, that created good can become demonic when we give our loyalty to it rather than to its source. Every created good that claims finality is idolatrous and evil. Only creative good itself is unconditionally good. Wieman agrees with traditional religious faith at least in this: that which creates good is supreme over that which is created. This distinction between created and creative is fundamental to the identification of Wieman’s view as a form of theism’. Shaw, ‘Introduction’, xxii.

41 Wieman, *Source of Human Good*, 79. Wieman also refers to created good as qualitative meaning. Ibid., 17. Qualitative meaning is ‘that connection between events whereby present happenings enable me to feel not only the quality intrinsic to the events now occurring but also to the qualities of many other events that are related to them’, including past and/or future events. Ibid., 18.
class and beliefs. His premise springs from the notion that every event in the history of humankind has some sort of ‘quality’ or value attached to it. However, this quality is limited in that it is temporal and contextual.

Conversely, creative good is ‘absolute good’, which is to say, according to Wieman, ‘good under all conditions and circumstances’. It is a good that is not dependent on or bound to any one context – be it time, place, person, culture, class or beliefs; instead it retains its unchanging goodness. It is that ‘one kind of goodness’ that is good, ‘always and everywhere … relative to everything’ and that can ‘enter into all relations … without losing its identity’. Additionally this absolute good is ‘infinite in value’, and is completely ‘trustworthy’ to ‘always produce good’ and ‘never fail’. It can be trusted to work to bring about the ‘best result possible under the circumstances, even when that result is the radical realignment of our values and beliefs’. Creative good is first and foremost, and always comes before created good. It is the good that remains when all other good is destroyed and it is the good that will endure and ‘spring anew’ when all else fails. It is the good that is created as a result of engaging in the creative event.

Distinctively, it is this creative event that sets Wieman’s communicative process apart from other models of communication. The creative event is a ‘process of reorganisation’ where new meanings are

42 Ibid., 79.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid., 80. This is reminiscent of Barth’s understanding of ‘catholicity’ discussed in chap. 3 of this thesis.
46 Ibid., 81.
48 Wieman, Source of Human Good, 81.
generated and then integrated with the old before creating a wider and ‘more deeply unified totality of meaning’. The creative event is further comprised of four sub-events that work together to bring about the accomplishment of this task. These four are: (1) an emerging awareness of qualitative meaning derived from other persons through communication; (2) the integrating of these new meanings with others previously acquired; (3) an expanding sense of meaning in the appreciable world, leading to a growing awareness of the richness of its quality; and (4) a deepening of the community among those who participate in this total creative event of communication. The creative event itself is not time-bound, but rather is marked as having occurred by the observance of the ‘newly created good’ that has resulted from all of the four sub-events having taken place.

Further, as Wieman points out, the combined ‘creative event, together with every one of the sub-events is an ing’, in that they are ‘happenings in transit, not finished products, although they yield a finished product’. Therefore the sub-events are not ‘accomplished facts’ but rather should be considered as ‘emerging’, ‘integrating’, ‘expanding’ and ‘deepening’; and therefore they are ‘events in process’ and ‘the product of the total creative event, is always a new structure’.

In Wieman’s description and understanding, the creative event is ‘supra-human’, not because it exists and operates outside of human life,
but because ‘it creates the good of the world in a way that man cannot do’.\textsuperscript{55}

Attempts to compare the work of humankind to the work of the creative event are not even possible because ‘the work of the creative event is different in kind to the work of man’.\textsuperscript{56} At best, humankind (individuals or society) can choose involvement in the creative event by determining either to help or to hinder it, but the creative event itself is never the work of humankind.\textsuperscript{57} Humankind’s ultimate commitment or responsibility is to engage in the processes of the creative event so that it can ‘faithfully produce … far greater abundance(s) of human good’.\textsuperscript{58} It is engagement with the creative event that ‘has brought forth the best which man has ever attained; and it opens up to man his highest possibilities’.\textsuperscript{59} The reason this is possible is because, in Wieman’s concept of creative interchange, the ‘creative’ element is ascribed to God, who is the never ending Source of ‘creativity’.\textsuperscript{60} ‘God’ is nominated as the ‘Source’ of human good.\textsuperscript{61} The fundamental pursuit of Wieman was to produce a naturalistic and empirical concept in which to measure divine creative activity – God had to be

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 74.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 76–77.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 77.
\textsuperscript{59} Wieman, \textit{Ultimate Commitment}, 76.
\textsuperscript{60} Creativity is also at times referred to as ‘creative’. Although in Wieman’s thinking ‘creativity’ and the ‘creative event’ are ‘inseparable’, he still notes an ‘important distinction in meaning’ between the two terms. Wieman, \textit{Source of Human Good}, 299. Wieman, ibid., states that: ‘Creativity is the character, the structure, or form which the event must have to be creative. Creativity is therefore an abstraction. The concrete reality is the creative event’. Wieman suggests that despite the fact that events are complex – due to their unique and changeable nature that houses the ability to be divided into sub-events and/or to be components of other events – they carry a ‘single self-identical character or structure’ and that structure is creativity. Ibid. Therefore even though events may change due to circumstance, context, time; ‘creativity’ is ‘changeless in respect to the structure’. Ibid. See also Wieman, \textit{Ultimate Commitment}, 33.
\end{flushright}
‘knowable’ and ‘measurable’. In Wieman’s opinion the traditional term ‘God’ was lost in translation due to the variety of meanings and misinterpretations it conjured up. Therefore Wieman equates ‘God’ with the ‘creative interchange manifest in the lives of individuals’. It is this creative event that goes beyond what humans can do for themselves. All that humanity can do is to commit to that creativity, understanding that the creative event will work to bring about a new situation that it could never possibly conceive or imagine. Therefore, as a portion of the communicative element of the paradigm, Wieman’s model provides a vertical and dynamic understanding of communication through which God as the Source offers God’s immanent ‘creative good’ to the church in order to create new structures, processes and forms of communication aimed at ‘mutual understanding’.

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62 Peden, ‘Creative Interchange’, esp. 44.
64 Shaw suggests that this is why Wieman saw himself as a ‘theist’ and not a humanist. Shaw, ‘Introduction’, xxii. ‘He is a theological realist because he has identified the creative source of good as an actual event working beyond human knowledge and effort.’ Ibid.
65 See e.g. Wieman, *Ultimate Commitment*, 29–35. In this same work Wieman dedicates the second half of the book to considering changes that can occur as ‘institutions’ exist ‘under commitment’, with chapters on the church, education, industry, government, and organisation.
Succinctly put, in Habermas’s theory of communicative action, ‘he seeks to demonstrate that there is a universal rational structure behind human communication’.

His two-part work, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, is written predominantly in a response to the ‘illusions of Enlightenment’ and the ‘unfinished project of modernity’. In a postmodern context Habermas attempts ‘critically to retrieve modernity’s reason’, arguing that ‘reason can be defended only by way of a critique of reason’.

Habermas suggests that his vast and comprehensive theory of communicative action comprises three interrelated concerns: (1) to develop a concept of rationality that is no longer tied to, and limited by, the subjectivistic and individualistic premises of modern philosophy and social theory; (2) to construct a two-level concept of society that integrates the lifeworld and system paradigms; and (3) to sketch out, against this

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67 See also Erin Michele Brigham, ‘Communicative Action as an Approach to Ecumenical Dialogue’, *Ecumenical Review* 60, no. 3 (2008): 297. Brigham engages with the work of Habermas in an effort to develop principles for an ecumenical ecclesiology. See also her recently published work, *Sustaining the Hope for Unity: Ecumenical Dialogue in a Postmodern World* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2012). In this work she seeks to answer the question of what unity is and how it serves as a goal for ecumenical dialogue. Brigham draws from Habermas and his theory of communicative action to discuss various published works of the World Council of Churches and its efforts in the ecumenical movement. Using Habermas’ theory she offers a framework that locates ‘Christian unity’ within ‘an eschatological reality’ in which the ‘fullness of the Church [is] not yet realized [and] should always compel us to grow … by an ongoing process of conversation’ (12). Brigham’s work will be more fully considered in the next chapter of this thesis.


69 Ibid., vi.
background, a critical theory of modernity that analyses and accounts for its pathologies in a way that suggests a redirection rather than an abandonment of the project of the Enlightenment.\(^{70}\) Habermas’s contribution to this thesis will, for the most part, be limited to and concerned with his integrated concept of lifeworld-system. In this, one can clearly identify the Habermasian attempt to shift ‘rationality’ towards an intersubjective conception that encompasses a strategic focus on a paradigm of language, where ‘reaching understanding’ (Verständigung) is the primary goal.\(^{71}\) For Habermas, ‘the term “reaching understanding” means, at the minimum, that at least two speaking and acting subjects understand a linguistic expression in the same way’.\(^{72}\) In brief, Habermas presents ‘lifeworld and system’ as his two-sphere concept of society that is coordinated by the use of communicative action. Habermas explains ‘communicative action’ as referring to:

the interaction of at least two subjects capable of speech and action who establish interpersonal relations (whether by verbal or by extra-verbal means). The actors seek to reach an understanding about the action situation and their plans of action in order to coordinate their actions by way of agreement. The central concept of interpretation refers in the first instance to negotiating definitions of the situation which admit of consensus. As we shall see, language is given a prominent place in this model.\(^{73}\)

He further adds that communicative action is ‘the type of interaction in which all participants harmonize their individual plans of action with one

\(^{70}\) Ibid.


\(^{73}\) Ibid., 86, italics in original.
another and pursue their illocutionary aims *without reservation*. This is
due in part to the fact that the goal of communicative action is for a ‘mutual
understanding’, ensuring that the ‘speech act’ must be ‘transparent’ and
‘noncoerced’. Habermas explains that the speaker chooses ‘a
comprehensible linguistic expression only in order to come to an
understanding with a hearer about something and thereby make himself
understandable’. Habermas contends that:

> Only the communicative model of action presupposes language
as a medium of uncurtailed communication whereby speakers
and hearers, out of the context of their preinterpreted lifeworld,
refer simultaneously to things in the objective, social and
subjective worlds in order to negotiate common definitions of
the situation.

At this stage, as a method for engaging in dialogue, Habermas’s model is
rich with resources and, by including it as part of the communicative
element of the gift-task paradigm, it creates the background for the kind of
dialogue that one would hope to be engaged with concerning the marks. Yet
of additional benefit is the further inclusion of the concept of the lifeworld-
system relationship within Habermas’s model.

Regarding this lifeworld-system relationship, Habermas maintains that
‘lifeworld’ is the ‘linguistically organized stock of knowledge’ that contains
all the ‘taken-for-granted background assumptions’.

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74 Ibid., 294, italics in original. Habermas draws from the speech-act theory of John
Austin, in which he distinguishes between three aspects of communication: locutionary
(saying something), illocutionary (to act in saying something) and perlocutionary
(having an effect on the hearer through saying something). Ibid., 288–89.

75 Ibid., 307, italics in original.

76 Ibid., 95.

77 ‘Lifeworld’ is variously defined by Habermas but includes such descriptions as being ‘a
culturally transmitted and linguistically organized stock of interpretive patterns’, the
‘more or less diffuse, always unproblematic, background convictions’ that ‘stores the
interpretive work of preceding generations’. Habermas, TCA2, 124; TCA1, 335, 70. It
is ‘the intuitively present, in this sense familiar and transparent, and at the same time
vast and incalculable web of presuppositions that have to be satisfied if an actual
reproduction of lifeworld takes place through communicative action it will
pass on the ‘traditions’ and ‘meanings’ of the lifeworld while serving as a
‘medium’ for the ‘improvement of all kinds of knowledge; technical,
practical, scientific, moral’.\textsuperscript{78} Lifeworld and communicative action are
complementary terms.\textsuperscript{79} Lifeworld is the ‘background’ for communicative
action and ‘communicative action provides the medium for the reproduction
of lifeworlds’.\textsuperscript{80} Finlayson explains their relationship this way:

Every time a successful communicative action takes place, a
consensus is reached that feeds back to the lifeworld and
replenishes it. Thus the lifeworld supports communicative
action, and communicative action in turn nourishes the lifeworld
by topping up the fund of shared knowledge. The lifeworld is
thus able to function as a kind of bulwark against social
disintegration, resisting the fragmentation of meanings and
preventing the eruption of conflicts of action.\textsuperscript{81}

Differentiated from lifeworld is ‘system’. ‘System’ is the sphere of society
that contains all the economic, political and administrative processes.\textsuperscript{82}
These processes are established, coordinated and driven by instrumental (or
strategic) action.\textsuperscript{83} Whereas ‘lifeworld’ views society from the ‘participant’s

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\item utterance is to be at all meaningful, i.e. valid or invalid'. Habermas, TCA2, 131. In
other words, the lifeworld is a ‘stock of knowledge composed of basic assumptions
which function as an implicit or tacit horizon in everyday processes of communication’
in new or familiar situations. Danny Wildemeersch and Walter Leirman, ‘The
Facilitation of the Life-World Transformation’, \textit{Adult Education Quarterly} 39, no. 1
(Fall 1988), 19–30, at 19.
University Press, 2005), 53.
\item Habermas, TCA2, 119.
\item ‘The cultural tradition shared by a community is constitutive (Having the power to
establish or give organized existence to something) of the lifeworld which the
individual member finds already interpreted. This intersubjectively shared lifeworld
forms the background for communicative action.’ Habermas, TCA1, 82, 337.
\item Finlayson, \textit{Habermas}, 53.
\item System components can be further divided into the two subsystems of ‘money and
power’, which operate as ‘steering media’, that is, the inherent directing and
\item Brown and Goodman suggest that the primary example of a system is a ‘free market
economy’. They state: ‘if we try to discover, for example, who sets the price of a
particular commodity in an ideal free market, we soon discover that no one really does.
\end{itemize}
perspective’, ‘system’ is viewed conversely from the ‘observer’s perspective’. Therefore in Habermas’s conception of society, he understands that the two spheres would operate simultaneously to create a balance, thereby maintaining their integrity despite becoming progressively complex and differentiated from each other.

However, he also identifies that the necessary integration of the two spheres can present hazards. Habermas distinguishes between the communicative action of lifeworld and the instrumental (or strategic) action of system, arguing that only the former can create, sustain and reproduce environments whereby the primary goal of communication can be reached. This goal is to achieve ‘mutual understanding in communication that is free from coercion’ rather than the secondary, ‘parasitic’ goals that are aimed towards individual success (instrumental or strategic). System is meant to serve lifeworld. System is tied to processes in the lifeworld and must be seen as firmly anchored in the lifeworld. In Habermasian phraseology, ‘system … has to satisfy the conditions of maintenance of sociocultural lifeworlds’. However, as processes within lifeworld and system become more complex, the ‘language-independent’ system ‘encroaches’ upon and attempts to ‘relieve’ the lifeworld of functions that ‘system’ cannot possibly

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85 Habermas, TCA2, 150–51.
87 Habermas, TCA1, 285, 288; see also 85–101.
perform. This happens when ‘the communicative orientation towards mutual understanding is substituted by the instrumental and strategic orientation toward success (i.e. efficiency in achieving certain ends)’. Lifeworld reproduction (cultural reproduction, social integration and socialisation) can take place through only the linguistic medium of communicative action. When this does not take place there is ‘unbalance’, which can lead to ‘social pathologies’ that eventuate in the ‘colonization’ of lifeworld by ‘system’. Brigham notes: ‘When this happens, social systems, rather than the shared lifeworld, function to hold the society together’. This brings about a change in ‘the way that individuals interact and understand themselves in the every day activity of the lifeworld. Meaning, values, and goals are no longer defined by the taken-for-granted horizon of the lifeworld, but by the technical aims of systems’. Habermas introduces the terms ‘uncoupling’ and ‘colonization’ to identify these resulting problems (pathologies and system instability crisis) that can occur in the lifeworld-system relationship. Finlayson summarises the process:

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89 Referred to as ‘relief mechanisms’ by Habermas (TCA2, 181). Brown and Goodman explain: ‘As system complexity increases at the expense of the lifeworld, the system takes over functions that it cannot possibly perform, such as cultural reproductions, social integration, and socialization’. Brown and Goodman, ‘Habermas’ Theory’, 212. Drawing from Habermas, they add: ‘These three functions can be fulfilled only via the medium of communicative action and not via the steering media of money and power: meaning can neither be bought nor coerced’. Ibid., 259. See also Brigham, Sustaining Hope for Unity, 34.


91 Habermas, TCA2, 154, 181 (relief mechanisms). Brown and Goodman add: ‘Both conceptually and actually, systems are tied to processes in the lifeworld. In actuality, systems and the lifeworld are always intertwined and even when fully objectivated by sociological analysis, systems still must be seen as firmly anchored in the lifeworld…. A system is also tied to the lifeworld conceptually. A system represents those aspects of interpersonal processes that cannot be grasped as a product of communicative action in the lifeworld. Brown and Goodman, ‘Habermas’ Theory’, 209.

92 Brigham, Sustaining Hope for Unity, 34.

93 Ibid., 35.
The problem is that although the system is embedded in and depends on the lifeworld, the former tends to encroach upon, to displace and even destroy the latter. This tendency of the system to colonize the lifeworld leads to greater fragility and to disequilibrium or instability.\(^4\)

To be sure, Habermas is not arguing that the system is inherently evil. His concern is that ‘social systems and the lifeworlds that created and sustain them have become uncoupled from each other’ and that ‘it is the deterioration of what should be key connections … [that] leads to the domination of one form of rationality over the other’.\(^5\) Therefore, ‘the pathologies of modernity can only be avoided if communicative action is allowed to interpenetrate and curtail the working of systems’.\(^6\) The corrective to this ‘uncoupling’ of lifeworld and system is ‘communicative action’.

As a portion of the communicative element of the paradigm, Habermas’s model provides a horizontal understanding of communication that can take place at the local and contextual level. His two-part sphere of society outlines that communication is aimed at ‘reaching understanding’, so that participants can engage in dialogue that successfully reproduces all the contents of the lifeworld while passing on traditions and meanings as it further serves to improve all kinds of knowledge. As will be more fully explored in chapter 5, but briefly noted here, this has been part of the problem in terms of dialogue concerning the marks of the church in the twenty-first century. It is because the marks have been engaged with statically within denominations, and because it has been ‘system’ (i.e. their

\(^4\) Finlayson, *Habermas*, 56, italics in original.


institutional self-justifications) that has been reproduced instead of ‘lifeworld’ (i.e. their commitment to communication and mutual understanding), this process has resulted in a loss of critical theological functioning on the marks, and has been replaced with an institutional understanding of them. This institutional (or denominational) understanding continues to be ‘reproduced’ and therefore a corrective of some sort is required. Finding an alternative way to engage in dialogue concerning the marks could provide a way forward, and this is in part what this thesis aims to do.

4.2.3: *The Benefits of a Conjoined Communicative Method*

I contend that there is a benefit to be found in combining the theories of Wieman and Habermas. In short, Habermas points to the particular and Wieman points to the universal. An understanding of the ‘particular’ and ‘universal’ is helpful in addressing the nature and function of the marks. This is important to the gift-task paradigm and to this thesis because the marks exist as an indicative (gift) and as an imperative (task) that the church is meant to accept and appropriate within the ‘here and now’, rather than leave their fulfilment as a matter solely for the eschaton. Therefore there exists a real ‘here and now’ implication that must be addressed, if not simply as a matter of accommodating the nature and mission of the church, then certainly as a matter of being a concrete example of visible witness.

Further, in regard to the particular, while both theorists highlight the need for the primacy of language within their models, Habermas’s concern for the social cohesion of society locates language in the particular of lifeworld-system. This is a primary benefit to be found in Habermas. By
drawing on his concept of lifeworld-system located within his theory of communicative action, a framework is readily available to discuss communication that is contextual and open. This is an important inclusion in the paradigm because there needs to be a fresh expression of an authentic and open engagement in communication across the body of Christ concerning the marks of the church. This communicative process would provide a way to discuss the marks of the church within the particular (i.e. the horizontal dimension).

Wieman’s model also refers to an immediate context where understanding and integration take place between human subjects. Additionally, however, Wieman’s model contains an element of reaching out to a ‘divine Source’ through a process of communicative interchange that will ‘transform, create, and sustain’ individuals and their communities in ways in which they could never do for themselves. This is the primary benefit to be found in the use of Wieman’s doctrine of creative interchange. Contained within his theory is a universality that, obviously, goes beyond the particular. This communicative process provides a way to discuss the marks of the church as a dynamic process that allows for further engagement with and from the divine Source (i.e. the vertical dimension).

I argue that there is a need for both models of communication: communicative action and creative interchange. Since communicative action always takes place within the context-forming horizon of the lifeworld (i.e. the particular), in order to embrace the marks of the church as gift and task there must be an opportunity to reach beyond the lifeworld (or the system that drives and maintains it) and, in doing so, there must be openness to the transcendent (i.e. to the universal). This will be beneficial
to the paradigm because it has already been evidenced that the marks can become so grounded in the particular that they become institutionalised (a condition of the marks in the twenty-first century that has already been identified). When this happens the marks are treated statically, with their dynamic nature neglected, ensuring that there is a loss of their critical theological functioning. In contrast, but revealing a similar danger, appealing solely to the transcendent nature of the marks ensures that dialogue surrounding them is abstract instead of concrete, because it appeals to the invisible and eschatological nature of the church. Such appeals neglect the need for a visible and concrete outworking of the ‘task’ element of the marks. Therefore having a communicative pattern that allows for dialogue in the particular of the ‘here and now’ is beneficial to the outworking of the marks.

Finally, both authors provide models of communication that are geared towards reaching some level of ‘mutual understanding’. Habermas’s model is focused on the communication of human subjects understanding linguistic expressions in the same way. Wieman’s model includes the need for human intersubjectivity (of understanding and integration), as well as communication that takes place through the ‘creative event’ in which participants have a dynamic interaction with the divine Source. Such interaction would bring out new levels of ‘creative good’ that could transform individuals and societies toward a fuller actualisation. Therefore, including both models outlines a two-part communication process as an event of communication that ‘reaches out’ to the universal as it ‘reaches across’ to the particular. This communicative element is important to include in the paradigm, given its value to the church and ecumenical
dialogue as it provides opportunity to find new ways to discuss the marks while aiming to reclaim their theological functioning.

4.3: The Analytical Element

To be clear, while communication is fundamental to this paradigm, the objective is also to develop an analytical aspect that can be used as a form of self-examination (as opposed to self-justification) for ecclesial communities. This is important because history has revealed that the church can get into strife when it has not been proactive in self-examination. In chapter 2 of this thesis, past eras of history were retraced and it was identified that the marks have been appealed to during times when the church has experienced tension and transition. This historical retrace revealed that the marks have not always been utilised as forms of self-examination. The marks were first presented as a cohesive unit in the fourth century during a period of the church’s self-examination and were offered to the church as descriptors of the church and statements to be made in faith. However, within a short time after this the marks began to be utilised as individual elements that could be further prioritised and employed to support any single group’s claim to be able to do theology according to its own understanding of the nature and mission of the church. This trend (among others) has continued throughout church history right up until the present day. The presence of this type of use of the marks negates what it means for the church to act in a ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ manner. The church is meant to bear witness to possessing these gifts even as it attempts to live out the task of the marks. Yet history has provided examples of times in which the church has ‘failed’ to live up to the
task of demonstrating the possession of the marks. Nevertheless, the contemporary church could take advantage of the opportunity to examine these concrete examples and determine what can be learnt from its predecessors for its own future successful use. Therefore, drawing from the work done in chapter 2 of this thesis, three brief historical examples will be presented from periods in history when the church engaged in the use of the marks during a time of tension and transition. This material will then be considered before determining what the contemporary church might glean from these examples and before offering certain aspects to be included in the ‘analytical framework’ of the gift-task paradigm.

The first example to be considered highlights the schism encountered by the North African church during the fourth and fifth centuries whereby the Donatists ‘denied that the church should have any dealings with the lapsed’. From their position a ‘traditor’ is ‘unholy’ and therefore ‘cannot be a member of the church’. They further claimed that those who had ‘dealings’ with them could also ‘lose sanctity’ and thus ‘cease to be members of the Church’. In this way it is clearly identified that the Donatists valued the mark of holiness (and specifically their own definition of holiness) as the mark to have priority above the other three. Augustine of Hippo, in an effort to refute the Donatists, engaged with the marks as apologetic tools. He drew especially heavily on the mark of ‘one’, or that of unity. He appealed to the Donatists that they would not ‘tear in pieces

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98 Ibid.

99 Ibid.
Christ’s body, which is the Church’. This use of the marks by the Donatists revealed a dysfunction that can occur when the four marks are not held together in balance and tension, namely that schism and division can easily occur within the church – and even to the point where reconciliation becomes unlikely.

What can be identified in this example is that there is a benefit to holding the marks together not simply as a cohesive unit but also in *creative tension*. This idea is present in contemporary academic thought. Hans Küng, in his seminal work on the church (*The Church*), refers to the marks as ‘interwoven dimensions’. Utilising the example of the damage caused to the catholicity of the church when the sixteenth-century Reformation division occurred, Küng notes that ‘unity and catholicity are correlative concepts and if one dimension is upset the other must be as well’. Eric Jay has highlighted in his work that ‘to place a disproportionate emphasis on one of the four credal notes of the Church has always endangered one or more of the others’. Berkouwer suggests in regard to the marks that they are ‘so clearly connected’ that to attempt to place ‘priority’ of one over another is simply ‘unthinkable’.

Drawing from this understanding, this thesis would agree that there is a benefit to holding the four marks together in creative tension, and that in

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102 Ibid.

103 Jay, *The Church*, 180: ‘To place disproportionate emphasis on one of the four credal notes of the Church has always endangered one or more of the others, and our study has revealed instances in which such over-emphasis has led to disaster’.

doing so the four individual marks serve to inform and be informed by one another. That is, holding the four marks together in creative tension provides the necessary condition through which the marks can prove to be mutually illuminating and critiquing. This means that while each mark has certain meaning attached to it that helps to describe and explain it, each mark also has the ability to inform and challenge the understanding and meaning of the other marks. By way of example, and as Berkouwer points out: ‘Catholicity is connected with the commission to Christ’s disciples: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations”, or, in the words of Mark 16:15: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation”’. While this passage of Scripture is usually most easily identified with the mark of apostolicity (‘preach the gospel’), the mark of catholicity (‘preach the gospel to the whole creation’) can add further illumination and understanding to the mark of apostolicity.

Although Berkouwer does not go any further in drawing out connections between apostolicity and the other two marks (oneness and holiness), the concept of ‘one’ or ‘unity’ can also be considered as further illuminating to the mark of apostolicity. For example, the disciples should work in ‘unity’ as they bring the ‘one’ message of Jesus Christ to the nations. Further, the concept of holiness informs this process and must be included if the apostles are to ‘make disciples of all nations’. Along the same lines, Küng links together unity and catholicity:

The catholicity of the Church, therefore consists in a notion of entirety, based on identity and resulting in universality. From this it is clear that unity and catholicity go together; if the Church is one, it must be universal; if it is universal it must be

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105 Ibid., 106.
one. Unity and catholicity are interwoven dimensions of one and the same church.\textsuperscript{106}

By linking these dimensions, Küng highlights the understanding that to hold one dimension is to hold the others simultaneously, and subsequently it is to allow the dimensions to inform and challenge one another. This is most clearly evidenced in his statement, ‘if the church is one, it must be universal; and if it is universal it must be one’.\textsuperscript{107}

While it could be argued that Küng is simply appealing to the indicative nature of the church when he makes this statement without any concern for the imperative, it is helpful to remember that within this same body of work he also makes statements such as: ‘The church is one and therefore should be one’;\textsuperscript{108} and ‘the Church … must continually reform itself, through the grace and mercy of God … according to the Gospel of Jesus Christ: ecclesia semper reformanda’.\textsuperscript{109} Clearly Küng is not appealing for a solely static and indicative treatment of the marks.

Continuing in this line of thought, additional claims could be made for any paired or triadic combinations of the marks, so long as they do not exclude the other marks in the process. Apostolicity could be linked to holiness so that a message of continual renewal could be preached to the church and its surrounding communities.\textsuperscript{110} Holiness informs catholicity in regard to living as a people who are set apart for God and his purposes in the midst of a broader community. Conversely catholicity informs holiness,

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\textsuperscript{106} Küng, The Church, 303. Berkouwer, in linking these two dimensions, phrases it ‘the catholicity of the one Church’. Berkouwer, Studies in Dogmatics, 25.

\textsuperscript{107} Küng, The Church, 303.

\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., 273, italics in original.

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., 337.

\textsuperscript{110} See Berkouwer, Studies in Dogmatics, 331, where he discusses the ‘schism’ that occurs in the church when it ‘forgets’ its past teachings; and Küng, The Church, 341, where he states that ‘the only measure for renewal in the Church is the original Gospel of Jesus Christ himself’, which is the message the apostles preached.
\end{flushleft}
reminding God’s holy community that it exists and must commune within a broader community. As previously noted, apostolicity and unity linked together speak of the one message of the one church. Unity, catholicity and apostolicity in mutually illuminating and critiquing relationship challenge and inform processes by which the one church is to reach out to the whole world with its gospel message. Holding the four marks together in creative tension and balance allows the marks to be mutually illuminating and critiquing, while highlighting the inherent necessity for the church to seek to fulfil the four marks and encouraging the church to operate as one, holy, catholic and apostolic. Treatment of the marks in such a way allows for an expression of the marks to be realised in the here and now as a visible reality, even as it points to the eschaton, where the fullness of the marks will be realised.

This is not to say that it is erroneous for ecclesial communities to give focused attention to one mark or another at some point, but simply to clarify that this should not be done to the exclusion of the other three marks. Reflecting on history has shown that when a preference has been given to one mark over the others, division and schism have been caused within the church. As seen with the example of the Donatists, their preference for the mark of holiness meant that they neglected the other three marks, but most notably the mark of unity. In turn it could be argued that Augustine answered the Donatist controversy in a similar way when he employed unity as a boundary marker in determining the priority for the church (of course, Augustine was also concerned with protecting the orthodoxy of the church and, in his actions of proclaiming the need for unity, he was extending more grace to the Donatists than the Donatists were willing to extend to those
they deemed as ‘unworthy’). However, the point is that when priority is given to one mark over the others, it creates an imbalance. How differently might church history look if the Donatists had, for example, allowed the mark of oneness to inform their position on holiness? A helpful resolution in this case would have culminated in events that allowed for all four marks to be working together while also balancing the gift and task dimensions of the marks. This would have meant that questions regarding holiness could have been raised and examined alongside questions of unity, catholicity and apostolicity. In this way there would have been a fullness in appropriating the marks, allowing for new growth to take place between Augustine and the Donatists that could have benefitted the entire church.

The second example to be considered is the change in the use of the marks that can be identified during the medieval period of church history. During this time the established and institutionalised church had gained such prominence that the marks were no longer viewed as statements of self-examination but rather as statements of self-justification. The marks at this point were treated as a possession of the church and engaged with statically rather than dynamically. The marks, treated as a sole possession of the church and its leaders, were then further utilised as a boundary-marking tool that could be wielded by those who held the greatest power, to exclude one group or another.

This change in the appeal to the marks from statements of ‘faith’ and ‘self-examination’ to statements of ‘self-justification’ highlights a shift in thinking on the marks from one of dynamic appeal to one of static treatment. This example from the medieval period in church history

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111 See chap. 2, section 2.3 of this thesis: ‘The Medieval Period: The Marks as Institution’.
highlights the need to understand that the marks function best when they are allowed to operate according to their dynamic nature rather than when they are treated as static. For example, it can be argued that this use of the marks was appealed to not only during the medieval period of church history but also during the sixteenth-century Reformation. Again, arguably, the twenty-first century could be included in this category of misuse of the marks with its tendencies to engage with the marks as denominational definitions that act as boundary-marking tools and points of distinction rather than as unifying elements. The marks, being a gift to the church from God and dependent on God, must be open to every generation and context. This means that they cannot be defined so concretely and statically. Rather, their dynamic nature means that there is always more ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ to be found and appealed to in any given situation. Much has already been said in regard to the transcendent and dynamic nature of the marks in an earlier section of this chapter on ‘gift and task’ and therefore there is no need to rediscuss that material here. However, for the purposes of the analytical portion of the gift-task paradigm, it is important to highlight that the dynamic nature of the marks is grounded in the theology of the marks. That is, the marks can be appealed to dynamically because they are located within the triune God and they therefore transcend the church. Furthermore, because the marks originate and are sustained from outside the church, this ultimately means that their Source is outside the church. Yet this Source does not exist as some inaccessible, invisible and eschatological hope, but rather as an immanent and available resource (as outlined in Wieman’s concept of the ‘creative good’ within his doctrine of creative interchange).
Additionally, the abundance of this resource is not simply for some congregations or denominations but for all communities founded under the headship of Jesus Christ. Therefore the marks must be appealed to dynamically and understood as such lest they be reduced to some institutional form that becomes ineffective in its functioning (e.g. weekly recitation of the Nicene Creed without any consideration given to self-examination). As highlighted in chapter 3 of this thesis, it is this theological critical functioning of the marks that has been lost and needs to be reclaimed for the benefit of ecclesiology and its practices. In this way (as a theological concept in which the marks originate and are sustained within the Godhead), the church can confidently declare that it is indeed ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ as a statement of faith even in times when empirical evidence of it may be lacking. The marks with their dynamic nature are ascribed to the church as a gift and there is a continual renewal that can take place as the church engages with the associated task of this gift it has been given. Incorporating the concept of the dynamic nature of the marks into the analytical element of the gift-task paradigm allows for the ‘gift’ aspect to function more fully, because it suggests that there are horizons that are yet to be explored, understood and integrated. At the same time, this allows the element of ‘task’ to have authenticity in the here and now, thus maintaining the integrity of past horizons even as the church looks hopefully towards horizons yet to come. Furthermore, this dynamic nature validates every current local context without negating any other local contexts, thus allowing for unity in diversity. It is therefore the responsibility of every church to ensure that within their ecclesial

112 It can further suggest that any one person’s or church’s horizon may be too small.
expression the marks be received as dynamic gift. Incorporating this understanding within the paradigm is beneficial because it reveals the transcendent and dynamic nature of the marks as being a gift that is open to every generation of the church (past, present and future) as a fresh revelation.

The third example to be considered comes from the sixteenth century and the engagement of the Reformers with the marks.\textsuperscript{113} It can be argued that the Reformers were appealing to the need for the marks of the church to be engaged with dynamically and as statements of self-examination. This came in response to the institutionalised church that preferred the status quo, in which the marks were treated as static statements of self-justification. For their part, the Reformers critiqued contemporary accounts of the marks and contested the prevailing definitions. Even so, it was not the status of the classic marks \textit{per se} they were challenging but the understanding and application of the marks. Particularly, how could external and institutional conformity be seen as authentically demonstrating, defining and identifying the use of the marks? Therefore, the Reformers sought to supplement the marks with assertions relating to the ‘pure preaching of the Word’ and the ‘right administration of the sacraments’ tempered through the lens of church discipline.\textsuperscript{114} Their biblical and spiritual understanding of the marks was ‘logocentric’, by which the church received its ‘identity and mission from

\textsuperscript{113} The previous treatment of this was in chap. 2, section 2.4: ‘The Sixteenth Century: The Marks of the Church as a “Reformed” Idea’.

\textsuperscript{114} Moltmann in his treatment on the marks indicates that the classical marks of the church are seen to be the ‘essential ones’, and although the Reformers saw the need to include Word and Sacrament, there exists between them a ‘mutual complementing’. He states that ‘a church in which the gospel is purely preached and the sacraments are rightly used is the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. The two Reformation signs of the church only show from within what the traditional attributes of the church describe from without’. Moltmann, \textit{Church in Power of the Spirit}, 341.
the Word’. In essence the Reformers were identifying their concern for the marks to be *practised as an embodied task* within the lives of believers and within the overall institutional church.

Regardless of the Reformers’ intent, however, this recasting of the marks had a long-term effect and what eventuated was further church division in which engaging in dialogue on the classical marks of the church all but ceased. This trajectory of division has continued right up to the twenty-first century, where use of the marks as points of apologetic distinction has continued. Worse still, the marks are often declared dogmatically as statements of fact without any apparent concern for verification.

If appealing to the ‘dynamic nature’ of the marks allows the church to confidently declare that it is ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’, then demonstrating the marks as an embodied task answers the question of ‘where is the church?’ As an inclusion in the analytical element of the gift-task paradigm, practising the marks as an embodied task involves a twofold response of churches and denominations of self-examination and of vulnerability to outside scrutiny (i.e. scrutiny from other churches and scrutiny from outside ecclesial and/or faith bounds). In both situations (self-examination or outside scrutiny) there is extensive questioning of churches and denominations in regard to the extent, scope and effectiveness of engaging with the task of being ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ as a visible reality.

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116 Küng aptly states that the ‘four credal attributes have become in our post-medieval, post-Reformation theology more and more four marks of distinction to be used apologetically’. Küng, *The Church*, 265–66.
Again much of this content has already been covered in the earlier section of gift and task and does not require repeating here. However, as an inclusion in the paradigm it is important to draw out that formal questioning of a church’s use of, and engagement with, the marks should not be the sole means and method of assessing the validity claims of what is or is not a true church. This type of claim would be unfair to non-creedal churches and would in essence undermine the aims of the communicative aspect of this paradigm, in which increased dialogue on the marks is the goal. Instead the marks identified as practised as embodied task is about questioning and demonstrating that self-examination is taking place, with care that the marks be visibly demonstrated in the here and now.

This self-examination of churches and denominations challenges the preference to view the task of the marks solely through a static or eschatological lens. If received as dynamic gift looks forward to horizons yet to come, practised as embodied task is about ensuring that the current ecclesial context displays ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ as characteristic of the contemporary church. As a portion within the analytical element of the gift-task paradigm, ‘practised as embodied task’ means that churches and denominations welcome the questioning that self-examination brings, and allow themselves to be vulnerable to outside scrutiny concerning their practices and methods. This ensures that challenges and claims from those outside any particular church can become part of the questioning process and, through this, positive feedback, helpful suggestions and timely comments can be accommodated. Potentially this would mean changes to current ecclesial practices and structures regarding their incorporation of the marks. Changes may also extend to allowing others to participate in the
journey of discovering what it means for a congregation to practise the embodiment of the marks within its given context. In doing so, it may even be found that individual churches might join efforts in shared ministry, prayer and worship. This is an example of an embodied task that is not always easily identifiable today by some at denominational levels (due to, e.g., denominational barriers to shared worship such as communion and baptism).

The twenty-first-century church should benefit from learning from this brief historical retrace on the marks (and the more comprehensive retrace done in chapter 2 of this thesis) and glean some key aspects from it in order to employ them in an analytical process. At least three key aspects have been identified and can be further developed in the analytical portion of this gift-task paradigm. Specifically, as an analytical tool, the church can ask: Are the marks being held together in creative tension? Are the marks being received as dynamic gift? Are the marks being practised as embodied task? It is a contention of this thesis that the marks function most effectively when they are analytically engaged in this way.

This chapter has been about identifying, describing and outlining the communicative and analytical elements that will be necessary in a paradigm that views the marks of the church through a lens of gift and task. To some extent the argument of this chapter has been somewhat abstract in considering the communicative and analytical elements. Therefore, the task at hand is to develop more fully the gift-task paradigm. This will be done by drawing together the identified elements from this chapter (the communicative and analytical) and the ‘theological’ element (outlined in chapter 3 and identified in the ‘gift and task’ discussion of chapter 4) in a
concrete way and through the use of examples of specific applications. This will be the task and content of chapter 5, and to this I now turn.
Chapter 5

Re-interpreting the Marks:

The ‘Gift-Task’ Paradigm

Before engaging in the concrete development of the gift-task paradigm, it is important to remember why this approach is being undertaken. In the introductory chapter of this thesis I noted that there are at least five tensions that exist with respect to the marks within the twenty-first-century church. Specifically, they are that (1) the marks are often declared dogmatically but are not visibly demonstrated; (2) despite the longstanding heritage of the marks as helpful resources, today they appear to be on the periphery of resources being utilised by the church; (3) although the marks are meant to be indicative of the entire ecclesial body, in fact they are employed by only some denominations; (4) literacy concerning the marks has been reduced to an institutionally based understanding, and, as a result, (5) there has been a loss of critical theological functioning concerning the marks.

In chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis, the marks were investigated historically and theologically in order to determine what could be learned from history and what would need to be reclaimed in order to engage with the marks efficaciously in the twenty-first century. At the start of chapter 4, I outlined the desirability of a gift and task paradigm through which the marks of the church could be historically understood, contextually assessed and theologically reclaimed. This need for a paradigm was suggested, in part, after discovering that in the twenty-first century the marks are treated statically instead of dynamically. As a way forward I have determined that creating a gift-task paradigm would need to be comprised of three primary
elements: a model of communication, an analytical framework and a theological grounding. This paradigm could then be offered as a fresh and constructive process that could add value to the contemporary and future church.

Within the paradigm, ‘communication’ relates to dialogue, ‘analytical’ is concerned with questioning and assessing, and the ‘theological grounding’ engages with the understanding that the marks originate within the Godhead and are sustained outside the church even as they are appropriated at the level of church. I would suggest that within contemporary ecclesiology all three of these elements as they relate to the marks have been neglected. Nevertheless, all three of these elements are interconnected. Therefore, beginning to address any one of the elements would open the way to addressing the others. That is the intention of the gift-task paradigm: to address the need for current ecclesiology to engage with the marks in a way that transcends the static treatment of them and through which the church can discuss the marks analytically and theologically.

The intention of this chapter is to concretely and specifically develop the gift-task paradigm. By way of a method, I will combine the three individual elements (communicative, analytical and theological) already described. In developing the paradigm, these individual elements will overlap and inform each other even as they are further enmeshed. In other words, a communicative model based on mutual understanding has to be informed by an analytical framework and be theologically grounded. This is not to minimise or deprioritise these latter elements in favour of the
communicative, but simply to offer a structural method through which to
discuss this material in an attempt to develop the paradigm.

Up until now in this thesis, what has been offered is purely an ideal.
As attempts are made to concretely and specifically apply this ideal,
drawing from specific ecclesial examples will be included. The caveat is
that any example can be beneficial to a certain point only because the ‘gift-
task’ paradigm is a new work that has yet to be fully developed, let alone
actually used or tested. Thus, a liberty has been taken in the examples
offered to show how they are beneficial in illustrating the elements of the
gift-task paradigm, while at the same time identifying the limitations of the
examples. This is not done in an attempt to disparage in any way the
examples used, but rather, simply, as an attempt to utilise concrete scenarios
through which to present an untested conceptual ideal.

In what follows I will develop each of the three elements of the gift-
task paradigm and show how they form a distinct, yet also a necessary, part
of a comprehensive paradigm of the marks. First, however, I need to take a
detour to discuss the consensus model of dialogue in comparison with the
one I am advocating, one of mutual understanding.

Mutual understanding is the right communicative goal for the gift-task
paradigm for it outlines the kind of dialogue that the paradigm would hope
to create. As will be seen, this type of dialogue is informed vertically
(hearing from God, led by the Spirit) and horizontally (interchurch dialogue
that is noncoercive and transparent). Furthermore, mutual understanding as
a type of dialogue is a complementary fit within a gift-task paradigm. ‘Gift
and task’ as a concept is a dynamic process that engages with the marks in
the lived reality of the here and now, even as it is drawn towards the
eschaton. This is the nature of dialogue based on gift and task where mutual understanding is the focus, because it allows for new and existing information to be brought into the dialogue and considered alongside already established and traditional givens. This type of dialogue, while not novel in its approach, is a fresh alternative to the type of dialogue that generally has been sought concerning the marks (e.g. that of denominational consensus).

At this point it is important to highlight the nature of consensus as it relates to ecumenical dialogue. While initially this might seem tangential to the purpose of this chapter of creating a gift-task paradigm, a discussion on the facets of interchurch and ecumenical dialogue cannot be ignored, given that the structural framework of the paradigm includes a communicative element. Furthermore, having a discussion on consensus is quite relevant because it outlines the kind of dialogue that has previously been offered concerning the marks and therefore I need to clarify how ‘mutual understanding’ as a form of dialogue differs from this.

The dialogue I am proposing to include within the gift-task paradigm differs from the classical consensus-based understanding because the primary focus of mutual understanding is process-driven, not results-driven. Mutual understanding as a process is concerned with increasing dialogue that is open and dynamic and that allows for truth claims to be heard and validated (or rejected) as new levels of understanding and experiences between interlocutors are sought. Mutual understanding (as the primary focus of communication within the paradigm) seeks to determine what conditions must be created in order for better communication to take place across the ecclesial landscape concerning the marks within the ‘here and
now’ even as it is drawn towards and is open to the ‘more’ of the eschaton. This dialogue suits the gift-like nature of the marks, and, as part of the task, it helps us to discover how the gift and task of the marks might be understood and expressed between conversation partners.

Thus, I am attempting to outline a form of communication that is more interested in the process of dialogue than the ultimate outcome of consensus (even if this is reached at some point during the dialogue process).

Alternatively, while the classical consensus-based dialogue has a similar agenda, it inadvertently may set up rules and boundaries, distinctions and markers that include some and exclude others.¹ In this way, it may draw up dividing lines where conversations can reach an ‘agree to disagree’ status. It is these negative connotations associated with classical consensus in ecumenical dialogue and its requirement of full doctrinal agreement that are seen as too limiting for a gift-task paradigm, where process-oriented dialogue is the goal. The gift-task paradigm’s primary concern is to create dialogue on the marks, and to enhance the process of that dialogue in order to keep the dialogue open.

Yet, any dialogue, even in its most basic form, requires some level of ‘consensus’ to take place. For instance, individuals need to agree upon what will be discussed, and even prior to that, they need to agree to be part of the conversation. Therefore the concept of consensus or agreement cannot be treated as irrelevant and so ignored, especially since consensus (in one form or another) features so prominently within ecumenical dialogue and it is within the realm of ecumenical dialogue where the gift-task paradigm fits.

¹ More will be said on ‘classical consensus’ in the following section, but generally it is the type of consensus that aims for ‘uniformity of expression’ over any expressions of diversity or pluralism. David M. Chapman, ‘Consensus and Difference: The Elusive Nature of Ecumenical Agreement’, Ecclesiology 8 (2012): 56.
Therefore, it is important to deal with the nature of consensus, because, historically, this has been the primary means through which the marks have been engaged. Further, if attempts are made to offer an alternative means of dealing with the marks, then a rationale as to why this is the case needs to be presented alongside the alternative method being offered as ‘better’ (more effective). To clarify, this is not an attempt to deny the value of consensus in ecumenical dialogue. Rather, because some form of consensus will always be required, it is important to explore the facets of consensus and to consider ‘what kind’ of consensus is required and ‘how much’ of it is needed to engage in the dialogue process of ‘mutual understanding’ so that it may support the gift-task paradigm that is to be created.

In the next section and prior to concretely developing the gift-task paradigm, I will discuss the nature of consensus. This will be done with a view to highlighting the type of consensus that needs to be sought and considered within the gift-task paradigm, while at the same time noting that full consensus is not the primary goal within the communicative element of the paradigm. If, however, consensus regarding the nature and function of the marks is reached at any given stage, this is to be welcomed and embraced, even as it is understood that it is set against a dynamic and eschatological backdrop of the church and thereby exists with the potential to change.
5.1: Exploring the Need for Contemporary Ecumenical ‘Consensus’

Generally speaking, in terms of ecumenism, ‘consensus has to do with the agreement of a community’ and with dealing ‘with the fundamental convictions, attitudes and behavior shared by the members’.² Along the same lines, consensus can also refer ‘to an agreement in the form of a specific accord or joint statement’.³ Yet as Finnish ecumenical theologian Minna Hietamäki points out: ‘Contemporary discussion of the ecumenical relevance of consensus is challenged by the elusiveness of the concept itself. At times it becomes evident that opponents and proponents represent not only differing opinions but also very different discourses’.⁴ Vischer adds:

The question of the meaning of consensus for the true unity of the Church has been the object of intensive ecumenical theological and ecclesiological reflection in recent years. Yet, essentially, it is as old as the ecumenical movement itself. To ask about the unity of the church is inevitably to raise the question of the kind of consensus necessary for unity.⁵

Chapman highlights the need for consensus but notes that bound up with consensus is Christian identity, in that each community has ‘developed their own vocabulary and interpretive framework involving a complex combination of language, sacred signs and actions, normative way of life, and inherited patterns of behavior’.⁶ Therefore, ecumenical dialogue cannot simply be a comparing of doctrinal statements, because their individual

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³ Minna Hietamäki, Agreeable Agreement: An Examination of the Quest for Consensus in Ecumenical Dialogue (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 3.
⁴ Hietamäki, Agreeable Agreement, 4.
statements each has its own *sitz im Leben* (‘setting in life’). Chapman points out the difficulty for any ‘ecclesial community’ to ‘adopt the vocabulary, language and interpretive framework of another’, because it is unlikely that any community would want to give up its language and ecclesial way of life simply to adopt those of another. This may be why, ‘although it seems justified to say that consensus is an integral part of the church as communion, there is no common theological definition of consensus in reference to the church’. Further, ‘this diffuse nature of consensus makes it challenging to define what consensus is, ecumenically speaking’, because ‘ecumenical encounters are holistic’ and incorporate a variety of aspects, including the ‘cognitive’, ‘intellectual’, ‘social’ and ‘spiritual’, which ‘take place under various circumstances with a variety of different goals’. Chapman is correct when he states: ‘Reaching meaningful agreement between ecclesial communities is therefore a multi-faceted process that extends beyond the comparison of doctrinal statements’.

In Hietamäki’s comprehensive work on the subject (*Agreeable Agreement: An Examination of the Quest for Consensus in Ecumenical Dialogue*), she discusses consensus by examining various documents (dialogues) between Anglicans, Lutherans and Roman Catholics. Her stated aim is to ‘investigate some characteristics of a theoretical context in which an ecumenically viable and theologically and philosophically acceptable

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7 Ibid. ‘Adopting’ another’s point of view would be in contrast to the nature of ‘mutual understanding’ dialogue based on Wieman, in which there would be a process of ‘understanding’ and ‘integrating’ that understanding in one’s point of view.


10 Ibid.

11 Chapman, ‘Consensus and Difference’, 56.
consensus would be possible’.12 In her study she discovers that the ecumenical texts utilise a variety of terms in order to express agreement. Terms used within the analysed interchurch documents include: ‘common understanding’; ‘basic agreement’; ‘agreement in the basics’; ‘substantial agreement’; ‘consensus’; ‘consensus with difference’.13 Chapman rightly observes that ‘the fact that ecumenical agreement has to be qualified in numerous different ways’ suggests that what is required is ‘greater theological precision in ecumenical texts’, rather than the ‘inherently unsatisfactory and potentially risky … widespread practice of … emphasizing agreement and playing down remaining differences’.14 Hietamäki concurs and further argues that classical consensus ‘as an ecumenical goal’ has failed because ‘it cannot accommodate the kind of diversity that is the essence of the church’ and ‘is at best “only” differentiated and not full consensus’.15 Chapman adds that ‘it is precisely over its apparent aim of eradicating “difference” that the classic form of “consensus ecumenism” has come under strong attack from proponents of post-modern theology’.16 He notes that critics of the method see it as ‘flawed because it aims for uniformity of expression, whereas pluralism in the Church is both inevitable and enriching’.17

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12 Hietamäki, Agreeable Agreement, 216.
13 This list is compiled according to Chapman, ‘Consensus and Difference’, 58–59. While I agree that Chapman has included the main terms that Hietamäki highlights in her work on analysing interchurch dialogue, I would also mention the other forms of consensus that Hietamäki refers to in her work, such as ‘specific accord’, ‘joint statement’, ‘compatibility’, ‘commonality’, ‘fundamental’, ‘ nuanced’, ‘ full’, and ‘sufficient’.
15 Hietamäki, Agreeable Agreement, 221. Hietamäki adds to this argument further, suggesting that other issues point to the failure of classical consensus: ‘human existence is bound to perspectives and therefore there is not universal rationality that would lead all to a common conclusion and … the pursuit of consensus fails to identify correctly the church’s foundation as the work of the trinitarian God’. Ibid.
17 Ibid.
Therefore, I would argue that, given that the gift-task paradigm is aimed at increasing dialogue, this goal could be thwarted by the limitations found in the classical conception of ecumenical consensus. If classical consensus were being offered as the primary goal of the paradigm, or even if consensus were being offered as a method, then the fear is that churches and denominations will not engage in dialogue because the demands of consensus are too strict. If doctrinal consensus requires, as Chapman notes, the ‘subscriptions to a set of cognitive propositions’, then this ‘places unnecessary constraints on the way in which the different ecclesial communities express and live their faith’. In developing the gift-task paradigm, finding a way to transcend the institutional and denominational handling of the marks is highlighted, as is the need to treat the marks dynamically instead of statically. Therefore, a theologically and analytically informed dialogue aimed at ‘mutual understanding’ is the goal of the paradigm, in which the communicative element should not carry the requirements and demands of consensus. Dialogue concerning the marks that is based on ‘mutual understanding’ allows interlocutors to present their individual or corporate understanding of the marks before hearing the perspective of others, without the requirement of consensus looming in the background. This means that as an individual or group presents their understanding on the marks, there is no additional need to attempt to convince the hearers to accept their point of view because they are simply sharing their own viewpoint. Within this type of dialogue, questions can be asked (‘analytical’) and theological views can be inserted, but what the hearers take away from the interaction is their own decision, without the

18 Ibid.
overarching requirement to find consensus. Further, it also becomes their decision and/or responsibility to attempt to integrate the information into their understanding and within their ecclesial contexts. Therefore ‘choice’ is involved in the process. Finally, I would argue that hearers will never truly ‘adopt’ another point of view, because the information shared must first be filtered through their own contextual lens and then inserted within their contextual ecclesial space and practice (orthopraxis). While integration of a viewpoint into one’s own can take place after understanding another’s point of view, an outright adoption is not possible unless the hearer comes with absolutely no knowledge or experience on the subject matter in the first place (i.e. no understanding of their own), and unless they are already somehow connected to the context to begin with (e.g. shared denominational affiliation). As will be seen in the next section, this is why the gift-task paradigm can be beneficial in ecumenical dialogue, because, rather than seeking consensus, it *seeks to create a new way forward.* Thereby together interlocutors can learn what ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ can mean for ecclesiology at a *shared table.*

I would argue, as Brigham does, for the importance of ecumenism to remain on the theological agenda, because it ‘discerns how to articulate a common Christian identity across traditional divisions’.\(^{19}\) Aware of the current challenges of ‘pluralism and ambiguity’ to the ecumenical movement, she asks ‘what will sustain ecumenical dialogue in such a context [?]’, and offers that only multiple approaches ‘will create the kind of inclusive participation and commitment to ecumenism’ that she considers to

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19 Erin M. Brigham, *Sustaining the Hope for Unity: Ecumenical Dialogue in a Postmodern World* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2012), 3. In this work, Brigham also draws from the work of Habermas in proposing communication that can aid in ecumenical dialogue.
be desirable. For her part, she proposes ‘an approach to unity that sustains dialogue within an eschatological reality’. She suggests that the ‘theological understanding of the church as an eschatological reality invites us to ecumenical hope and commitment … just as the ideal of consensus provides a framework for discourse’.

To develop this framework she draws from Habermas’s theory of communicative action, suggesting that he ‘responds critically and constructively to the postmodern context by developing a framework of communicative rationality’. Reinforcing the line of argument within this thesis, Brigham suggests this is the process of ecumenical dialogue that can be sustained within an eschatological reality. She explains:

Organizations that facilitate ecumenical dialogue … create … public spaces for the exchange of religious narratives. Conceptualizing these truth claims as narratives allows me to emphasise their contextual nature while maintaining their intelligibility outside of their context of origin. In this way, each tradition can retain its particularity while also moving toward greater Christian unity. Bringing these traditions into conversation with each other allows us to discover our common story and direct its outcome together. In so doing, Christians have the potential for fostering global solidarity and modeling diversity in unity for the globalized world.

Within Brigham’s thinking, then, consensus is always ‘in flux’: it is ‘realized and then disrupted in the communicative encounter’. She follows Habermas, arguing that ‘consensus is always provisional, subject to critique and revision’. She determines that ‘if discourse is to be truly inclusive and consensus truly noncoercive, the possibility of new insight is

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20 Ibid., 151.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid., 118.
23 Ibid., 11.
24 Ibid., 16.
25 Ibid., 152.
26 Ibid., 21.
always present’. Within this understanding, consensus presents with a dynamic nature, offering more than the ‘here and now’ perspective. This content challenges contemporary forms of consensus, perhaps even invalidating the need for full consensus. This shift in thinking on consensus opens the door towards new and alternative approaches, and even lends itself to a ‘mutual understanding’ form of communication that the gift-task paradigm would require.

Furthermore, in terms of ecumenical dialogue, it could be argued that full doctrinal consensus is ‘not actually needed for the Church to be able to function as a community of believers’. Nor is full doctrinal consensus required to have helpful conversations, or even to advance conversations. Hietamäki, in discussing consensus, notes the additional qualifiers ‘which illustrate the depth, scope or field of the agreement by posing either qualitative or quantitative limits to the agreement’. It is the failing to distinguish between the two (qualitative and quantitative) in ecumenical texts that has ‘significant implications’ and that can produce misleading conclusions. Regarding basic consensus, ‘quantitative’ identifies the ‘depth or width of an agreement’ and can be ‘described quantitatively as substantial, extensive, wider, sufficient or growing’. This type of agreement can be seen as ‘lacking in fullness’ because agreement is reached on some aspects but not all. Conversely, in a qualitative agreement the ‘consensus is full … but is restricted in its scope’ to that which is ‘essential,

27 Ibid., 21.
29 Hietamäki, Agreeable Agreement, 12.
30 Ibid., 217.
31 Ibid., 12, italics in original.
32 Ibid., 217.
basic, or fundamental’. Hietamäki adds an example, suggesting that ‘Anglican churches have quite effectively used a quantitative interpretation of consensus to allow ecumenical processes to advance, even when agreement is not yet total in the qualitative sense’. Chapman points out that while it is ‘regrettable’ that there is ‘widespread failure’ in terms of distinguishing between these two aspects of consensus, this ‘does not necessarily render such agreements invalid’.

This understanding of the ‘quantitative and qualitative’ aspects of consensus would seem to fall in line with a gift-task understanding of dialogue based on ‘mutual understanding’. It is therefore helpful to the development of the paradigm, in that some level of agreement will be required in order for churches and denominations to engage in dialogue on the marks. Within the gift-task paradigm, I suggest that agreement is to be found in appealing to the marks theologically and analytically. Such an appeal does not require full doctrinal consensus, but it does require a ‘basic’ agreement (‘qualitative’) with a ‘growing’ (‘quantitative’) conception of consensus (e.g. understanding).

Closely related to consensus and often used in an ‘overlapping’ manner is that of ‘convergence’ (Latin, convergere, ‘to incline together’). Hietamäki notes that the term ‘convergence’ in the ‘positive sense’ can signify ‘a rapprochement or growing understanding between churches’, because ‘convergence has to do with the differing expressions that refer to a

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33 Ibid., 12, italics in original.
34 Ibid., 13. See also 54–80, where Hietamäki dedicates a chapter of her book to ‘Anglican–Lutheran Dialogue’.
36 Hietamäki, Agreeable Agreement, 10.
common faith’.\textsuperscript{37} In convergence the emphasis is placed ‘more on the ecumenical process than the resulting agreement’.\textsuperscript{38} Therefore expressions may be ‘converging’ even though ‘complete agreement is lacking’.\textsuperscript{39} Further, such convergence should not be considered to be an ‘incomplete agreement’, because ‘it emphasizes the necessary and fruitful process of growing together’.\textsuperscript{40} In this way, ‘it avoids the connotations of static, ahistorical understanding of truth sometimes associated with the idea of consensus’ and ‘has therefore been suggested as an especially suitable concept for describing a plurality of viewpoints and their complementarity as witness to the same reality’.\textsuperscript{41} Hietamäki says a positive example of convergence can be seen in the ‘multilateral Faith and Order document \textit{Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry}’ in which ‘convergence means the discovery of shared convictions and viewpoints which is enabled by “leaving behind hostilities of the past”’.\textsuperscript{42}

Developing the concept further, Hietamäki argues that as emphasis on the social or communal process of convergence increases, its viability as a possibility for ecumenical dialogue gains additional credibility.\textsuperscript{43} She notes that the emphasis in this case is not on ‘knowledge’ but rather ‘on \textit{metanoia} or change of mind’, which ‘describes the individual and communal processes of change without the loss of what is essential to one’s own

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 11.
identity ... [as] individuals and communions converge or draw nearer to
God and to each other'.

Hietamäki argues that while ‘the picture painted of “consensus
ecumenism” ’ has been ‘overly simplified’, ‘although the dialogue text as
the end product is a goal of the dialogue, the dialogue process itself is an
important, even necessary element of the consensus reached’, because ‘an
“ecumenical agreement” is a document *sui generis*’ (‘unique in its
characteristics’). This means that what is created is a new document,
carrying new information. This is not a ‘finding’ of consensus, but a
‘creating’ of consensus. This is because the ecumenical documents (text) are
characterised as documents of ‘dialogue’ as opposed to a ‘monologue’, with
‘successful dialogue’ being founded on a ‘relational anthropology ... in
which the individual “I” is formed through an encounter with the
“other”’.

Again, the paradigm (as will be developed) resonates with this kind of
thinking being offered by Hietamäki. Within the gift-task paradigm I argue
for a communicative model that is informed by a theological and analytical
framework. In this process, communication is based on mutual
understanding in which participants have the opportunity to share
viewpoints, ask questions and then choose to integrate this learning into
their ecclesial contexts. This is the language of *metanoia* and *sui generis*.
Hietamäki’s discussion on consensus is thus a support for the type of
dialogue that the gift-task paradigm would hope to create in the form of
‘mutual understanding’. In her work she has identified that ecumenical

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44 Ibid. This would support a gift-task type of ‘mutual understanding’ dialogue.
45 Ibid., 7. This lends itself to a gift-task type of ‘mutual understanding’ dialogue.
46 Ibid. This is reminiscent of Wieman’s doctrine of creative interchange.
consensus has a history and associated hurdles, including notions that classical consensus has ‘failed’ or is ‘flawed’ and that it cannot contain the scope of diversity required for postmodernity or even for truth. The gift-task paradigm, if it is to be a way forward, cannot be lumbered with these associations. Therefore full doctrinal consensus cannot be the goal of this paradigm. Alternatively a ‘basic’ and ‘growing’ consensus can be included in the gift-task paradigm, albeit secondary to the goal of increased dialogue, in which the process of that dialogue holds the place of prominence.

It is important to note that, in her work, Hietamäki ultimately defends a form of consensus for ecumenical dialogue. She proposes that ‘to respond to the ecumenical consensus criticism one must be able to speak of a consensus that combines both the cognitive-intellectual’ (concerned with ‘questions of truth and rationality’) and the ‘socio-communal aspects’ (involving ‘the realities of the lived community’) of consensus.\(^{47}\) She proposes therefore a ‘consensus with difference’, because it is ‘in line with the kind of ecumenism that emphasizes the positive contribution of a variety of confessional identities’ and can ‘accommodate the features associated with postmodernity’.\(^{48}\)

While Hietamäki argues for a consensus with difference, for her part, Brigham argues for consensus sustained in eschatological dialogue. I argue for dialogue that seeks mutual understanding where a basic agreement to engage on a selected topic can exist (specifically the classical marks of the church) that can then be built upon in a process of dialogue that is dynamic, contextual and theologically informed. Therefore, I propose that a

\(^{47}\) Ibid., 221. This is reminiscent of a gift-task understanding.

\(^{48}\) Ibid., 209, 220.
communicative, analytical and theological paradigm based on gift and task is a relevant place to start. To the development of this paradigm I now turn.

5.2: The Communicative Element: Based in ‘Mutual Understanding’

First of all, the proposed paradigm in essence is communicative, that is, it has to do with communication in all of its forms, written, spoken, and unspoken, just as it takes account of nonverbal cues and the practice of listening. I have suggested that a primary problem surrounding the marks of the church is the seeming inability of churches to have discussion concerning them, that is, to exchange information and viewpoints. This is because denominations have been locked into their own notions concerning the marks and, as such, see their positions on the marks as being antithetical to one another.

While the various denominations have excelled at stating their position and understanding on the classical marks of the church, I would argue that there has been a lack of authentic imparting- and exchanging-type communication concerning the marks of the church. Further still, there has been perhaps even a lack in the ability of the various churches to incorporate any new information on the marks into their respective understandings. This is not to suggest that attempts have not been made or that there has been no identifiable progress in this regard. Rather, it is to highlight that in the twenty-first century there appears to be a stall, or a static treatment of the marks, that must be addressed because their dynamic nature insists that there is still room for growth to take place. Therefore it is a task that the churches must not neglect or ignore, but rather are obliged to address.
Having a paradigm that is communicative in nature is beneficial because the ethic of communication means that it contains vulnerability and openness where change is possible. Concerning the marks, at times, the historical church has attempted to engage with the marks in an institutionally-based or consensus-based format. As was identified earlier, these attempts have not been as fruitful as had been hoped because they have created boundary lines of differentiation that the church has been unable to transcend. Therefore the gift-task paradigm encourages and supports communicative attempts whereby churches and denominations can reach a level of ‘mutual understanding’ for those involved in the process or for those affected by the use of the marks. This does not ensure that every attempt to reach mutual understanding will be successful. However, what it does mean is that at the very minimum there are at least attempts being made to reach some level of mutual understanding through open dialogue.

It has already been outlined that ‘attempting to reach mutual understanding’ is a primary goal and constant feature of the gift-task paradigm. By way of reminder, Wieman’s model is a dynamic process of understanding and integration that aims to create a newly inclusive whole. The importance of dialogue is central in that communication is based on mutual understanding and begins as an attitude of openness whereby there is a desire to engage in dialogue with the ‘other’. It is at this point primarily theoretical, but it can be evidenced as individuals place themselves in a position where they can ‘hear’ the position of another in an attempt to ‘understand’. This is followed potentially by an ‘integration’ of that information. Regarding the development of the gift-task paradigm this means that as individuals (churches/denominations) engage in dialogue on
the marks, their first required task is to attempt to reach some level of understanding of the other before they then attempt to integrate this understanding within their own original experience.

Two interrelated points need to be made regarding this original experience as it relates to the gift-task paradigm. These concern what it is, and who engages in it. The ‘original experience’ can be identified as both personal and corporate. Original experiences can include personal values, denominational propositions, and theologically held assumptions. What is key in one’s original experience is that it is one’s own unique way of identifying and expressing one’s personally and/or corporately held truths. It is in essence one’s truth claim.

Regarding truth, Hietamäki points out that genuine interchurch dialogue ‘recognises the possibility that truth is perspective’.49 This means that the nature of truth is related to a particular perspective of an ecclesial community. This is the community’s ‘original experience’. Nevertheless, Chapman highlights that within ecumenical dialogue this means that ‘Christian truth transcends individual understandings’.50 Hietamäki would concur, noting that in doctrinal dialogue it is important to not let individual or specific ‘propositional understanding(s) of doctrine … collapse dialogue into a monologue’.51

This is important because a unique truth claim can be held by an individual or a group of individuals. Further, this truth can exist personally in the larger context of a specific church within a denomination, or across the denomination. This allows for a diversity or variety of truths to exist

49 Ibid., 7.
50 Chapman, ‘Consensus and Difference’, 58.
51 Hietamäki, Agreeable Agreement, 8.
within the ecclesial context. Therefore, in Wieman’s conception, and as it is expressed within the gift-task paradigm, this ‘understanding’ and ‘integration’ process takes place on multiple levels: from individual to institution (and vice versa), within a denomination, and across denominations. This is the scope of ecumenical dialogue and reveals it as a complex and intricate process.

Anglican theologian Gillian Evans highlights the individual–corporate tension as ‘one of the paradoxes of ecumenical encounter’, stating that ‘although what is happening is a meeting of churches, that can only happen in and through the meeting of human individuals’.52 Furthermore, participants do not always clearly demarcate ‘their positions as individuals and their positions as representatives of an ecclesial body’.53 Ecumenical dialogue therefore presents as a multifaceted process that requires the transformation of individuals, their respective communities and the communities of those they engage with. Nevertheless, there must be a ‘change of attitude’ on a personal level because ‘communities are made up of persons and must carry their members with them when they “move”’.54

Certainly Wieman’s doctrine of creative interchange would see the need for not only a personal commitment to this process but for institutions, and especially the church, to commit themselves to this process. Specifically, they would need to choose to engage with the creative event by seeking out in ‘every situation the conditions most favorable for appreciative understanding’ to take place and for participants to ‘yield’.54

53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
themselves ‘to whatever transformations must occur’ in order ‘to achieve this appreciative understanding of others’.  

This is not to suggest that by merely committing to the process all the outcomes will be a successful and positive integration. It is important to note, as Shaw does, that ‘there may be negative integrations of communicated meanings; that is, we may deny or reject what is communicated, but it nevertheless becomes a part of our understanding’. 

Perhaps the first historical example of this can be seen in the fact that the marks were formulated during what was essentially the first ever ecumenical councils: the Council of Nicaea (325), with ratification at the Council of Constantinople (381). As part of the creed’s development, the spirit in which the marks were birthed was one of attempting to reach ‘mutual understanding’. The church was in a period of self-examination, where answers to difficult questions regarding the nature and mission of the church were being sought. Church leaders came together to hear from one another and to understand each other’s position. The result for some was the ‘integration’ of that understanding, creating a new experience.

By way of differentiation (and as already outlined within the introduction of this chapter), unlike the ecumenical councils of Nicaea and Constantinople, where full consensus was the goal, within the gift-task paradigm full consensus is not the goal. To be sure, the goal in this approach is not focused on the outcome but on the process. The process is concerned with dialogue that is open, where an ‘original experience’ can be expressed

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55 Henry Nelson Wieman, *Man’s Ultimate Commitment* (1958; Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991), 166. For further reading specific to the required commitment of the church to this creative process, see the chapter ‘The Church Under Commitment’, 163–85.

and heard, even accepted as valid amongst a plurality of other expressions. This approach is not seeking to achieve full consensus as its object; rather this approach seeks to create a new level of understanding and experience between interlocutors. Once this has been accomplished then the sub-events of the creative event can work together to bring about the accomplishment of this task (i.e. the ‘events in process’ of ‘emerging’, ‘integrating’, ‘expanding’ and ‘deepening’). This event is not time-bound, but can be marked as having occurred by the observance of the ‘newly created good’ that has resulted from all of the four sub-events having taken place. This suggests that this process engages with the marks as dynamic rather than as static because it means that the gift-task paradigm is always open to new horizons as it points beyond them towards the eschaton. This allows for new levels of mutual understanding on the marks to be sought and found in a variety of contexts, thereby outlining a ‘unity in diversity’ approach.

By way of reminder and along the same lines, Habermas’s concept of ‘reaching understanding’ is the primary goal of communicative action that takes place against the tacit horizon of lifeworld. For the purposes of the content being described here, a ‘lifeworld’ can be thought of as an individual church/denomination or as a collective whole. For Habermas it is important that dialogue take place in the context of lifeworld, for it is ‘the transcendental site where speaker and hearer meet, where they can reciprocally raise claims that their utterances fit the world (objective, social, or subjective), and where they can criticize and confirm those validity claims’ (e.g. analytical questions) … ‘settle their disagreements, and arrive

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57 Henry Nelson Wieman, The Source of Human Good (1946; Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008), 58. These were outlined in chap. 4 of this thesis.
58 Ibid., 57.
at agreements’ (i.e. mutual understanding). When this happens successful reproduction of lifeworld contents (i.e. its beliefs, doctrines, traditions) can take place, by which it will pass on the ‘traditions’ and ‘meanings’ of the lifeworld while serving as a ‘medium’ for the ‘improvement of all kinds of knowledge; technical, practical, scientific, moral’ (i.e. fresh understanding).

Within the gift-task paradigm, based on a combined approach of Wieman’s and Habermas’s concepts, the following aspects can be expected as part of the process. For those involved in this process they would put themselves in a position to ‘hear’ from the ‘other’ and allow for the authentic exchange of dialogue (e.g. truth claims can be raised and validated, etc.). This communication would allow for the reproduction of lifeworld and its contents while accommodating new kinds of knowledge. Essentially it would offer a concrete and contextual, ‘here and now’ approach along with being open to a dynamic engagement with the marks that understands their eschatological fulfilment. Finally, this communication of mutual understanding would be integrated into the current understanding, creating a more deeply unified meaning. Therefore ‘mutual understanding’ would take place on the contextual (‘here and now’, ‘particular’) level, that is, it would be informed by its theological framework and calling. It would involve churches and denominations (lifeworlds) engaging in dialogue concerning the marks, understanding them to contain both a dynamic and a concrete aspect, and then attempting to allow this new information to be


integrated in an effort to ‘pass on’ traditional beliefs and/or offer fresh understanding.

A contemporary concrete example of this would be the work done by the World Council of Churches (WCC) in its document *Confessing the One Faith*. In this work the WCC engages with various denominations in a discussion where an attempt is made to use the Nicene Creed as a common basis for dialogue. Although the WCC did not approach the work done in *Confessing the One Faith* using the communication theories of Wieman and Habermas, it will be provided here as an example because of its content specifically related to interdenominational dialogue concerning the marks. Furthermore, utilising this work as a primary example is the right choice, because this work provides a comprehensive historical example of interchurch dialogue on the marks of the church.

In fairness to the substantial work undertaken in the 50-year history of bilateral ecumenical theological dialogue, I note that within this thesis I have only engaged primarily with this one example from the WCC. This

61 World Council of Churches, *Confessing the One Faith: Towards an Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic Faith as Expressed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381)*, Faith and Order Paper No. 153, rev. ed. (Geneva: WCC, 2010). This book is the result of a comprehensive and denominationally inclusive ten-year study undertaken by the WCC. This work follows and is closely linked to the WCC’s previous work, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper No. 111.

62 In World Council of Churches, *Confessing the One Faith*, three stages to essential visible unity for the church are identified: common explication, recognition and confession (xxi). The authors proceed to develop this understanding of visible unity by utilising the Nicene Creed as a ‘theological and methodological tool’ (xxii). They say that their intended purpose is not to insist that non-creedal churches move towards ‘formal recitation of the Creed’ but rather that this work will ‘act as a stimulus for churches to recognize in themselves and in each other, a fidelity to the faith of the church’ through an ‘exploration of faith set forth in the Creed’ (viii).

63 Ibid., xxvii. See esp. section II, ‘Structure of the Text’, §§32–34, xxvii–xxviii. Within the work, §§216–41 present the marks of the church in a denominationally neutral format with basic affirmations of the marks, based upon historical and biblical treatment. This is followed by a discussion on ‘explication for today’, by which, following the phrases of the Creed, the authors attempt to outline the ‘subject matter [in relation to] challenges of today in order to interpret the respective aspect of the apostolic faith for our present time’. Finally, at various points further ‘commentary’ is added to address additional information required, including that relating to ‘continuing controversial themes’.

182
limiting of bilateral and ecumenical documents within this thesis should in no way should be understood as a disregarding of the rich and fruitful contributions made by such dialogue, but rather as a way of ensuring that this thesis and its content could be contained to a manageable size.

While ordained Baptist minister and theologian Mark Heim highlights that studying the creed risked ‘the varied perspectives [coming] sharply to the fore again’; I would suggest that this study is helpful because it involved the opportunity for dialogue on the marks. Therefore, fresh attempts could be made to reach some new level of mutual understanding between those involved. In terms of the gift-task paradigm, this was the primary benefit of this document in that it opened afresh the conversation by placing participants in a scenario whereby a ‘here and now’ dialogue could be had concerning the marks. Further, it provided the means and method for that ‘conversation’ between ‘speaker’ and ‘hearer’ in which an opportunity was provided for each participating denomination to present their understanding on the marks and have that understanding heard. This allowed for the potential process of ‘understanding’ and ‘integration’ to take place, a process in which, as Wieman would suggest, ‘lives are transformed into a more richly inclusive whole’. I say ‘potential’ because I cannot confirm that any individual church or denominational position altered on the marks as a result of studying this document. What can be confirmed, though, is that this document provided an opportunity for churches and denominations


65 Apart from the many international meetings, there were also meetings that were specifically concerned with the third article of the Creed, in which matters related to the Holy Spirit, the church and the marks were discussed. See appendix IV in World Council of Churches, Confessing the One Faith, esp. 125, 132, 134.

to engage in dialogue on the marks of the church. This is important because the marks of the church belong to the entire body of Christ and this should be visibly evidenced with participation from across the ecclesial field.

Continuing then in the discussion on mutual understanding and developing the gift-task paradigm: when successful communicative action takes place, the contents of the lifeworld are passed on. This is important because the contents of the knowledge of the lifeworld are not ‘owned’ by any one group but instead are the property of the lifeworld as a whole. Therefore it becomes the responsibility of those in the lifeworld to ensure that all contents of the lifeworld are being reproduced through communicative action. Applied to the marks this means that knowledge of the marks should continue as a ‘linguistically organized stock of knowledge’ within the lifeworld. Further, this knowledge should be faithfully reproduced (i.e. ‘passed on’) as a means by which to ‘secure the continuity of tradition’ and as a ‘coherence of knowledge that is sufficient for everyday practice’. I would argue that this combined task of ‘faithfully reproducing’ and securing the ‘continuity of tradition’ that is ‘sufficient for everyday practice’ has been neglected within the churches. Consequently, the reproduction of the marks has failed to take place, thereby causing problems across the ecclesial field related to their profile, literacy and usability. While there is some evidence to suggest that denominations do attempt to ‘faithfully’ hand on their tradition as related to the marks, this is not necessarily done as a form of critical engagement with the marks, or within the larger framework of a ‘tradition’ or ‘lifeworld’ that belongs to all Christians. This highlights the need to expand their practices concerning the marks. Concrete examples of such expansion would include a regular
preaching or teaching on the marks, especially as it concerns engaging with other churches and denominations. Further, combining communication with the analytical framework perspective could truncate problems related to the marks. For example, in ecumenical dialogue concerning the marks, if static approaches are being offered, the churches should be reminded to appeal to the dynamic nature of the marks and make attempts to visibly demonstrate them. So, for instance, if any one church or denomination (or lifeworld) prefers to prioritise one mark over the other three, within the communicative action of lifeworld there are opportunities provided whereby other individual churches can ‘raise and validate claims concerning the marks’, and ‘settle disagreements and arrive at agreements’. To reiterate, this is a goal and benefit of mutual understanding (over full consensus) that open dialogue concerning the marks can create. It is the focus on the process of the dialogue that distinguishes mutual understanding from the end-goal-focused attempts of consensus dialogue. Again, this is not to suggest that consensus-based dialogue does not contain some form of mutual understanding within its processes, but simply to note the end goal distinction. In mutual understanding the end goal is increased levels of dialogue, whereby participants have the opportunity to raise and validate truth claims in an ongoing process of dialogue. Consensus dialogue has, as its goal, consensus. One form of dialogue focuses its efforts on a specific outcome, the other form of dialogue focuses on process. Again the goal would be to allow communicative action to inform the processes of the lifeworld-system relationship so as to ensure a successful reproduction of

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67 The analytical framework will be further outlined in the next sections, but as previously noted, at times it will be necessary to overlap the elements in the development of the griT-task paradigm.
lifeworld in which not only the ‘tradition’ and ‘meanings’ are passed on, but newly arising situations can be connected to existing lifeworld practices.

The problem, however, is that although the lifeworld is reproduced through communicative action, ‘system’ is integrated through non-communicative action, that is, through actions and their consequences. In considering the lifeworld-system relationship in Habermas’s conception of society, the two are meant to work together in an integrated fashion. 68 When this does not happen there is an ‘encroachment’ of system on lifeworld and the attempts by system to ‘relieve’ the lifeworld of its functions thereby replace communicative action with instrumental action. This unfortunately reproduces the economic, political and administrative processes of the steering media, and sets the conditions for the ‘uncoupling’ of lifeworld-system and the subsequent ‘colonization of lifeworld’. 69 It is the colonization of lifeworld that leads to ‘disturbances’ in the process and is identified in the resulting problems (pathologies and system instability crisis) in the lifeworld-system relationship. 70 Such disturbances can be identified as a ‘loss of meaning’, a scarceness of ‘social solidarity’, and problems with ‘legitimately regulating’ social norms. 71

This framework (i.e. the colonisation of lifeworld by system) can be helpful in understanding what has taken place regarding the marks,

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68 Michael Power, Richard Laughlin and David J. Cooper, ‘Accounting and Critical Theory’, in Studying Management Critically, ed. Mats Alvesson and Hugh Willmott (London: Sage, 2003), 139. Systems emerge from the lifeworld as a consequence of processes of functional and cognitive differentiation. Brown and Goodman, ‘Habermas’ Theory’, 210, add: ‘parts of society, especially those dominated by steering media, can be modeled as systems so long as we remember that they emerge from the lifeworld and are never totally separate from its processes’. Habermas suggests that because system is ruled by ‘steering media’ (such as power and money) rather than individuals, there is a need to anchor ‘system’ in the ‘lifeworld’. Habermas, TCA2, 154.
69 Habermas, TCA2, 318–31.
70 Ibid., 140.
71 Ibid., 140–41.
especially where the marks have been statically defined, based upon institutional preferences instead of appeals to their transcendent and dynamic nature. Concerning the marks, it has been the traditions and meanings of the lifeworld that should have been passed on (i.e. reproduced) through communicative action. Instead what has been reproduced is the language-independent steering media that are aimed at ‘efficiency in achieving certain ends’ through actions and their consequences, resulting in a focus on maintaining the system.\(^{72}\) Specifically, what has been reproduced is the institutional and denominational understanding of the marks. As was highlighted earlier in this thesis, this means that the marks have been relegated to a static understanding instead of fulfilling their dynamic nature.

Further, this preference for a denominational understanding of the marks has resulted in the loss of the critical theological functioning of the marks. The end result has been an institutionalism of the marks, where the ‘lifeworld’ and ‘system’ surrounding the marks have indeed become ‘uncoupled’. Brigham highlights the importance of Habermas’s integrated lifeworld-relationship to ecumenical dialogue, noting that ‘when systems are informed by the communicative action of the lifeworld, they can provide legitimate social cohesion within a complex and pluralistic context’.\(^{73}\) It is a concept of society that simultaneously integrates the spheres of lifeworld and system as interacting through the linguistic medium of communicative action where \textit{mutual understanding} is the goal.

Therefore, Habermas would suggest the way forward is through communicative action. Wieman would appeal to engagement with the


\(^{73}\) Brigham, \textit{Sustaining Hope for Unity}, 35.
creative event. I would argue that the combined way forward therefore would mean that authentic dialogue (i.e. transparent, non-coercive dialogue) would need to take place and that truth claims could be raised and either accepted or rejected. The goal would be first to ‘understand’ the other before ‘integrating’ those insights into a newly inclusive whole in which perspectives are widened (Wieman) and through which ‘traditions and meanings’ could be ‘passed on’, including ‘all kinds of improvements in knowledge’ (Habermas).

In regard to the type of ‘mutual understanding’ the gift-task paradigm aims to create, the WCC document proves, in part, to be a beneficial example. In Confessing the One Faith it states that the study did not seek to ‘represent a consensus or even convergence’, but rather to create a document that could ‘be seen as an instrument to help the churches to focus on and reflect together upon the apostolic faith’. It was further outlined that this ‘reflection should lean towards a fresh understanding of the apostolic faith and thus towards a common recognition and confession of this faith today’. Therefore the suggested intention on this interchurch dialogue is to start not by examining each other for points of commonality (and therefore differentiation as well), but rather to engage ‘together’ in a process of study of, and reflection on, the ‘apostolic faith’, before seeking a ‘fresh understanding’ and ‘common recognition’ of this faith.

The outlined process for finding ‘common recognition’ requires churches first to self-examine their own ‘commitment’ to the ‘apostolic faith’ (through ‘words and deeds’) before recognising the ‘apostolic faith’ in other churches (through ‘confessional statements, liturgical life and witness,

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74 World Council of Churches, Confessing the One Faith, §19, p. xxiv.
75 Ibid.
proclamation, and practice’).

76 The ‘means for this mutual discernment’ is through ‘bilateral and multilateral dialogues’. 77 Therefore, at this point the WCC document supports the goals of the gift-task paradigm in two ways: (1) by increasing dialogue on the marks; and (2) by seeking to truly appreciate the original viewpoint of another before integrating that into one’s own.

Clearly the WCC approach was not appealing specifically to the use of Wieman’s method of ‘understanding and integration’ in its suggestion that the churches ‘reflect together’ and ‘lean towards fresh understanding’. However, it can be argued that this process does, in some way, convey the same attitude of understanding and integration.

Yet, as beneficial as this example is, what would have been of further benefit to the WCC process would have been the contribution of Habermas’s model, in which questions can be asked regarding the lifeworld-system relationship. Specifically, it could be asked whether or not the contents of lifeworld were being reproduced (e.g. the ‘passing on’ of the understanding of the dynamic nature of the marks and their theological function) or whether strategic action was ‘colonizing’ the lifeworld practices concerning the marks and thereby reproducing the institutional and denominational statically bound approaches to the marks.

Along the same lines in regard to communication, questions could be asked as to whether the lifeworld viewpoints being offered were large enough to incorporate the widest possible views of the Christian faith, including those views held by non-confessional churches. This is a noted limitation in the WCC’s work in relation to the gift-task paradigm.

76 Ibid., §20, p. xxiv.
77 Ibid.
Specifically, the dialogue was not expansive enough to include voices from across the ecclesial field. In choosing a document such as the Nicene Creed, there was an automatic demarcation between ‘creedal’ and ‘non-creedal’ churches (of course this argument is just as true in choosing a theme such as the ‘classic marks of the church’, which find their written inauguration as a cohesive unit within the creeds, yet, as will be seen, it is how the issue is approached and what dominates the focus of the dialogue – consensus or process – that is significant). While the WCC document does stipulate that ‘the basis of this study does not mean to demand the acceptance and use of the Nicene Creed … by the “non-creedal” churches in their regular worship’, the stated ‘primary function and purpose of the World Council of Churches is “to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and in one Eucharistic fellowship”’. The council further states that this goal for ‘visible unity’ can be identified in three ‘essential conditions’: (1) common confession of apostolic faith; (2) mutual recognition of baptism, Eucharist, and ministry; and (3) common structures for witness and service, as well as for decision-making and teaching authoritatively. The concern is that with the overarching goal of ‘visible unity’ being couched in terms resembling classical ‘consensus’, this will constrain the dialogue process that could occur between those churches whose ecclesial identities are starkly different from one another.

If dialogue is approached with the mindset that it must accommodate ‘basic affirmations’, then there is the potential that the fullness of

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78 Ibid., §13, p. xxii.
79 Ibid., §1, p. xix.
80 Ibid.
Mutual understanding through the lens of Habermas’s model suggests that dialogue is ‘the type of interaction in which all participants harmonize their individual plans of action with one another and pursue their illocutionary aims without reservation’, meaning that the ‘speech act’ is ‘transparent’ and ‘noncoerced’. Further, responsibility is placed on the speaker to choose ‘a comprehensible linguistic expression … in order to come to an understanding with a hearer about something and thereby make himself understandable’.

I would argue that a context where consensus is included in the overall goal, even if it is limited to finding ‘basic affirmations’, creates limitations in the ability to engage fully with the diversity of ecclesial expressions that are offered. The formation of the gift-task paradigm concurs with Brigham’s suggestion that drawing from Habermas’s theory of communicative action ‘provides a way to freely arrive at perspective-transcending truth in a pluralistic context’. Therefore within a postmodern context of plurality, to not draw fully from a process of ‘mutual understanding’ constrains dialogue and negates to incorporate an understanding of the dynamic nature of the church. Furthermore, it neglects to understand the dynamic nature of the marks and neglects their theological

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81 Ibid., §2, p. xv.
82 Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 1, *Reason and Rationalization of Society*, trans. T. McCarthy (Boston: Beacon, 1984), 294, italics in original. This point was made in chap. 4 of this thesis as well. Hereafter TCA1.
83 Ibid., 307, italics in original.
84 Brigham, *Sustaining Hope for Unity*, 23.
functioning by limiting the understanding of the marks to a denominational one.85

Drawing from Barth’s understanding of the marks, a theological appeal can be made that, because the marks are located and grounded within the nature and being of the triune God, the marks are initiated and sustained from outside the church and therefore cannot be limited to a denominational understanding of them. This understanding offers a critical theological functioning of the marks that should not be neglected or ignored. Hence the gift-task paradigm would support and include the need for churches to be committed to this kind of transcendent interchange.

If the marks themselves are allowed to inform the communication, it begs the question: how can any church or denomination be ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ without engaging with others and seeking together what those words mean contextually? This is a contextual ‘mutual understanding’ dialogue aimed at the ‘particular’ and the ‘here and now’. It is, if you will, ‘horizontal’ dialogue. Yet, the ‘oneness, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity’ of the marks also appeals to a dynamic understanding of the marks that transcends any denominational, institutional, or contextual understanding. Thus, a further appeal to the dynamic nature of the marks must inform the conversation and go beyond the immediate context of the interlocutors. Wieman’s model incorporates an element of reaching out to a divine ‘Source’ of ‘creativity’ that will ‘transform, create and sustain’ humankind in a way that we cannot do these for ourselves (a theological ‘gift’). It is, if you will, a ‘vertical’ understanding of communication. This

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85 Both the analytical and theological aspects in relation to dialogue will be considered more fully in later sections of this chapter, but as previously noted at times it will be necessary to overlap the elements in the development of the gift-task paradigm.
means that (as outlined in Wieman’s doctrine of creative interchange) there is a commitment to engaging with the ‘creative’ in order to attain levels of ‘greater good’. Wieman believes that this is the ‘ultimate commitment’ of humankind – to be dedicated to this process of interchange through which the greatest good can be achieved. For it is through this process of communication (‘vertical’, being engaged with the ‘Source’) that humankind will see continual growth of ‘good’. This allows humankind to go from one level of created good to the next in a manner that is continually reaching out and constantly seeking to receive from and be engaged with that Source that will persistently transform, create and sustain in ways that humanity could never do itself.

Drawing from the work done in chapter 3 of this thesis, Barth would remind us that those churches who are ‘no longer addressed by her Lord and renewed by his Spirit’ run the risk of ‘ceasing’ to be in unity with their Lord. Alongside this notion of remaining in unity with the Lord lies the concept of church unity. Again Barth would make an appeal to ‘hearing’, drawing upon both streams of ‘hearing’ (vertical and horizontal) when he states:

In the realisation of faith in the one Church in face of its disunity, the decisive step is that the divided Churches should honestly and seriously try to hear and perhaps hear the voice of the Lord by them and for them, and then try to hear, and perhaps actually hear, the voice of the others. Where a Church does this, in its own place, and without leaving it, it is on the way to the one Church.

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A concrete example of what ‘vertical communication’ might look like would be church/denominational leaders and members engaging in activities that could be classified as ‘seeking God’, such as the spiritual disciplines (e.g. prayer, fasting, silence, solitude, meditation), either individually or corporately. Vertical communication would include means and methods in which one is ‘led by the Holy Spirit’ as one seeks ‘fresh revelation’ and a willingness to engage with fresh expression, as opposed to relying solely on past church documents or teachings. This is not to suggest that current ecumenical dialogues rely solely on past church documents or that they do not already engage in corporate prayer and worship as they look forward together, but rather to affirm the necessity of these practices within the gift-task paradigm. Corporately it might be expressed through group prayer.

This concrete description of the vertical expression of communication is offered to illustrate more fully the aspects of the gift-task paradigm and explicate more fully Wieman’s model. As can be seen, the process itself is rightly situated within the (vertical) context of being under God and awaiting God’s guidance and ‘creative good’, which is larger than any particular church. The Scriptures themselves provide this view, of course, and the ecumenical movement has relied on them for the vertical view, but hearing it said another way (through Wieman’s model) can be helpful.

This identifies an additional benefit of Wieman’s doctrine of creative interchange, in that through a communicative framework it opens the

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paradigm to the transcendent and universal. The risk from drawing from
Habermas’s model of communication only is that it is limited to the
particular. While Habermas’s theory of communicative action does have a
dynamic understanding in that it allows for ‘improvement of all kinds of
technology’, it is based on human development and progress and therefore
loses the critical theological functioning of the marks (as will be discussed
further in section 5.4, ‘The Theological Element: Based in the Triune God’).
The marks need to be reclaimed and maintained in their theological nature
and not be limited to a human construct in which they can be reduced to
solely an institutional/denominational understanding. Wieman’s doctrine of
creative interchange reminds the church to reach towards ‘greater’ good and
not to settle merely for levels of created good and become complacent.
Being complacent can be understood as the tendency to try to live within the
confines of like-mindedness and staid approaches instead of reaching out to
the ‘other’ and the dynamic process. Instead, the marks with their dynamic
nature call the church to move out beyond complacency and towards the
imperative in which the future awaits; thus the need for engagement with
the transcendent source.

Habermas’s model is firmly grounded in language that primarily
involves linguistics and media found within his two-sphere concept of
society presented as lifeworld-system. By combining the transcendence of
Wieman’s doctrine of creative interchange with the contextualism of
Habermas’s theory of communicative action, a dual communication process
(vertical and horizontal) is allowed to take place through ‘creative
interchange’ and ‘communicative action’, where fresh understanding can be
integrated with past understandings. The gift-task paradigm can then
incorporate the dynamic nature of the marks because it is anchored in lifeworld, while being open to the processes of the creative event. Concretely this means that truth claims regarding the marks can be raised and validated, even as consideration is given to a dynamic understanding of them. As churches pray and seek to be led by God, the revelations they receive can also be raised as new truth claims and either validated or rejected. This essentially outlines a two-part process, an event of communication that ‘reaches out’ to the universal as it ‘reaches across’ to the particular.

To sum this section, its goal has been to develop the concept of mutual understanding as understood within the gift-task paradigm. By way of a concrete example, the WCC’s document Confessing the One Faith was considered. The primary benefits of this document were that it created afresh an opportunity for dialogue on the marks and that it was offered as an ‘instrument’ to help churches ‘reflect together’ towards a ‘fresh understanding’ and ‘common recognition’ of the ‘apostolic faith’. However, the document could have benefitted from certain aspects of the gift-task paradigm. For example, insights from Habermas’s model regarding the lifeworld-relationship would help interchurch participants in identifying whether the marks were being ‘reproduced’ according to their dynamic nature and theological function or whether what was being reproduced was the institutional and denominational understanding of them. Another limitation noted within the document was that because ultimately the overall goal of the WCC is to find ‘visibly unity’ by reaching consensus on certain points, this unfortunately limited the conversation – both in the options that could be explored and in the diversity of voices that could be included.
Regarding dialogue about the marks, the way forward is to allow for mutual understanding that seeks to understand and integrate in a way that offers authentic dialogue exchange and that seeks to create a newly enriched whole, with the improvement of all kinds of knowledge. While the analytical and theological aspects of the marks were at times alluded to in the development of this section, these aspects will be developed more fully in the remainder of this chapter. In the next section, I will attempt to outline more fully communication that is informed by an analytical framework.

5.3: The Analytical Element: Based in Self-Examination

In the previous section, a ‘mutual understanding’ type of communication was outlined that included both ‘horizontal’ and ‘vertical’ elements. Horizontal communication is more readily identifiable as the contextual dialogue that takes place in ecumenical endeavours. This dialogue, apart from seeing churches and denominations engage with one another on a variety of ecclesial issues, also appreciates that such dialogue is further informed by a vertical communication as participants seek to be led by the triune God in their discussions. This further reveals that, within the vertical communication, a dynamic process can be evidenced as taking place. This dynamic nature of communication forms part of the discussion that will take place in this section, where communication that is informed by an analytical framework will be explored and offered. This analytical framework suggests that the marks function most effectively when they are held together in creative tension, received as dynamic gift and practised as embodied task. Each of these predicates will now be discussed in turn.
5.3.1: *Held Together in Creative Tension*

Analytically speaking the four marks have increased value and are most effective when they are held together in creative tension, in which they can mutually illuminate and critique each other. In the previous section, it was noted that holding the marks together in creative tension could be employed in an effort to combat attempts made by individual churches to prioritise one mark over the other three through the raising of validity claims and through attempting to remind churches of their call to unity in times of dissenting dialogue. It is a contention of this thesis that an analytical aspect of self-examination is important when interchurch dialogue on the marks takes place, because it offers a framework through which churches can ask questions as to their own levels of oneness, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity. For the most part, the answer to these questions should come out in a concrete expression (e.g. are we engaging with others?) but it also reveals the type of attitude that should be held in such dialogue. For example, questions could be asked whether, within a particular church or denomination, there is an attitude of openness to sharing in joint apostolic mission with other ecclesial expressions. Perhaps affirmations can be made about this already taking place in some concrete and contextual way. The additional questions in this case would have to do with how and where this could be increased.

It was noted in the example of the WCC document *Confessing the One Faith* that various denominations were able to put forth their viewpoints on the marks and thereby to offer their understanding with the further possibility of integrating this understanding of others within their own original experience to produce a newly inclusive whole. However,
there were no further analytical aspects offered to explore and deepen this dialogue. Through the working groups and the various papers written in response to truth claims by the individual denominations, there was an opportunity for either acceptance or rejection of those truth claims through written dialogue, but there were no checks in place to determine ‘what’ was being ‘reproduced’ or further efforts made to determine the increase or improved value of this dialogue. This is not to deny that increased dialogue did in fact take place, but simply to highlight the absence of an analytical assessment of that dialogue. For example, I would argue that producing dialogue centred on ‘basic affirmations’ diminishes the value of the marks both analytically and theologically. Further, such dialogue potentially reinforces already existing institutional and denominational understanding of the marks instead of producing any new or fresh understanding. As a potential and beneficial way forward, dialogue participants could draw from an analytical framework perspective, in which holding the marks together in creative tension would assist in their mutual illumination and critique.

If part of the problem is that the churches cannot have adequate dialogue (e.g. exchange) regarding the marks, then certainly having an understanding that holds the four marks together in creative tension places equal weighting on the requirement of ‘one’ or ‘unity’ just as much as on any other mark. In practice, therefore, and by way of example, if unity is held as one of the goals, then ‘conversations’ must end in places where all that can be done to remain in unity is sought and pursued. Therefore, stopping the conversation at points of differentiation or ‘agree to disagree’ positioning cannot be the end of the conversation. ‘Unity’ or ‘oneness’

89 The theological aspect will be further explored in the next section.
must inform the kind of dialogue that is being sought and therefore conversations should not ‘cease’ because of disagreement. But if this were so, it would mean that there had been an imbalance, where an individual mark (whether it be holiness, catholicity or apostolicity) had been held in priority (i.e. in that they disagree) over the others. To conclude, then, this aspect of holding the marks together in creative tension needs to be incorporated into the dialogue that takes place concerning the marks.

5.3.2: Received as Dynamic Gift

Communication that appeals to the dynamic nature of the marks understands that there are new levels of created good yet to be discovered as churches are pulled towards the eschaton. Such communication does not limit conversations to the here and now but rather asks questions about who, collectively, the churches might become. Therefore in developing the gift-task paradigm, I would argue that ‘mutual understanding’ conversations are not just about ‘how’ churches agree or disagree on the marks, but also about ‘what’ freshness can be brought to the conversation. This would require appealing to a dynamic understanding of the marks and the inclusion of a diversity of voices in the dialogue.

Again drawing from the example of the WCC document, this was another limitation of the document as there was a lack of diverse voices involved in the dialogue process. In viewing the document’s appendix IV, the lists of members of the steering committees is impressive, displaying representation from a number of denominations. However on closer inspection, many on the steering committees came from creedal churches. Again, utilising this document as an example is not to disparage the work
done by the WCC but simply to show the limitations of this document that the gift-task paradigm seeks to address.

Pentecostal Harold Hunter points out the same limitation in other WCC documents, suggesting that ‘the absence of an official Pentecostal response … is a commentary both on the multiplex reality of global Pentecostalism and the shortcomings of conciliar treaties in relation to the whole of Christendom’.  

He adds that the inclusion of noted Pentecostal and theologian Dr Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, as an advisor to the Faith and Order Plenary Commission ‘is a promising sign of things to come’, but laments that in the 1992 proceedings ‘Dr. Miroslav Volf was again the lone Pentecostal’. In fairness to this comment and the overall discussion being had here, there must be a desire to engage in the conversation from the breadth of the ecclesial landscape and not simply to assign blame to the powers that be. It could be argued that some denominations choose not to take up their invitation to join the conversation, determining from the outset that their theologies are antithetical.

I would argue that bilateral and multilateral conversations are beneficial but there is a need to expand the comfort zones of ‘who’ is included in the dialogue in order for the discussion to be truly catholic. Consideration has been given to ‘how’ the conversations take place (cf. mutual understanding), but equally important to consider is ‘who’ is included in the conversation. This is important in relation to the dynamic aspect of the marks because it challenges churches and denominations to move beyond their comfort zones of like-mindedness, and allows for a

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91 Ibid., 205.
dialogue process that goes further than the questions of self-examination and scrutiny from other churches that are likely, for the most part, to ‘agree’. Instead it calls for churches and denominations to be ‘more’ by challenging them to be open to outside scrutiny from those who are distinctively different from themselves. Again this is not an exercise in differentiation whereby churches seek to simply discover ‘how’ they are different from one another. Rather, it is an attempt at mutual understanding, in which the effort is made to discover what can be learnt from one another.

Mutual understanding is not about drawing on points of commonality (so that interlocutors can be found to ‘agree’). Rather, it is communication that involves the analysing of ourselves and each other for the purposes of drawing out beneficial and helpful aspects of each. This type of conversation could be called ‘shared table’ dialogue, in which any church or denomination could participate in the dialogue (e.g. what can you bring to the table to share that is of benefit and that we do not already possess?). Not only so, but if any church or denomination is seen to be ‘bearing fruit’ (e.g. transformed lives based upon a relationship with Jesus Christ), then regardless of the denominational preference (or whether or not they are creedal confessing churches), what this church does contextually must be considered as valid. It cannot be that since, historically, the churches have been divided from one another the future is tainted because there is a disagreement on certain parts of theology (e.g. Mariology, or speaking in tongues); or, worse still, there is a writing-off of the potential for divided churches to relate with each other. The gift-task paradigm would call for analysis and examination of not just the points of distinction or agreement but of the ‘fruit’ of others. This would explicate the gift-like nature of the
marks and demonstrate the visible reality of the churches in their efforts to accommodate the task of the marks.

Brigham suggests that ‘mutual understanding occurs as a process of ongoing encounters with the other’. 92 She contends that ‘individuals and churches should not have to choose between either retaining their particularity or realizing greater unity’. 93 Rather, because the ‘ecclesial self-understandings of Christians around the world are diverse’, what is required is ‘an ongoing process of listening to each other, discovering together what a common vision of the church might look like’. 94

Chapman adds that ‘inter-church dialogue properly involves genuine “encounter”, “reciprocity” and “exchange” rather than a parallel “monologue”’. 95 Drawing from the Second Vatican Council document Lumen Gentium, he suggests that ‘inter-church dialogue is a kind of “dialogue of consciences” and never merely an exchange of ideas but is always in someway an exchange of “gifts”’. 96

Brigham suggests that the work of Lumen Gentium ‘invites us to retrieve the eschatology dimension of Christian unity, which … emphasizes … describing the church as a pilgrim community’. 97 In discussing the marks specifically, Budde refers to the four marks of the church as ‘signposts of the journey’ and as ‘boundary-markers of the faith’ that ‘keep us honest in

92 Brigham, Sustaining Hope for Unity, 150.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid., 151.
95 Chapman, ‘Consensus and Difference’, 57.
97 Brigham, Sustaining Hope for Unity, 21. Chapter 7 in Lumen Gentium specifically refers to this and is entitled ‘The Eschatological Nature of the Pilgrim Church and Its Union with the Church in Heaven’.
our Christian identity’. Keeping with the theme of their dynamic nature, he adds that ‘they serve as beacons towards unity, pointing toward the future even while grounding us in the doctrines and liturgies of the tradition. They help pilgrims to discern the road, define the mission, and discover the way forward’. He challenges the contemporary church ‘to continue to bear witness to the world in ways no longer denominationally defined’ as it continues on its ‘ecumenical pilgrimage of unity’.

The concern, of course, is that appealing to a dynamic understanding of the marks increases the risk of losing doctrinal orthodoxy. Yet, concerning this issue, what needs to be clearly demarcated is the difference between doctrinal orthodoxy and denominational preference. Denominational preferences can often act like an unfortunate barrier to inclusion. Daniel Williams notes that within a contemporary culture marked by pluralism and on all accounts presenting as ‘post-Christian’, many Protestants and Evangelicals are appealing for a reclaiming of apostolic and confessional faith. Their primary concern is for doctrinal anchoring of their faith and traditions as they recognise and perceive the need to speak definitively about themselves. This creates therefore an ‘opportune time’ to ask questions about what kind of faith will shape their future. Williams suggests the answer is to reclaim and incorporate the interpretive tradition of the early church. He surmises that what affects most of theology today is an amnesia by which many in Christian leadership ‘seem to have forgotten

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99 Ibid.
100 Ibid., 218.
102 Ibid.
103 Ibid., 1, 4.
that the building of a foundational Christian identity is based upon that which the church has received, preserved, and carefully transmitted to each generation of believers’.  

He adds that ‘one cannot move simply from the Bible to the chief doctrines of the Christian faith without passing through those critical stages of development that link the past and present together’.  

This is not to suggest that in the early church or in subsequent periods of church history one can find a singular or pure form of doctrine or understanding. Indeed, as earlier treatment of the marks of the church in this thesis proposes, there has been great diversity evidenced in the forming and developing of the doctrine surrounding the marks. Williams notes that ‘because doctrine has always grown out of the life of the churches, its continuity is never tidy; it is one of preservation but also of alteration, of fulfillment but also of correction’. Nevertheless, it should also be pointed out that the diversity seen in early Christianity is ‘not antithetical to positing a central axis of faithful self-awareness that functioned within the historical processes’ and therefore one should not discount the evidence found in that period as being of no value to the church today. Braaten concurs, suggesting that contemporary New Testament studies clearly witness that while there was ‘abundant pluralism’ in the early church, there also ‘existed from the beginning a concern that the diversity of beliefs, doctrines and practices did

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104 Ibid., 9.
105 Ibid., 29.
106 Ibid., 138.
107 Ibid., 30.
not threaten the basic unity’ of the believers who were ‘grounded in the truth of the gospel’.\textsuperscript{108}

Presented in a slightly different way, and drawing from the works of another author, Williams links doctrinal continuity to the image of a ‘ship’ that is ‘tied with a length of rope to an anchor’.\textsuperscript{109} He contends that while the ‘winds and waves of contemporary issues may set it moving in various directions that alter its course in beneficial and unfortunate ways’, the ‘adventurous ship’ can never stray further than the length of the rope to which it is attached.\textsuperscript{110} Beckwith points out that, as Christians, our ‘community is comprised of all believers, past and present’, and to ‘separate ourselves from such a community is to proceed with arrogance, to privilege particularity, and to undermine the catholicity of Christ’s church’.\textsuperscript{111}

Finally, there is also a component of trust or faith that must be called upon and employed in this process. Drawing from the work done in chapter 3 of this thesis, Barth would remind his readers that any one congregation does not exist in and of itself or for itself. Rather, it is part of the larger body of Christ, which is meant to follow and emulate its Lord and head. In this way, it can have confidence as it looks to its Lord and hears his voice.

Therefore appealing to the dynamic nature of the marks can inform the gift-task paradigm’s model of communication by reminding sojourners


\textsuperscript{109} Williams, \textit{Retrieving the Tradition}, 138. See also the text from which Williams draws: Richard P. C. Hanson, \textit{The Continuity of Christian Doctrine} (New York: Seabury, 1981), 83.

\textsuperscript{110} Williams, \textit{Retrieving the Tradition}, 139.

to look forward in faith and confidence. Concretely the gift-task paradigm as an analytical framework would ask questions to promote self-examination, rather than self-justification. These questions should be open-ended. Specifically, these questions should focus on whether the marks are held together in creative tension, are received as dynamic gift, and are practised as embodied task.

5.3.3: Practised as Embodied Task

The gift-task paradigm, despite its communicative framework, would suggest that engagement with the marks must go beyond dialogue to appropriate the marks as a ‘here and now’ visible reality. Even where agreement on the marks can be found in academic scholarship, and professed as unity in contemporary dialogue, this does not negate the need to demonstrate that the marks are being practised as embodied task. The framework of the gift-task paradigm, with its constitutive elements (communicative, analytical and theological), should bring churches to the point where they ask how the marks can be practised as embodied task and how can this be done collectively. Otherwise, potentially all that has resulted is that there has simply been dialogue with no follow-up action. The analytical component ‘practised as embodied task’ would entail the realisation that, for the church, the body of Christ is a good ecclesial embodiment that expresses the theological calling. The framework understands that living the marks as embodied task is a dynamic process that seeks to identify ways in which the marks are already being practised as embodied task and then determines how that might further be built upon. The ecumenical start to the twentieth century serves as a good example of a
viable attempt to practise the marks as embodied task, with its visible
demonstration of shared missional ministry and prayer among
interdenominational bodies.

Concretely then, practising the marks as embodied task could further
be identified in any interchurch involvement that includes shared ministry
and worship or in the shared concern of solidarity concerning social justice
issues (e.g. recent social justice attempts for better treatment of asylum
seekers in Australia).112 Other grassroots attempts to practise the marks as
embodied task include joint ventures between churches such as soup
kitchens, participation in interdenominational ministers fellowships, joint
mission ventures locally (joint ‘clean up the neighborhood’ projects, or
planting community gardens, or sharing breakfast clubs for schools) or
abroad (e.g. joint ventures conducted overseas).113 Broader attempts include
specific non-denominational events such as the National Day of Prayer and
Fasting114 or ‘Church Unite’.115 Essentially it is faith in action to bring about
greater good despite institutional differences.

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112 A contemporary example of this is the #LoveMakesAWay movement, which brings
together in solidarity and action Christians seeking an end to Australia’s inhumane
asylum seeker policies through prayer and nonviolent ‘love in action’ demonstrations
and sit-ins. For information on this movement, see
November 2014. This movement also has a website, but access to it can be gained only
by visiting the movement’s Facebook page and requesting access. More information on
this movement, however, can be accessed via various Australian newspaper articles (in
e.g. the Herald Sun, the West Australian) online or in print, and television (e.g. Today
Tonight, Channel 7) and radio (e.g. ABC) broadcasts online.

113 For more on this utilising specific examples from congregations in Melbourne,
Australia, see Marguerite Kappelhoff, ‘Do the Traditional Marks of the Church Inform
the Mission and Ministry of the Local Congregation?,’ BTh honours thesis, Charles Sturt
University and St Mark’s National Theological Training Centre, Canberra, Australia,
2011, 36–56.

114 ‘National Day of Prayer’ is an annual event held in many parts of the Western world
(e.g. Canada, USA, UK) and sometimes incorporates other Christian disciplines such as
fasting or worship. In Australia, it was to be (and in fact was) hosted on 15 February
2015 in various locations around Australia, including the capital city, Canberra;
Nevertheless, practising the marks as embodied task also includes addressing any outstanding issues that remain as a point of challenge (e.g. not sharing in communion or recognising each other’s ordinances). Within the gift-task paradigm these issues would not be avoided or neglected but rather would be considered and addressed in some form of ongoing dialogue as a potential goal to be reached. The marks practised as embodied task could also include any attempts to place one’s church or denomination in the midst of contemporary dialogue through joint conversations, and the promotion of regular teaching from the pulpit on the theological and historical value of the marks as indicative of the body of Christ.

Therefore, when churches do engage in dialogue attempts, shared ministry and prayer, joint mission ventures and self-examination, they are engaging in a dynamic communicative, analytical and theological process whereby understanding and integration can take place. Further to this, they are opening up to the possibility of engagement with the divine Source that will help to create, sustain and transform them beyond what they already are. Yet, even being open to the process is evidence of growth taking place. Therefore the ultimate commitment is to continue to organise individual and corporate lives so as to be committed to the process, allowing for the ‘creative event’ to take place where they can be open to hearing from God in a vertical process of communication and analysing. Wieman points towards God as the divine Source, and therefore theologically reminds churches to keep the vertical communication open by providing a communicative model that incorporates a process for it. Regarding the

115 ‘Church Unite’ is a specific event. It was held in Melbourne in October 2014. As part of its aim, organisers sought to unite Christians across Melbourne in prayer and worship; http://www.churchunite.com.au, accessed 15 November 2014.
marks of the church, Barth fills in Wieman’s ‘Source’ as being the triune God who will sustain the marks and ultimately the church.

The value of the marks in practice cannot be overstated. Apart from the immediate benefit of this practice of the marks to those involved in the process, it aids in the visible unity that can be seen, and thereby it helps other churches and those outside the ecclesial communities to identify a ‘lived theology’. This is important because emerging theology is often lived and expressed at the grassroots level before it makes it debut in academia. Chapman highlights a tension that exists between the churches and the academy in regard to ecumenical dialogue, noting that ‘the respective needs of the academy and the churches are reflected in their different theological methods and suppositions, which may cause a disjunction between inter-church dialogue and academic scholarship’.  

He suggests that when it comes to dialogue, there is a need to ‘strike a balance between theological rigour and accessibility to the non-specialist reader’. He further adds that what often takes place practically is that ‘ecumenical texts generally resort to describing agreement’ in terms that ‘may be sufficiently clear for everyday purposes but which lack the precision necessary to satisfy close scrutiny from the perspectives of philosophy and fundamental theology’.

While I would not disagree with Chapman on this point, I would add that if the marks of the church are practised as embodied task in a concrete way that produces viable fruitfulness, then the academic scholarship regarding the ‘written’ theology can ‘catch up’ at a later stage. Furthermore, if positive concrete examples are being evidenced then perhaps this is part

\[\text{\textsuperscript{116}}\text{Chapman, ‘Consensus and Difference’, 58.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{117}}\text{Ibid, 58–59.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{118}}\text{Ibid.}\]
of the mystery of the ‘gift’ of the marks being attributed to the church by its
divine Author. This is not to dismiss the need for theological method, but
simply to encourage the visible outworking of the marks. Regarding the
value of the theology on the marks, this is a discussion that is taken up in
the next section.

5.4: The Theological Element: Based in the Triune God

As was clearly identified earlier in this thesis, one of the tensions within the
contemporary church is that the marks have been relegated to an
institutional handling of them and have, as a result, lost their critical
theological functioning. Therefore it is imperative within the gift-task
paradigm to allow a theological understanding of the marks to maintain
prominence within the dialogue concerning them. This was another noted
limitation in the WCC document, Confessing the One Faith. In that
document, the council attempted to put forth a denominationally neutral
position, but it offered only ‘basic affirmations’ on the marks, and thereby
made only a weak appeal to the theological nature of the marks. Yet
appealing to a theological understanding of the marks appreciates that the
marks originate in God and are sustained from outside the church, thus
immediately establishing the marks as being above any institution or
denomination. Therefore to approach the marks with denominational ‘basic
affirmations’ is too limiting a position and robs them of their theological
function. The correct location is to conceive of the marks as ‘gift and task’.
This discussion has already warranted much of the content of chapters 3
and 4 of this thesis and does not require to be repeated here. However, it is
important to restate that a gift and task conception of the marks allows any
dialogue on the marks to be informed theologically and to thereby remind
interlocutors that their appropriation of the ‘gift’ of the marks can only ever
be a ‘task’ that is to be lived contextually in correspondence to the life of
Christ. Therefore any individual claim to possess the marks is simply a
claim to their contextual appropriation of their lived theology and does not
negate the lived theology of another church in another context. In this way, I
would argue that the WCC document did not go far enough in allowing the
marks themselves to inform the dialogue concerning them. This
consolidates gift and task in a theological grounding that needs to be
maintained, lest the marks be reduced to an institutional or denominational
handling of them. Appealing to chapter 3 of this thesis, and the case study
on Barth’s understanding of the marks, reveals that the marks are found first
and foremost within the nature and being of the triune God. This
understanding informs ecclesiology and its practices because it locates the
origin of the marks of the church outside the institution of the church and
further indicates something of how the marks are sustained. The
institutional church therefore can only respond in a corresponding manner to
the example it has been given regarding the marks. In this case it follows the
lead of its Lord Jesus, who does what he sees the Father in his loving action
doing, namely seeking and creating fellowship with humanity. The church,
therefore, empowered by the Holy Spirit, is required to imitate and represent
what it has been modelled and seeks to be ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’
as an imitation of the divine Godhead. In practice this means that any appeal
made to the marks on an institutional level must be measured against the
theological truth of the gospel. Any claims to bear the marks that do not
place the triune God at the centre, through which Christ is the head, and the
church is ‘His own earthly-historical form of existence’, the ‘provisional representation of the whole world of humanity justified in Him’, are not valid claims.\textsuperscript{119} Practically, this community is only ‘gathered and lets itself be gathered and gathers itself by the living Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit’\textsuperscript{120}. Further, this community can ‘attest in its own activity’ only through ‘His activity’, living as a community whose continual renewal comes through and from Jesus and the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{121} The church lives as his body, his community, his fellowship. Its claim to be ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ is founded in him who is in his nature ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’. This means that the marks are not only to be understood as residing in Jesus but any further ‘movement’ of them (i.e. moments of action, when they occur) on the part of the church will follow after Jesus’ own movement.

Within the gift-task paradigm, therefore, any dialogue that takes place concerning the marks needs to be informed by this theological grounding and kept at the forefront so that no individual church or denominational claims to the marks can have be seen as having priority.

\textbf{5.5: Concluding Discussion}

Attempts have been made to concretely and specifically outline a gift-task paradigm of the marks that is a communicative model of mutual understanding, offers analytical self-examination and locates the marks theologically instead of institutionally.

\textsuperscript{119} Barth, CD, vol. IV, bk. 1, §62, p. 643.  
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 651.  
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., 662.
Below, at the end of this discussion, I offer the gift-task paradigm in table 1 as a tool to encourage engagement with the marks. This table succinctly outlines the three key elements of the paradigm (communicative, analytical and theological), and their central ideas (ideals), which are to be held together in tension and balance. The value of any tool can be measured only by its ability to achieve the job it was intended for. Therefore in the next chapter I will utilise this tool to assess current academic literature that has engaged with the marks of the church. Specifically I will engage with the work of key authors from various traditions (Orthodox, Anglican, Reformed, and Pentecostal) who have written on the marks of the church. Using the gift-task paradigm as a tool, and drawing from the gift-task table, I will attempt to assess whether, how and where the paradigm can be beneficial to each of the surveyed theologian’s understanding of the marks. If this proves to be successful, the paradigm could be offered to the current and future church as a means of assessing any particular theology regarding the classical marks of the church.
Table 1. The gift-task paradigm, with its key elements, aims and ideals

| The Gift-Task Paradigm:  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Communicative, Analytical and Theological Tool</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communicative</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeks to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• engage in dialogue for ‘mutual’ understanding and critique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• teach and confess the marks of the church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• be open to God and to others for deeper expression of the marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Analytical</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses the marks for self-examination, not self-justification, and determines whether the marks are:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• held together in creative tension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• received as dynamic gift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• practised as embodied task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theological</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believes that the marks are:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• located, grounded and sustained within the being and nature of the triune God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• given to the <em>whole</em> church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• attributed to the church, because it corresponds to its head, through the power of the Spirit, to reflect God’s desire to ‘seek and create fellowship’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 6

Testing the ‘Gift-Task’ Paradigm

In chapter 4 of this thesis I outlined the value of the concept of ‘gift and task’ for engaging with the marks of the church. I also identified the necessary elements required to develop a ‘gift-task paradigm’ as communicative, analytical and theological. Regarding the communicative, I determined that the kind of communication that would best serve the paradigm would be that of ‘mutual understanding’, which focuses on the process of dialogue in order for the conversation to remain open to new contexts and deeper understandings. In developing the analytical and theological elements, I drew from the work done in chapter 2 (historical retrace of the marks) and chapter 3 (case study of Barth’s theological engagement with the marks) of this thesis. By drawing the three elements together into a communicative and analytical paradigm that reclaimed the marks theologically, the intention was to create a tool that could (1) generate a specific kind of dialogue; (2) encourage churches to enter into self-critique; and (3) remind churches to appeal to the theological nature of the marks. The purpose of such a move was to hold together within one framework the breadth of what it means to receive the marks as gift and task. In chapter 5, I presented a ‘gift-task paradigm’ by utilising actual examples from ecclesial praxis to indicate how the paradigm might function.

In this chapter, the goal is to test the gift-task paradigm. By ‘test’ I mean to determine whether the paradigm might be a constructive tool for the current and future church by applying it to contemporary academic
discourse on the marks. My hope is that this tool will enable higher quality interchurch dialogue, promote self-examination rather than self-justification, and inspire these efforts by grounding them theologically.

For this task I will engage with the following theologians: John D. Zizioulas (Orthodox),\(^1\) Rowan Williams (Anglican),\(^2\) Jürgen Moltmann (Reformed),\(^3\) and Amos Yong (Pentecostal).\(^4\) I have chosen to engage with only these four theologians as a ‘sampling’ of the variety that exists in denominational expression, bearing in mind the need to keep this thesis to a reasonable size, and I have chosen them as internationally well-regarded theologians who have made valuable contributions to the field, in order to see whether the paradigm might enable current theologians to assess whether their views are still comprehensive enough, and address the faults of the past.\(^5\)

With each theologian, I will provide a brief overview of their ecclesiology before offering a summary of their view on the marks from a key article or chapter of their work.\(^6\) I will then evaluate each theologian’s

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5 On this point I note that although exemplars of each denomination have been chosen, theological diversity within the denominations can and does exist. Thus it is not possible to find a lone voice that might speak for all within any given denomination.

6 This statement is true for each of the theologians sampled apart from John Zizioulas. In order to outline his theology on the marks I needed to access several documents. Regarding the other theologians surveyed, I was able to find a single work that outlined the theology of each one on the marks. Nevertheless, at times I will draw more broadly from each theologian’s works where appropriate in order to outline that theologian’s position on the marks more fully.
contribution according to the gift-task paradigm. In this exercise, I will be conducting a twofold test. First, I will be testing their theologies against the paradigm, and second, I will be testing the paradigm by assessing its illuminative qualities for a theologian’s view on the marks.

6.1: John Zizioulas: Orthodox

Zizioulas’s approach to the marks is embedded within an Orthodox understanding of the nature of the church. It is therefore necessary to outline his ecclesiology in order to comprehend more fully his treatment of the marks. There are at least three main overarching themes present in Zizioulas’s understanding of ecclesiology: (1) communion of the Trinity; (2) eschatology of the church; and (3) the centrality of the Eucharist.

Regarding the trinitarian communion that exists, Zizioulas writes that ‘the Church is the outcome of the Father’s will, a will he shares with the Son and the Holy Spirit, and which is realized through the economy in which each of the persons of God is engaged’.\(^7\) He further adds that ‘the Father initiates, and the Son and the Spirit execute the initiative of the Father in the economy’.\(^8\) For Zizioulas, to understand the nature of church is to grasp that ‘God reveals to us His existence as one of personal communion’.\(^9\) Therefore the church ‘as a communion reflects God’s being as communion’. Zizioulas further addresses the purpose of this communion as an ‘eschatological gift’ that ‘will be revealed fully in the Kingdom’.\(^10\)

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\(^7\) Zizioulas, *Lectures*, 132.
\(^8\) Ibid.
\(^9\) Zizioulas, ‘Church As Communion’, 8.
\(^10\) Ibid.
Regarding the eschatological nature of the church, Zizioulas states that ‘the Church receives its identity from that which is to come’ and in doing so ‘the Church is able to make the future present to the world now ... whenever the divine liturgy is performed’. In considering this particular context against the future hope, he clarifies that ‘to ask whether the true church is the historical or the eschatological Church is to fail to grasp that the eschaton is the reconciliation and integration of all history’. Further, that contained within the eschaton ‘is the summation and truth of all time and all kingdoms, and thus the eschaton is the truth of the world, of which the Church is a foretaste’. This ‘communion’ becomes fully present within the sacrament of the Eucharist and it is the Eucharist that gives ‘composition and the structure’ to the community. Zizioulas writes that ‘the nature of the eucharist points not in the direction of the priority of the local Church but in that of the simultaneity of both local and universal’. Furthermore, across time, ‘there is only one eucharist, which is always offered in the name of the “one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church”’. The identification of the church as the ‘Body of Christ’ signifies that ‘the eucharistic presuppositions of the Last Supper’ are ‘deeply connected with the eschatological unity of all in Christ’, thus finding fulfilment ‘in the prayer that “they all may be one” (John 17)’.

For Zizioulas, it is the interplay of these overarching themes that creates the church and therefore outlines his theology on the marks.

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11 Zizioulas, Lectures, 129.
12 Ibid., 153.
13 Ibid.
14 Zizioulas, Being in Communion, 149.
15 Ibid., 133.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid., 147.
Moreover, the marks themselves are seen as integrated within these themes. What follows is an attempt to summarise each mark from his overall ecclesiology.

In Zizioulas’s theology, ‘unity’ as a mark of the church is: (1) found in the ‘one God’;\(^{18}\) (2) identified as the ‘body of Christ’, of which Jesus is the head;\(^ {19}\) (3) understood as being expressed in ‘diversity’;\(^ {20}\) (4) linked to the concept of catholicity as seen in the ‘one and the many’ through communion;\(^ {21}\) (5) structurally evidenced locally through the bishop in the Eucharist;\(^ {22}\) (6) ‘safeguarded’ in the ministry of the episcopate (‘apostolic’);\(^ {23}\) and (7) experienced in the ‘here and now’ but will be ultimately brought about in the eschaton ‘by the Holy Spirit’.\(^ {24}\) This unity can be summed up concisely in the following quote:

Thus the Church is revealed to be in time what she is eschatologically, namely a catholic Church which stands in history as a transcendence of all divisions into the unity of all in Christ through the Holy Spirit to the glory of God the Father.\(^ {25}\)

In Zizioulas’s theology, ‘holiness’ as a mark of the church is understood to be found eschatologically in the eucharistic communion it shares as the body of Christ; thus the church is considered ‘holy’ even as it is ‘being made holy’.\(^ {26}\) Although ‘the Church is made of sinners’ who fully share in ‘the ontological and cosmic dimension of sin’, it can still be insisted ‘that the Church is in her essence holy and sinless’.\(^ {27}\) This is because ‘the Church

\(^{18}\) Ibid., 134–35.
\(^{19}\) Zizioulas, Lectures, 133.
\(^{21}\) Zizioulas, Being in Communion, 135–36.
\(^{22}\) Ibid., 153; Zizioulas, Lectures, 141.
\(^{23}\) Zizioulas, ‘Church As Communion’, 9–10.
\(^{24}\) Zizioulas, Being in Communion, 153; Zizioulas, Lectures, 126–27.
\(^{25}\) Zizioulas, Being in Communion, 169.
\(^{26}\) Ibid., 153; Zizioulas, Lectures, 118.
\(^{27}\) Zizioulas, ‘Communion and Otherness’, 11.
draws its holiness from Christ as much as it draws it’s being from him’.\(^{28}\) In this understanding, in the Eucharist, ‘there is no distance between Christ and his body in the Eucharist … the Church has no other identity than Christ’.\(^{29}\) It is in the Eucharist that ‘these offerings, along with those who offer them, are sanctified’ and ‘become holy’ as they ‘come to share in the relationship of Father and Son in the Spirit’.\(^{30}\) Orthodox theology understands this process to be visibly and concretely evidenced in the Eucharist:

> When the priest sings “Holy gifts for holy people’, the people respond with “One is Holy”, by which they mean that those who are going to participate in this holy communion are holy, or are to become holy, not because of their personal holiness but because of the holiness of Christ … In Christ we will be one with God, and holy as he is holy.\(^{31}\)

However, while Zizioulas’s concern for eucharistic holiness overshadows notions of personal holiness, he does concede that it is necessary to ‘find the proper balance between the Eucharist and the search for personal holiness, so that the holiness of individuals serves the whole gathered Church’.\(^{32}\) Nevertheless, he offers no direction on how this should be accomplished.

It is on the mark of ‘catholicity’ that Zizioulas offers his longest discussion. He sums up his conclusions on catholicity in five main points. First, the church is considered catholic because ‘she is the Body of Christ’ and ‘inseparably united’ with him and therefore constitutes ‘His very presence in history’, ensuring that ‘her catholicity depends not on herself but on Him’.\(^{33}\) Second, this catholicity is a ‘work of the Holy Spirit’ and cannot be produced as a task of the church, because ‘human attempts at

\(^{28}\) Zizioulas, *Lectures*, 151.
\(^{29}\) Ibid., 118–19.
\(^{30}\) Ibid.
\(^{31}\) Ibid., 117–18, italics in original.
\(^{32}\) Ibid., 125.
“togetherness”, “openness”, etc., cannot constitute the catholicity of the Church’. At best, ‘a catholic church in the world’ can be ‘cognizant’ of ‘Christ’s victory over Satan’, as it lives ‘in humility and service and above all in constant prayer and worship’. Third, ‘the catholicity of the Church is revealed in the eucharistic community’, thereby revealing that ‘the ultimate essence of catholicity lies in the transcendence of all divisions in Christ’. This is because ‘whenever the Spirit blows, he brings an end to individualism and elitism, and creates community’. Fourth, it is the role and function of the bishop as ‘head of the eucharist community’, and ‘accompanied by his presbyter’, who ‘represents the image of Christ surrounded by his Apostles’ and, in this way, ‘the community of the church lives and displays the Christ-centered relationship of God and the world’. Therefore, it is in the ‘role of bishop’, ‘meant for’ and ‘expressed in’ the community, that ‘all divisions’ can be ‘transcended’, because ‘his primary function is always to make the catholicity of the Church reveal itself in a certain place’. Fifth, linking catholicity with apostolicity, Zizioulas states that ‘there is no apostolic succession which does not go through a concrete community’. Here Zizioulas is suggesting that the development of the episcopate was not only for the ‘survival of orthodoxy’, but is also a means to maintain the ‘broader reality of the Church’s life as a community headed by the bishop’. The importance of this is that ‘although the catholicity of the Church is ultimately an eschatological reality, its nature is revealed and

34 Ibid., 160, 161.
36 Ibid., 162.
37 Zizioulas, Lectures, 12.
38 Ibid., 13.
39 Zizioulas, Being in Communion, 165, italics in original.
40 Ibid., italics in original.
41 Ibid., 167.
realistically apprehended *here and now* in the eucharist”; catholicity is evidenced through the importance placed on the role of the bishop.\(^{42}\)

In Zizioulas’s theology, ‘apostolicity’ as a mark of the church ‘is not constituted by the task of evangelization or mission, that is, by its desire to make its faith comprehensible to outsiders’.\(^{43}\) Rather, ‘apostolicity’ is a ‘matter of charismatic identification of the various communities in time’.\(^{44}\) Zizioulas explains that ‘the identification of the Church’s ministry with that of Christ is possible only if we let our *Christology* be *conditioned pneumatically*’.\(^{45}\) This happens when ‘we see the mystery of Christ as being *initiated* by the Father’, who ‘sends the Son in order to fulfill’ the ‘eternal design of the Holy Trinity to draw man and creation to participation in God’s very life’.\(^{46}\) The role of the Spirit in this process is ‘to constitute the Body of Christ *here and now* by realizing Christ’s ministry as the Church’s ministry’.\(^{47}\)

Regarding ‘apostolic succession’, Zizioulas states that it should not be viewed as ‘a chain of individual acts of ordination’ (e.g. from one bishop to the next).\(^{48}\) Rather it is in the ‘continuity of the Church’s historical life in its entirety as it was realized in each community’ that is being passed on.\(^{49}\) Its significance is that ‘each episcopal community reflects in itself not only the “whole Church” but also the *whole succession of the apostles*’, because each bishop is considered ‘to be successor not of a particular apostle but of all the

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\(^{42}\) Ibid., 145, italics in original.

\(^{43}\) Zizioulas, *Lectures*, 121.

\(^{44}\) Zizioulas, *Being in Communion*, 240.

\(^{45}\) Ibid., italics in original.

\(^{46}\) Ibid., 210-211, italics in original.

\(^{47}\) Ibid., 211, italics in original.

\(^{48}\) Ibid., 168, italics in original.

\(^{49}\) Ibid.
apostles’. He further adds that in this way the ‘importance of the ministry of episkopē becomes evident, and its proper understanding in the light of communion is crucial’. This is because ‘all diversity in the community must somehow pass through a ministry of unity, otherwise it risks running against unity’. This is the importance of the role and function of the bishop, who acts as the ‘one minister’ who is ‘part of the community’ and does ‘not stand above it as an authority in itself’. In this way, ‘all pyramidal notions of Church structure vanish in the ecclesiology of communion’, in which there is a ‘perichoresis of ministries’ experienced as a ‘ministry of unity’. Therefore, within the concept of ‘apostolicity’, Zizioulas envisages catholicity and unity taking place against the backdrop of an eschatological trinitarian communion. This is what gives structure and purpose to the church.

Zizioulas does allude to the marks being received as a dynamic gift and practised as an embodied task. He understands the marks to be held in creative tension in which each of the marks informs the other due to their dynamic and eschatological nature. Theologically, the marks are spoken of as being located within the triune God, in which each person of the Trinity is uplifted as having a significant involvement in the development of the church and in its forward movement towards the eschaton.

When the gift-task paradigm is applied to Zizioulas’s treatment on the marks, questions arise regarding ‘mutual understanding’, being ‘open’ to

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50 Ibid., italics in original.
51 Zizioulas, ‘Church As Communion’, 9–10; episkopē: episcopate.
52 Ibid., 10.
53 Ibid., 9–10. Zizioulas notes this in contrast to the episcopal structure of the Roman Catholic Church, in which the pope stands above. Rather, Zizioulas outlines his understanding of the Orthodox tradition within the concepts of conciliarity and communion. For more on his treatment of the institution, see Being in Communion, esp. 132–41.
54 Ibid., 9–10.
other churches, and the need for ‘self-examination’. Zizioulas works within a static structure in relation to the marks. This is evidenced in his understanding of the Eucharist as being able to be administered only by a bishop.\textsuperscript{55} As a result, there can be no opportunities for ‘shared communion’ and ultimately no opportunities for ‘unity’ between churches based on his understanding of the Eucharist.\textsuperscript{56} This means that ‘oneness’ can truly be experienced only within an Orthodox tradition and not with others. Further, while ‘unity’ is spoken of as a ‘unity in diversity’,\textsuperscript{57} this concept is again perceived within only an Orthodox tradition, because any ‘diversity’ displayed outside of that particular eucharistic understanding of communion is deemed invalid.\textsuperscript{58} In this way, by engaging with the paradigm, questions are raised whether Zizioulas’s scope for the marks is full enough and offers an adequate treatment. This provides the opportunity for more consideration to be given to Zizioulas’s treatment of the marks to the extent that he limits himself to his Orthodox perspective as the only valid expression; thus he limits himself in the task of expressing the fullness of the marks.

Regarding the analytical element of the paradigm, questions of ‘self-examination’ could be asked. Although Zizioulas does hold the marks

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\textsuperscript{55} Zizioulas writes: ‘But the main source of Orthodox ecclesiology is to be found in the eucharistic communion, headed by the bishop, who unites it in one body and lifts up its offerings to God … we must conclude that true ecclesiology is the one that relates to the structure of the eucharistic community which portrays the eschatological assembly that is called into being by Christ’. \textit{Lectures}, 131.

\textsuperscript{56} Offering and suggesting points for consideration within Zizioulas’s perspective of the marks is not a straightforward task because Orthodox ecclesial self-understanding and the church’s organisational structure are bound together with an eschatological and eucharistically centred notion of communion. Therefore in order for the Orthodox to consider suggestions on communication and self-examination requires in essence a deconstruction in some way of the very foundations on which their ecclesial identity is founded.

\textsuperscript{57} Zizioulas, ‘Church As Communion’, 9.

\textsuperscript{58} Zizioulas outlines unity as found within the Eucharist: ‘The Eucharist provides the Church with unity, for unity is what the Eucharist is … each place in which the Eucharist is celebrated, participates in the future unity of all time and place’. \textit{Lectures}, 141.
\end{flushright}
together in creative tension, questions arise in regard to treatment of them as dynamic and embodied task. Should an understanding of unity limit God to the confines of a single institution? ‘Dynamic gift’ implies a gift given to the whole church and one to which all churches are called to respond. Since God is relational and the Holy Spirit is dynamic, then God’s ‘seeking and creating fellowship’ is beyond any particular institutional or sacramental structure. The implied embodied task is to work from this bigger vision of the body of Christ than from that of one’s own institution.

A final point can be made under the analytical section. Perhaps it is Zizioulas’s preference for the eschatological notion of church that causes him to draw more fully from a gift understanding of the marks over the necessity of task. The gift-task paradigm as a tool illuminates the necessity to keep both gift and task in balance.

Therefore, using the gift-task paradigm, I would argue for Zizioulas’s theology to be more open to other churches, honouring the marks as a gift to the entire body of Christ. Further, holding in better balance the gift and the task would allow for a deeper expression of the marks to be sought for the betterment of all within the ecclesial landscape.

6.2: Rowan Williams: Anglican

For Williams, several themes feature in his ecclesiology and therefore influence his engagement with the marks. His ecclesiology: (1) bears a trinitarian focus, in which the ‘human community is rooted in the communal existence of Father, Son and Holy Spirit’;59 and (2) should be understood as

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one of global inclusion, because ‘the world we inhabit is the potential scope of the community that is created by relation to Jesus’, and it is in the world that the ‘power of Christ and the newness of the gospel always escapes across the frontiers of the Church and come back to challenge the Church from unexpected quarters’. It is in this global inclusion that the church grows together (in mutual responsibility and dependence) towards maturity and fullness in Christ.

Williams understands the church to be a community of diverse individuals who make up the larger body of Christ and who bear the responsibility of bringing their gifts to the common life. These gifts are to be shared in order to nourish and replenish the community. This giving and receiving of gifts and mutual working towards fullness and maturity is

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61 Rowan Williams, Tokens of Trust: An Introduction to Christian Belief (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2007), 129.

62 See also Williams, ‘One Church, One Hope’, for fuller treatment on this concept of the church growing in ‘maturity’, as it understands its ‘inescapable dependence on others and responsibility for them’. This theme is also presented in Tokens of Trust, specifically his fifth chapter, entitled ‘God in Company: And I Believe in One Catholic and Apostolic Church’, 105–33; see esp. 106–11, where Williams discusses the giving and releasing of ‘gifts’ one towards the other in the common life of this community. See also Williams, ‘Incarnation and Renewal’, where he links ‘maturity’ and ‘responsibility’ to that of the church’s apostolic mission.

63 Williams, Tokens of Trust, 106. Of diversity, Williams also writes: ‘Positively, it is the construction of communities in which diversity serves to nourish, not threaten, and in which behaviour is tested above all by what it contributes to the common life’. ‘Doing the Works’, 254.

64 Stated in ‘One Church, One Hope’ specifically as ‘what remains for Christ’s church is the work of mutual nourishment and mutual dependence’. Williams, ‘One Church, One Hope’, §2.
understood as the ‘close interweaving [of] the lifeblood of an entire community, extended without limit in time and space’.\textsuperscript{65} ‘Maturity’ is seen as ‘possessing some kind of steady identity’ that includes ‘having some awareness of what it is that each has to give into the common life of the community of believers’.\textsuperscript{66} Maturity also includes the ability to understand the call ‘into a more visible and robust exercise of responsibility for each other’ as believers form an ‘interwoven life of diverse communities offering their strength to each other’s weakness’.\textsuperscript{67} It is a ‘common life’ of mutual interdependence and one in which no one can reach maturity ‘in isolation’.\textsuperscript{68} Instead, the ‘slogan of the Church’s life is “not without the other”; no I without a you, no I without a we’, because the church can grow together only as God’s unique gift of living with the other.\textsuperscript{69}

It is within these combined themes of the trinitarian communion of giving and of the global responsibility of inclusion that the church exists for ‘the sake of each other and for the world’.\textsuperscript{70} Williams envisages the church as a ‘prophetic mould’ because it ‘claims to show the human world as such what is possible for it in relation to God’.\textsuperscript{71} This is accomplished by:

witnessing to the possibility of a common life sustained by God’s creative breaking of existing frontiers and showing that creative authority in the patterns of relation already described, the building up of Christ-like persons. The Church’s good news is that human community is possible; the Church’s challenge is in its insistence that this possibility is realized only in that giving away of power in order to nurture authority in others that

\textsuperscript{65} Williams, \textit{Tokens of Trust}, 110.
\textsuperscript{66} Williams, ‘One Church, One Hope’, §1.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., §2.
\textsuperscript{68} Williams, \textit{Tokens of Trust}, 106ff. William identifies isolation in direct contrast to ‘communion’ when he writes: ‘What the life of God constantly works against is the state of mutual isolation in which human beings habitually live’. ‘Doing the Works’, 256.
\textsuperscript{69} Williams, \textit{Tokens of Trust}, 106.
\textsuperscript{70} Williams, ‘One Church, One Hope’, §1.
\textsuperscript{71} Williams, ‘Incarnation and Renewal’, 238, 233.
is learned in the giving away of God in Jesus, and its further insistence that the relations constituting Christ’s Body neither compete with nor vindicate others, but simply stand in their own right as the context which relativizes all others.  

While the church’s existence as a ‘distinct institution is provisional, existing until the natural order of human society has been fully penetrated by the saving presence of God’, as a prophetic mould it is:

authorized to ask of any human association … whether it is making it more or less difficult for people to grow into a maturity in which they are free to give to one another and nourish one another, free enough to know that they have the capacity to be involved in re-creating persons.

Williams concludes that ‘the Church, in other words, proclaims and struggles to realize a “belonging together” of persons in community in virtue of nothing but a shared belonging with or to the risen Jesus’.

Another theme that runs through Williams’s ecclesiology that warrants comment is that of ‘repentance’. In regard to this, Williams writes that:

a Christian community doing its job is a community where people expect to be repenting quite a lot, and where the confident calling of others to repentance … [reveals] … a community of people who are daily aware of their own untruthfulness and lack of love and are not afraid to face their failure, is a community that speaks profoundly of hope … in its willingness to point to God; and repentance, which says that you don’t have to be paralysed by failure, [and] is thus one of the most effective signs of the Church’s appeal to something more than human competence and resource. Perhaps we should add a fifth mark to the church to the four in the Creed – a Church that is one, holy, catholic, apostolic and repentant.

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72 Ibid., 233.
73 Ibid., 225.
74 Ibid., 236.
75 Ibid., 231.
76 Williams, Tokens of Trust, 151–52. In his Resurrection: Interpreting the Easter Gospel (1982; London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2002), he writes that ‘the Church … if it is to be itself, it has no option but to live in penitence, in critical self-awareness
In another document, Williams links the church’s mission to repentance, and states:

The first image to be shattered is that of the “successful” Church: as we recognize in ourselves the impulse that belongs to God, the yearning of Christ’s Spirit in us … we recognize the barriers we have not yet crossed. To see lives left systematically untouched by the general policy of the Church is certainly to be brought to penitence."  

I have included this theme of repentance as a separate discussion for two reasons: (1) Williams makes a direct link between repentance and the four marks, even raising its profile so that it may be considered a possible fifth mark; and (2) although he so raises repentance in one of his works, he does not do so in the main work that will be considered for the purposes of this chapter. Nevertheless, the significance of repentance for his ecclesiology could not be ignored.

In order to outline Williams’ treatment on the marks succinctly and for the purposes of this chapter I will draw primarily from one document in which Williams identifies and engages specifically and fully with the four marks of the church. This material on the marks is located in the ‘Archbishop's Address to the Third Anglican Global South to South Encounter’ in Egypt in 2005, when Rowan Williams was the Archbishop of

and acknowledgment of failure. It must recognize constantly its failing as a community to be a community of gift and mutuality, and warn itself of the possibility of failure’ (48–49).

77 Williams, ‘Doing the Works’, 262.

78 I will not speculate here as to why Williams does not mention ‘repentance’ at his 2005 address on the marks. Suffice to say, and as can be seen in the brief sampling of Williams’s writings presented in this section, ‘repentance’ as a required and necessary action for the church was already a matter he considered in 1982 (Resurrection) and it remains for Williams a necessary component of church understanding up until 2007 (Tokens of Trust). Further research and study on Williams’s developed idea of including ‘repentance’ as a ‘fifth’ mark could be addressed in the scope and focus of another research project, but it will not be engaged with here. This thesis is content to focus on the classical four marks of the church.

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Canterbury.\textsuperscript{79} This document was chosen for its obvious relevance to the topic at hand, yet in order to substantiate this document I will also draw from other writings of Williams where he engages with the marks, and include any additional comments where needed. I found no discrepancy in those documents on the marks to his treatment of the marks being presented here in the main offering.\textsuperscript{80}

Williams begins his treatment on the marks of the church by locating them within Jesus, determining that:

The church is one because Jesus Christ is one; the church is holy because Jesus Christ is holy; the church is catholic because Jesus Christ is the saviour of all; the church is apostolic because, as the Father has sent Jesus, so Jesus sends us.\textsuperscript{81}

Furthermore, the marks are not ‘characteristics that we possess in our own right, or even goals that we can plan for’, because, in considering them, ‘we must think about Jesus Christ’, for ‘if we are to understand the nature of the church at all, we are to understand who Jesus Christ is and what he does’.\textsuperscript{82}

Williams then links the marks to the biblical text of John 17:17–21, determining that it is in this passage that ‘the whole nature of the church is

\textsuperscript{79} On the event, the Anglican Communion News Service reported that in attendance were ‘103 delegates of 20 provinces in the Global South (comprising Africa, South and South East Asia, West Indies and South America), representing approximately two-thirds of the Anglican Communion’ who had met to discuss the theme of the ‘One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church: Being a Faithful Church for Such a Time as This’. http://www.anglicannews.org/news/2005/10/the-third-anglican-global-south-to-south-encounter.aspx, accessed 14 November 2014.

\textsuperscript{80} Other works by Williams that have been considered and can be seen to offer treatment on the marks include: (1) Tokens of Trust, in which Williams engages with all four of the marks, although this is limited to only a few sentences on each; (2) ‘Incarnation and Renewal’, in which Williams variably draws upon the themes of unity, catholicity and apostolicity within the larger goal of the article, which is to discuss the ‘Incarnation and its social consequences’ (227); (3) ‘Doing the Works’, in which Williams discusses unity and apostolicity in reference to ‘spirituality’ and ‘mission’. Briefly towards the end of the chapter he discusses holiness as it relates to his overall theme and purpose for the chapter.

\textsuperscript{81} Williams, ‘One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church’.

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.
expressed’ and that within these verses ‘lies the foundation charter of the
one holy catholic and apostolic church’. 83

Sanctify them through thy truth: Thy word is truth. As thou didst
send me into the world, so have I also sent them into the world.
And for their sake, I consecrate myself so that they also may be
consecrated in truth. I do not pray these only, but for those who
believe in me through their word; that they all may be one; even
as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be in
us: so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. 84

Although not explicitly stated here, regarding ‘unity’ Williams outlines a
trinitarian concept. 85 He notes that this unity of being ‘in Christ’ is
evidenced in the most ‘basic place’ when Christians stand together and say
‘Our Father’. 86 He adds that the ‘oneness of the church is about how the
church is the community of those who are led to the one place at the
Father’s heart where he can be known, where he can be seen’. 87 Continuing,
Williams identifies that this unity is ‘given in baptism’ and ‘expressed in the
Holy Communion’ and allows believers to ‘pray the prayer of Jesus’ by
‘standing where he stands, by the Holy Spirit, alive with his life’. 88 In this
way, by including all three persons of the Godhead, Williams identifies the
church’s ‘unity’ to be trinitarian in nature. He adds that this unity is ‘more
basic’ than any external structures such as ‘universal Episcopal order’, ‘the
creed’, ‘the instruments of unity of the Anglican Communion’, and even
‘Holy Scripture’. 89 He suggests therefore that unity is a ‘gift’ that should be
remembered: ‘over and beyond all our anxieties about our structures …

83 Ibid.
84 Ibid., quoting John 17:17–21.
85 In ‘Doing the Works’, Williams links unity with mission (i.e. ‘apostolic’), stating that
‘if we want to speak adequately of mission, we have to speak of the trinity, of God’s
life as communion’ (257).
86 Williams, ‘One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church’.
87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
about our ministerial order … about visible unity, we should not forget the gift of the Spirit in the one Lord’.  

Williams determines that this unity positions the church to consider and ‘to invite a number of questions and challenges’ concerning unity that can at times ‘complicate’ ecclesial unity. He determines that ‘if our unity is about standing in the one Christ, then it’s quite clear that those who seek to stand in another place are automatically breaking that unity’.  

Quoting from two scriptural passages, he explicates the meaning and determines that ‘unity’ is broken by ‘those who preach another gospel’, and by ‘he who denies the Father and the Son’ and ‘denies that Jesus is the Christ’.  

Having firmly placed unity in Jesus Christ, Williams then links this to the question of church ‘structural unity’, suggesting that any structure that is ‘depending on something other than Jesus Christ’ is not compatible with true unity, because true unity is found in Jesus. Thus, he determines that to ‘speak of the way in which our church is organised, the demands [and] the requirements of visible and structural unity, our question is as we examine them and sometimes as we seek to reform them, “do they or don’t they serve that kind of unity[?]”’. Drawing specifically from the Anglican context (e.g. ‘whether it is the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Anglican Consultative Council, the Primates, or the Lambeth Conference’), he adds

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90  Ibid.  
91  Ibid.  
92  Here Williams refers to Gal 1:8 and to Gal 3:1–3.  
93  Here Williams refers to 1 John 2:22.  
94  As stated on the council’s website: ‘The role of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) is to facilitate the co-operative work of the churches of the Anglican Communion, exchange information between the Provinces and churches, and help to co-ordinate common action. It advises on the organisation and structures of the Communion, and seeks to develop common policies with respect to the world mission of the Church, including ecumenical matters’, http://www.anglicancommunion.org/structures/instruments-of-communion/acc.aspx, accessed 21 March 2015.
that regarding ‘the instruments of Unity of the Anglican Communion’, he would prefer them to be spoken of as ‘servants of Unity in the Anglican Communion’. 95 He cites that ‘whatever the instruments of unity are’, they are not ‘in any sense conditions to be met for Christian faithfulness’, because, as ‘human institutions’, they ‘seek [only] to serve the unity of Christ’s body’. 96 Therefore they should be placed ‘under the rubric of St Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 3: “it is not ourselves that we preach, but Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus’ sake”’. 97

Considering unity in the larger body of Christ (or the universal church), he states that, despite ‘disjunctions and separations’, ‘when one part of the body suffers, all suffer’ and therefore ‘we must remember in our prayer, this is our suffering; this is our loss, we are together in sin as well as in grace’. 98 He determines that this ‘task’ of unity proves challenging as we identify with and ‘remain in loving and prayerful fellowship with those who are our fellow sinners’. 99

Just as with the church’s unity, Williams finds that the holiness of the church is to be found in Christ, when he states: ‘Perhaps this is most clearly the note of the church where we are aware that it is Christ not ourselves we are talking about’. 100 He further links this understanding of holiness with a dynamic element when he draws again from John 17:19 – ‘for their sake, I am making myself holy, so that they may be made holy in truth’ – and therefore understands that the church is ‘becoming holy’. 101 He does not

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95 Williams, ‘One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church’.
96 Ibid.
97 Ibid.
98 Drawing from 1 Cor 12. Williams, ‘One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church’.
99 Williams, ‘One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church’.
100 Ibid.
101 Ibid.
dismiss the ‘tension’ that exists between being the people of God that have ‘been made holy by Christ Jesus’ and that are yet still ‘called to be holy’. Instead, he notes that the ‘holiness of the church is something a great deal more than being “good” or “virtuous”; it is being in the place where God through Christ makes peace between earth and heaven’. Identifying a ‘task’ element within the conception of the church’s holiness, Williams states that this ‘means that our holiness takes us where Jesus goes; our holiness takes us to those Jesus died for; it takes us into the neighbourhood of those who are forgotten, who have no voice; those who need healing and forgiveness’. A ‘holy’ church therefore would be a church that ‘goes with its proclamation and integrity and its fidelity, among those who need healing’; or one that ‘stands alongside those who live with the scourge of HIV aids [sic]’; or one ‘that labours … alongside those who have been made homeless or bereaved by natural disaster’; or a church ‘which will go into the heart of the city and sit with the homeless and the addicts and the destitute’. Williams determines that ‘holiness is being under the cross’ and ‘letting the cross live in us’ by ‘being where the crucified Christ is, among his suffering people and a suffering world’. Drawing from Williams’s discussion in ‘Doing the Works of God’, and by linking ‘holiness’ with ‘mission’, he concludes that:

holiness is – the radically other directed life of God lived in finite and vulnerable subjects … If God’s action is single and coherent, there must be a coherence to the shape of Christian holiness, a coherence we can look for in the pattern of Christ’s action and passion. If mission can’t be understood apart from

102 Ibid.
103 Ibid.
104 Ibid.
105 Ibid.
106 Ibid.
holiness, the search for holiness and the disciplines of the spirit can themselves only make sense in the context of mission – God’s mission, God’s sharing of the communion that is the divine life.  

Williams begins his treatment on the catholicity of the church by identifying that the word is often ‘misunderstood’ and clarifies that ‘catholicity’ is not limited to meaning ‘universal’, but also that it means ‘whole’.  

This means that catholicity brings wholeness not just for the individual person, but for the entire church. He explains that ‘the whole human person is touched, healed, and transfigured by the Gospel and the catholic church is the church which is able to address every level of human being; heart, mind, and body’.  

The church’s role as catholic, then, is to engage with individuals in order to ‘nourish’ and ‘purify’ the ‘life of the mind’ within individuals through ‘disciplines’, thus ‘sanctifying’ them until ‘every level’ of the ‘whole person is transfigured’.  

According to Williams, while catholic does mean ‘whole’, it must also be applied contextually. Referring to contextuality as the ‘necessary element’, he states that there must be a ‘constant search for a language and a style of worship which are authentic’ in any given place.  

This cannot be ‘something borrowed from another culture, not a second-hand suit of clothes from somewhere else or second-hand words, but the Gospel coming alive in this place, for this culture, in this language’. He determines that the church has at times ‘lent itself to error’, if not ‘sin’, in its attempts to make ‘cultural captives’ through ‘mass export’ of liturgical documents and

\[ ^{107} \] Williams, ‘Doing the Works’, 265.  
\[ ^{108} \] Williams, ‘One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church’.  
\[ ^{109} \] Ibid.  
\[ ^{110} \] Ibid.  
\[ ^{111} \] Ibid.  
\[ ^{112} \] Ibid.
through refusing to take seriously the challenges of contextual mission. He suggests that various churches in their contexts be encouraged to ‘write their liturgies, their prayers, in their own language’ and for their own circumstances.

Williams is in essence making an appeal to a ‘unity in diversity’ within a dynamic element when he suggests that ‘a catholic church is not a church that seeks a uniform global culture’, because ‘the unity of the church is not cultural; it is in Christ – one Lord, one faith, one baptism – and any number of languages and costumes’. It is ‘not simply opening the same fast-food shop in every village on the globe’ and it is ‘not like the global economy, in which people are drawn into somebody’s story and somebody’s interests which in fact makes others poor and excluded’. Instead, ‘catholic’ is the ‘opposite of the globalised because [being] catholic is about everyone’s welfare, everyone’s growth and justice’. What the ‘catholic church honours in its fullness’ is the ‘Christ-touched dignity of every person and every culture’ – ‘that is why the catholic church protests about a globalised system that works in the interests of a minority, whether in the church or in the world’.

In his treatment on ‘apostolicity’, Williams determines that it first and foremost refers to ‘sending’, as evidenced in the sending of Jesus and then in the sending of the apostles on Jesus’ mission: drawing again from the scriptural reference of John 17, Williams states that ‘we ought not to lose sight of the fact that the language of “sending”, the apostolic language of

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113 Ibid.
114 Ibid.
115 Ibid.
116 Ibid.
117 Ibid.
118 Ibid.
scripture, is first of all about God’s mission in Jesus, or indeed we could say God’s mission as Jesus’. Identifying the interrelatedness of the marks with the person of Christ, Williams reiterates that the ‘church is one in Jesus and holy in Jesus; the church is catholic in Jesus and it is sent in mission in Jesus’ and it is ‘because of Jesus Christ we are the bearers of that news to the ends of the earth’.120

Williams outlines the ‘apostolic role of the bishop’ as being one of both missionary and evangelist, stating that while the ‘bishop is the guardian of what has been delivered’, it is a ‘gift that demands to be given and shared’. Williams determines that the church’s ‘apostolic mission’ is a ‘mission in spirit and power … that leads to transformation’, in which the ‘apostolic church … exists and renews itself day after day in the power of the resurrection’.122

Williams further outlines that the church is evidenced as ‘apostolic’ ‘when it gathers to praise the risen Lord’ and then through that ‘gift’ that is ‘now in our hands, our mouths, [and] our voices to share with the world’.123 This ‘apostolic gift … comes alive in the transfiguring of the lives we touch by God’s gift, by God’s grace’.124

Williams makes an additional note about apostolicity by outlining its dynamic and eschatological nature. Linking unity with apostolicity, he states that ‘just as the unity of the church is a solidarity sometimes in sin and struggle, so the apostolicity of the church must be seen in that light of

119 Ibid.
120 Ibid. Williams makes the same link between catholicity and apostolicity in ‘Incarnation and Renewal’, when he refers to the ‘universal scope of Christian mission’ being found as a ‘pattern of the Body’. ‘Incarnation and Renewal’, 236.
121 Williams, ‘One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church’.
122 Ibid.
123 Ibid.
124 Ibid.
failure, repentance, restoration’. He determines that an ‘apostolic church … continues the labour and witness of the apostles’ as one that is ‘always engaged in repentance, always open to renewal, always trusting the one Lord for his faithfulness, always depending on him for its future’.

Finishing his dialogue on the marks of the church where he started, Williams concludes that the church ‘finds its unity, its holiness, its catholicity, almost by accident; not by human planning, but by faithfulness to Jesus.

In evaluating William’s treatment on the marks, overall he is comprehensive in the key areas of the communicative, analytical and theological elements. In terms of the communicative, he is ‘teaching and confessing’ the marks in an ‘open’ and inclusive manner, through which he makes a theological appeal for the marks to be understood as ‘grounded’ in the ‘Triune God’, expressed in local praxis, and accepted universally by the larger body of Christ. His approach is ecumenical; sticking points of episcopal structure are overshadowed by the ‘gift’ of unity that is found in the triune God.

In applying the gift-task paradigm to his treatment on the marks, I note the following. Positively speaking, Williams offers his theology on the marks for mutual understanding and critique. The manner in which he offers his views is open and invites response. In his appeal for the church to be one, his theology of the marks transcends even his own denomination. Again, in regard to the communicative, he teaches and confesses the marks, and his openness serves this purpose of seeking to understand them more deeply.

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125 Ibid.
126 Ibid.
127 Ibid.
Williams engages in the marks in terms of self-examination. Within his treatment, the marks are not used as a form of self-justification, but rather are engaged with as a challenge to the contemporary church for better practice. In this way, Williams does accept the marks as gift and task. However, while his emphasis on social justice and mission is to be commended, it does raise the question of his preference for task and whether he sufficiently acknowledges and teaches the gift of the marks.

A further question about Williams’s understanding is whether his view on the task is broad enough. In developing this paradigm, it was noted that ‘apostolic’ is ‘sending’, and while that includes social justice, it also includes bringing into fellowship with the triune God and with other believers those who are ‘far off’. It involves therefore the requirement of being ‘sent’ to ‘make disciples’, to ‘baptize’ in the name of the triune God and to ‘teach them to obey’ all they were commanded by Jesus as they learn to live in this new community.\footnote{Matt 28:19–20.}

Theologically speaking, Williams’s trinitarian framework does locate and ground the marks within the triune God, though his emphasis is christological rather than pneumatological (as an interesting contrast to Zizioulas and, as will be seen, to Yong). Williams strongly believes in the marks being ascribed to the whole church as the body of Christ.

\subsection*{6.3: Jürgen Moltmann: Reformed}

Succinctly stated, Moltmann is a Reformed theologian who characteristically downplays the episcopate and sacraments, while emphasising Word and Scripture, and the work of the church in the world

In this work, he presents a fourfold outline, stating that the church today is ‘the church of Jesus’ and is understood as ‘missionary’, ‘ecumenical’ and ‘political’. Incorporated within these four dimensions, he unearths further theological emphases relating to the concepts of the Trinity, eschatology and pneumatology.

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129 Various theologians consider the work undertaken by Moltmann in this book to be his main ecclesiological contribution. See e.g. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical, and Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2002), 126; Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 3; M. Douglas Meeks, ‘Moltmann’s Contribution to Practical Theology’, in *Hope for the Church*, by Jürgen Moltmann, ed. and trans. Theodore Runyon (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), 57–74, esp. 63–64, where Meeks outlines the sense of a building doctrine within Moltmann’s trilogy of *Theology of Hope*, *The Crucified God* and *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*. Bauckham adds that while ecclesiology has always been integral to Moltmann’s theological project, the works he wrote prior to *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* act as forerunners to the comprehensive and collective ecclesiology that Moltmann presents in it. Bauckham, *Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 121. Therefore, for the purposes of briefly outlining Moltmann’s ecclesiology I will draw predominantly on *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, noting additional Moltmann works for particular topics as they arise.

130 Moltmann, *Church in Power of the Spirit*, 1–18. Moltmann states that ‘all the different chapters of a doctrine of the church today will take account of at least these four dimensions of the church’. Ibid., 18.

131 For more on the Trinity, see Moltmann’s *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (London: SCM, 1974), in which he argues for a complementary approach to the Persons of the Trinity (esp. on 235–78). This concern becomes more specific in *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, where Moltmann seeks to overcome the subordination of the pneumatological to the christological (see 50–65).

132 For more on this topic, see Moltmann’s *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology*, trans. James W. Leitch (London: SCM, 2002), in which he describes eschatology as the ‘doctrine of the Christian hope’ and not simply an element of Christianity but the ‘key in which everything is set’ (2). Moltmann states: ‘From first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present’ (2).

133 Noteworthy to mention regarding Moltmann’s ecclesiology is his growing concern for the ecological crisis present within the world and his desire for the ‘transformation of the church from a religious institution that looks after people, into a congregational or community church in the midst of the people, through the people and with the people’. *Church in Power of the Spirit*, xiii.
The ‘church of Jesus’ is, quite simply, ‘fundamentally dependent on him, and on him alone’.\textsuperscript{134} It is the ‘lordship of Christ’ that is the ‘church’s sole, and hence all-embracing, determining factor’.\textsuperscript{135} Therefore, ‘every statement about the church will be a statement about Christ. Every statement about Christ also implies a statement about the church’.\textsuperscript{136} Yet, conversely, every ‘statement about Christ is not exhausted by the statement about the church because it also goes further, being directed toward the messianic kingdom which the church serves’.\textsuperscript{137} In this way, the themes of eschatology, christology, missiology and ecclesiology are drawn together and revealed. Moltmann writes:

In light of the eschatological person of Christ, the church does not live from the past; it exists as a factor of present liberation, between remembrance of his history and hope of his kingdom.\textsuperscript{138}

Hence, the ‘community of the cross’ becomes the ‘fellowship of the kingdom’.\textsuperscript{139} Yet this ‘messianic fellowship’ is a ‘provisional’ reality as it waits in ‘anticipation’ for the fulfilment of the kingdom of God, where ‘God’s rule is undisputed and universal’.\textsuperscript{140} Moltmann places the church in a trinitarian framework that includes its participation in Christ’s mission as empowered by the Holy Spirit to usher in the coming kingdom of God. Although the current church lives in the reality ‘of “not yet”’ … it also

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., xviii. See also Moltmann, \textit{Crucified God}, chaps. 3–5; Moltmann, \textit{Theology of Hope}, chap. 3.
\textsuperscript{135} Moltmann, \textit{Church in Power of the Spirit}, 5.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., 6.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., 75.
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid., 189–96.
stands under the sign of “no longer” and therefore under the sign of “already”. Moltmann writes:

The church in the power of the Spirit is not yet the kingdom of God, but it is its anticipation in history. Christianity is not yet the new creation, but it is the working of the Spirit of the new creation. Christianity is not yet the new mankind but it is its vanguard … the provisional nature of its messianic character forces the church to self-transcendence over its social and historical limitations. Its historical finality gives it certainty in still uncertain history.

In this dynamic way the church is to be understood as the ‘missionary church’. Moltmann further explains that the theological interpretation of the ‘missionary church’ is ‘not that the church “has” a mission, but the very reverse: that the mission of Christ creates its own church’. This is because the messianic community is also a ‘community in the process of the Holy Spirit’, in which:

The Spirit calls them into life; the Spirit gives the community the authority for its mission; the Spirit makes its living powers and the ministries that spring from them effective; the Spirit unites, orders and preserves it. It therefore sees itself and its powers and tasks as deriving from and existing in the eschatological history of the Spirit.

This mission is to be understood within its ‘world-wide mission in the trinitarian history of God’s dealings with the world’ in which the ‘real point is not to spread the church but to spread the kingdom’. Drawing in a political theme, Moltmann additionally identifies that ‘mission embraces all activities that serve to liberate man from his slavery in the presence of the

141 Ibid., 193.
142 Ibid., 75.
143 For more on this topic, see Moltmann’s work in Theology of Hope, esp. chap. 5, entitled ‘Exodus Church’, 288–322.
144 Moltmann, Church in Power of the Spirit, 10.
145 Ibid., 291ff.
146 Ibid., 294–95.
147 Ibid., 11.
coming God, slavery which extends from economic necessity to Godforsakenness’.\(^{148}\)

In discussing the ‘ecumenical church’, Moltmann suggests that ‘in the ecumenical context Christianity loses is provincial character’ and ‘parochial barriers’ as it ‘sees itself as being a member of the one church of Christ’ and as it exists in relationships with others (i.e. ‘relational ecclesiology’).\(^{149}\) The need in ecclesiology is to respond to ‘Christ’s plea “that they may all be one” (John 17:21)’ and to ‘find a theology of co-operation founded on common ground’, in which they are ‘drawn together into Christ’s messianic mission and are becoming the church of the coming kingdom of God … the eschatological hope’.\(^{150}\) Pulling in a liberation theology theme, Moltmann determines that:

> the church with its mission would be present where Christ awaits it, amid the downtrodden, the sick and the captives … For then the question is not how people or happenings outside the church respond to the church, but how the church responds to the presence of Christ in those who are ‘outside’, hungry, thirsty, sick, naked and imprisoned. It is not a question of the integration of Christians outside the church into Christianity in its ecclesiastical form; it is a matter of the church’s integration in Christ’s promised presence.\(^{151}\)

It is in this way that the ‘ecumenical concept of the church leads to an inclusive interpretation of the one church of Christ which will become a critical and liberating force in the hope of the coming kingdom of God’.\(^{152}\)

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\(^{148}\) Ibid., 10. For more on Moltmann’s concept of ‘Godforsakenness’, see Crucified God, in which ‘Godforsakenness’ is identified as referring to one who is utterly abandoned by God, or, in Jesus’ case of the cross, where it is a conflict between Father and Son, more specifically between ‘God and God’ (151–52).


\(^{151}\) Ibid., 129.

\(^{152}\) Ibid., 15.
Much has already been said with regard to the ‘political church’ in developing the three previously outlined points concerning the ‘church of Jesus’, ‘missionary’, ‘ecumenical’. Nevertheless, Moltmann summarises his ecclesiology on this, ‘political’, point by stating that, for ‘churches under the cross’, acknowledging ‘the sole lordship of Christ plunges the church into political conflict’, because a ‘logical and consistent Christian discipleship always has logical political consequences’. He determines that a ‘missionary church cannot be apolitical’, especially if ‘all the congregation’s activities are part of the service of the messianic mission’, because ‘witness to salvation belongs in all [of] life’s dimensions’. Thus, ‘the expression “political church” … does not mean a politicizing of the church’; instead, it ‘means a Christianization of the church’s politics according to the “yardstick and plumbline of Christ”’. Further to this, ‘against the world horizons’, the existence of the church as ‘political’ ensures that part of its ‘critical liberating task’ is to ‘fight against exploitation and oppression’.

Summing up matters so far, Moltmann presents his messianic ecclesiology within a fourfold outline (‘church of Jesus’, ‘missionary’, ‘ecumenical’, ‘political’). It is in relation to this that his perspective on the

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154 Moltmann, Church in Power of the Spirit, 15.

155 Ibid.

156 Ibid.

157 Ibid., 15, 16.
marks can now be engaged. To do this, I will draw from the chapter in Moltmann’s comprehensive ecclesial work, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, in which he focuses specifically on the marks of the church.\(^{158}\)

Moltmann begins his treatment of the marks by stating that, in discussing them, they are to be understood as ‘statements’ of ‘faith’, ‘hope’ and ‘action’. Regarding the marks being ‘statements made in faith’, he says that this refers to the ‘characteristics of Christ’s activity’.\(^{159}\) Therefore recognising the church as ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ is an ‘acknowledgment of the uniting, sanctifying, comprehensive and commissioning lordship of Christ’.\(^{160}\) In regard to the unity and holiness of the church as statements of faith, these are to be found ‘in Christ’, who ‘acts upon’ its members.\(^{161}\) Likewise, as a statement of faith, catholicity refers to the ‘limitless lordship of Christ’, where ‘Christ rules’ and where the church can be ‘found’.\(^{162}\) As a statement of faith, the church’s ‘apostolic character’ is ‘to be understood in the framework of the mission of Christ and the Spirit’.\(^{163}\)

The church experiences the marks as ‘statements of hope’ in the eschatological sense in which it looks forward to the time when the Messiah will ‘gather those who have been dispersed’, and unite them as ‘new people’ in the ‘one kingdom’, when they ‘become the new creation in Christ’ (‘holiness’), as the apostolate is brought together from ‘the beginning of the

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\(^{158}\) Ibid., 337–61.
\(^{159}\) Ibid., 338.
\(^{160}\) Ibid.
\(^{161}\) Ibid.
\(^{162}\) Ibid.
\(^{163}\) Ibid.
messianic era’ to the ‘community of the last days’, in which it will ‘partake’ of ‘the catholicity of the coming kingdom’.\textsuperscript{164}

These statements of ‘faith’ and ‘hope’ should ‘also lead to statements of action’, because, ‘in Christ’, the church ‘ought to be’ in unity (‘one’) through which it can ‘fight sin and sanctify its life’ (‘holy’), being ‘open to the world’ (‘catholic’), and ‘testifying everywhere to the all-embracing kingdom’ (‘apostolic’).\textsuperscript{165} He concludes that, because ‘faith, hope and action’ are ‘visible to the world’ within the way that the marks are displayed, our theology then ‘cannot withdraw’ to a form of church that is ‘invisible’, ‘future’ or one of ‘pure demands’.\textsuperscript{166}

To this point, Moltmann has outlined an understanding of the marks that places them theologically as attributes ascribed to the church through the actions of Christ (a gift), and through which the church currently participates in progressing (as a task) as it looks forward to their fulfilment in the eschaton.

Moltmann now turns from examining the marks as historical attributes ascribed to the church and begins to consider how they are contextually a task for the church to engage. Moltmann does not wish to ‘deny the truth of these statements’ made about the church and the marks, but he also suggests that, because the marks were ‘formulated’ by the early church, they must be understood ‘in the context of the church’s development [then]’, which was a time of ‘considerable political pressure for the church’s unity and universality’.\textsuperscript{167} Therefore, he offers that ‘theologically’ there is a contextual ‘liberty to move other marks of the true church into the

\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., 339, italics in original.
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid., 339–40.
\textsuperscript{166} Ibid., 340.
\textsuperscript{167} Ibid.
foreground … and to link these with the traditional ones’. He therefore proposes a new rendering on the marks of the church as: ‘unity in freedom’, ‘holiness in poverty’, ‘catholicity and partisanship’, and ‘apostolate in suffering’.

Moltmann’s addition to the marks reflects his concern that the current functioning of the marks points in an ‘inward direction’. He argues that the church cannot ignore its ‘social and political Sitz im Leben’ and become ‘occupied merely with itself’; instead, the marks should have an ‘outward direction’, because they are ‘important for the witness of the church’s form in the world’.

Moltmann makes three points regarding this ‘unity in freedom’. First, it is ‘experienced’ in the ‘gathered congregation’ as a ‘visible’ ‘fellowship of people who are in themselves different’, because there is a ‘unity in diversity and freedom’ in which no one is ‘forced into conformity’, but, rather, is accepted with all of his or her ‘gifts’, ‘tasks’, ‘weaknesses’ and ‘handicaps’, because it is Christ who gathers this community.

Second, every gathered congregation, past, present or future, is gathered in Christ and ‘if one member suffers, all suffer together’, because they ‘recognize one another’ as members of the ‘one church of Christ’. Their commonality is not found in organisations, but in Christ, and therefore this ‘demands solidarity beyond the limits of one’s own community and must be proved in time of persecution’. Third, ‘unity is not merely an attribute of the

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168 Ibid., 341, 347, 357, 361. Moltmann is consistent in his phrasing of ‘unity in freedom’ and ‘holiness in poverty’, but varies in his phrasing on the marks of ‘catholicity’ and ‘apostolicity’. This variation on ‘catholicity’ and ‘apostolicity’ will be noted in the discussion as each of these marks is presented.

169 Ibid., 342.

170 Ibid.

171 Ibid.

172 Ibid., 343.

173 Ibid., 344.
church; it is the church’s task in the world as well’. \(^{174}\) This unity includes ‘fellowship with the oppressed, humiliated, and forsaken’ if it is to witness to the whole Christ. \(^{175}\) The church ‘is not “one” for itself; it is one for the peace of divided mankind in the coming kingdom of God’. \(^{176}\)

‘Holiness in poverty’ for Moltmann includes three main themes. First, holiness contains a double meaning, in that ‘the church is holy because it is sanctified through Christ’s activity in and on it’ and ‘holiness consists of being made holy, in sanctification, the subject of the activity being God’, and therefore holiness is ‘simultaneously communion peccatorum (communion of sinners) and communion sanctorum (communion of saints)’. \(^{177}\) The church can be considered ‘holy … precisely at the point where it acknowledges its sins and the sins of mankind and trusts to justification through God’. \(^{178}\) Second, the church is considered holy ‘because God shows himself to be holy in the grace of the crucified Christ acting on it’, in which, as a ‘fellowship of justified sinners’, it is ‘called upon’ and ‘set apart and destined, not for themselves but for the service of the kingdom of God’; the church is thereby ‘sanctified’ to ‘sanctify the world’. \(^{179}\) Third, this call to service for the ‘coming kingdom of glory’ is ‘experienced and suffered in the fellowship of Christ’ sufferings’ and therefore the church is ‘sanctified whenever it participates in the lowliness, helplessness, poverty and suffering of Christ’. \(^{180}\) The church needs to become ‘poor’ so that it can create ‘fellowship with the poor’, as Christ did.

\(^{174}\) Ibid., 345.
\(^{175}\) Ibid.
\(^{176}\) Ibid.
\(^{177}\) Ibid., 352–53.
\(^{178}\) Ibid., 353.
\(^{179}\) Ibid., 354.
\(^{180}\) Ibid., 355.
A ‘true fellowship of the poor’ is not about creating ‘programmes’ or giving ‘alms’: it is about the ‘apostolic charge’ of ‘founding congregations at the lowest level’, where the ‘real poor’ can ‘find themselves and their hope in the church’, and through which as a congregation they can ‘discover their powers and potentialities in the liberating history of Christ’.  

Moltmann’s unique ‘catholicity and partisanship’ includes four points. First, the ‘church’s catholicity is determined by the universal, all-uniting presence of Christ’, including ‘spatial catholicity’ (‘presence in all parts of the inhabited earth’) and ‘temporal catholicity’ (‘presence in all parts of history’). This links the church’s catholicity to its unity. Second, catholicity is also linked to apostolicity, in that ‘the church is catholic in its mission, because in its proclamation it appeals to people who do not belong to it and because it does not accept that there is any sphere which Christ would not have claimed for his own from the beginning’. Regarding ‘catholicity’, Moltmann unequivocally states that it ‘is therefore not an adjective describing the church’s state; it is an attribute describing its movement, its mission and its hope’, thus adumbrating an ‘eschatological’ perspective. Third, breaking with the traditional understanding of the church’s catholicity, Moltmann surmises that, because of the church’s ‘eschatological definition’, the present church cannot be considered ‘catholic’, because it is ‘incomplete’, ‘limited’, and ‘non-universal’, but it can only be considered catholic in its ‘mission’. Therefore any

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181 Ibid., 356–57.
182 Moltmann also refers to this by saying ‘catholicity is linked with its partisan support for the oppressed’ (ibid., 341) and by using the expression ‘catholicity and partisan support for the weak’ (ibid., 361).
183 Ibid., 348.
184 Ibid., 349.
185 Ibid.
186 Ibid., 349, 350.
declarations of the church’s catholicity in the here and now (in any point in history) forces the church to act in a partisan way in which it must remain ‘there for all’ and in ‘the same way at all times and in all places’ ‘for everyone’. Yet in an eschatological view of the church, the ‘goal of the church’s mission remains universal’, so that ‘in the new people of God the divisions that destroy mankind will already be deprived of their force here and now’ and ‘will be broken down through mission and fellowship’. Fourth, in this way the gathered community can become a ‘together’ people by forming a ‘partisanship’ that does not deny catholicity, but returns to the need for Christians to turn towards the ‘oppressed’ and ‘oppressor’ alike, because the church is not for itself, but ‘primarily seeks and restores to favour the lost, the rejected and the oppressed’.

Moltmann makes four points regarding this ‘apostolate in suffering.

First, while ‘apostolic’ is both ‘historical’ and ‘a term related to the eschaton’; it is ‘not a characteristic of the eschaton itself’. Moltmann explains that, ‘whereas the three other characteristics continue in eternity, and are also characteristics of the church when it is glorified in the kingdom, the apostolic mission will come to an end when it is fulfilled’. Further, ‘we can say therefore that the historical church will be the one, holy, catholic church through the apostolic witness of Christ, and in carrying out that witness; whereas the church glorified in the kingdom of God is the one, holy, and catholic church’.

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187 Ibid., 351.
188 Ibid.
189 Ibid., 352.
190 Also refers to this as ‘the church’s apostolicity bears the sign of the cross’. Ibid., 341.
191 Ibid., 357.
192 Ibid.
193 Ibid., 358, italics in original.
apostolic in a double sense’ because it ‘denotes both the church’s foundation and it’s commission’ to continue in the ‘apostolic proclamation’ and the ‘missionary charge’. Third, this ‘missionary charge’ is a ‘particular commission’ to ‘testify by means of word, deed and fellowship to the liberating lordship of Christ’ but this does not have to be carried out in a particular way. Rather, the ‘apostolic church is the missionary church’ who ‘must continually orientate itself towards the future’ as a ‘new church’ expressing the ‘same apostolate’. Fourth, while the church is considered as ‘active mission’, ‘participation in the apostolic mission of Christ … leads inescapably into tribulation, contradiction and suffering’ in which ‘the apostolate is carried out in the weakness and poverty of Christ, not through force or the strategies of force’. Therefore ‘the church is apostolic when it takes up its cross’ in active suffering.

In summary, then, Moltmann’s view of the marks is understood as an eschatological task of the church that is to be expressed outwardly rather than inwardly, because the marks are not for the church – but for others. Theologically, they are integrated components of the confession of the triune God, they are evidenced as creative workings of the Spirit found in Christ’s activity, and they will be fulfilled in the future by God.

In evaluating Moltmann’s treatment of the marks in relation to the communicative element of the gift-task paradigm, it can be observed that he engages in dialogue that seeks mutual understanding, is concerned with teaching and confessing the marks, and is open to others on their treatment

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194 Ibid.
195 Ibid., 360.
196 Ibid., 360–61, italics in original.
197 Ibid., 361.
of the marks. Therefore, there would appear to be fullness to Moltmann’s communication on the marks.

Regarding the analytical element, Moltmann clearly does not identify the marks as statements of self-justification, but rather would appeal to the marks for ecclesial self-examination. For this, Moltmann’s theology on the marks is to be commended. Yet, an area that may require further attention in his theology is that of ‘receiving the marks as dynamic gift’ within the present context. Moltmann’s preference for identifying the marks as a task is plainly evidenced when he argues that the church needs to focus in an ‘outward’ direction in order to address its ‘social and political Sitz im Leben’. By drawing upon the gift-task paradigm, a question could be asked as to whether Moltmann adequately appropriates the marks as both gift and task. While his theology does add a much needed balance to those ecclesiologies that are too inwardly focused or that already ‘own’ the gift, the paradigm would remind any theologian who offers such a rebalance not to lose sight of either gift or task.

In regard to the theological element, Moltmann identifies the marks within a trinitarian framework as ‘characteristics of Christ’s activity’, which the church engages in through the ‘power of the Spirit’ and which the church represents as the eschatological kingdom of God. For Moltmann, the marks are categorically statements of ‘faith’, ‘hope’ and ‘action’. Yet, his preference and priority for the task element of the marks would seem to undermine his theological approach to the marks. In drawing upon the gift-task paradigm, it is highlighted that it is the triune God who sustains and will ultimately fulfil the marks as the author and initiator of ‘seeking and creating fellowship with humanity’. Insofar as Moltmann focuses on the
marks as task at the expense of the marks as gift, his theology becomes unbalanced and in danger of forgetting that the marks are gifted and sustained by God.

Moltmann’s messianic ecclesiology favours an eschatological treatment of the church. In this way he seems to be advocating a fellowship that will take place only in the future church once it has broken down all social and political barriers and where ‘catholicity’ can coexist with partisanship. Yet, in doing so, he determines that an experience of unity, holiness and catholicity cannot happen in the here and now. The work done in developing the gift-task paradigm outlined an understanding of the marks that places them both within the ‘here and now’ context and as being drawn towards the ‘more’ of the eschaton. In this way, the theological framework of the gift-task paradigm holds that God does ascribe the marks to the church as a gift that can be and is experienced within the here and now. This is a statement that can be made in the faith of the church as an indicative, not because the church can award itself such a title, but because God has ascribed this nature to it from his own triune fellowship.

Moltmann’s eschatological view highlights another question that the theological framework of the gift-task paradigm would seek to address. In Moltmann’s treatment of the marks, he notes that only the marks of ‘one, holy, and catholic’ will have a place in the future kingdom, because ‘apostolic’ will cease, since the ‘mission’ will be complete. The question that begs is this: If ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ are attributes of the triune God, that is, part of the nature and being of the triune God, does part of the nature and being of the triune God come to an end? Conversely, if, as is outlined in the gift-task paradigm, the marks are located and grounded
within the triune God and are to be received by the church as a dynamic gift, then they already exist within the here and now as a ‘gift’ to the church. Therefore the marks can contain both an ‘inward’ and an ‘outward’ expression that is maintained in balance through a gift and task understanding. Hence the paradigm serves to remind us that the marks are both a gift and a task to the church and that developing one of these should not be at the expense of developing the other.

6.4: Amos Yong: Pentecostal

Yong’s ecclesiology is unequivocally pneumatological. However, themes of trinitarian communion, soteriology, eschatology and globalism can also be located within this pneumatological framework. Regarding the Trinity, Yong understands ‘Christian community as both a pneumatological and trinitarian concept’. He states that he has developed this concept by drawing on the work done by Zizioulas in Being in Communion and determines that it is Zizioulas’s accomplishment that has allowed for the ‘application of the trinitarian ontology of personhood to ecclesial identity’. Yong explains that:

God as communitarian relationality brings about redemption through the reconstitution of human communality and fellowship in Christ by the power of the Spirit. The Spirit is therefore the relational, dynamic, and communal life of the Church … constituted by the new birth of the Spirit which re-establishes the body of Christ precisely as the communal mutuality of its members. And, just as trinitarian coinherence

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198 Amos Yong, Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 110.
199 Ibid., 111.
resists all hierarchicalization and subordinationism in the divine life, so also are these resisted ecclesiologically.²⁰⁰

Yet Yong takes Zizioulas’s concept a step further in order to ‘apply the trinitarian ontology of personhood to the social and relational constitutedness of lived experience’.²⁰¹ He determines that ‘relationality and community are engendered through the gift of the Spirit’.²⁰² This is the underlying and foundational thrust to Yong’s pneumatological ecclesiology.

For, as Yong outlines:

In this way, the Spirit’s gift which is nothing less than mutual love of Father and Son finds economic expression. The Spirit of life enables reconciliation and healing among human creatures. The divine breath renews life through reestablishing relationality, fellowship, and community … the Spirit as the dynamic of life anticipated the bestowal and return models’ emphases on the movement of creation-fall-redemption … as the going forth and return of the divine missions, culminating in the hoped-for eschatological re-gathering of all things to God through the Word by the power of the Spirit.²⁰³

Linking soteriology with ecclesiology, Yong highlights that the ‘Christian tradition has long understood salvation in terms of receiving the Spirit and being baptized into Jesus Christ’ and that this ‘entails becoming a member of the body of Christ’.²⁰⁴ Drawing from the Acts of the Apostles, he determines that three themes must be discussed in unison: salvation, church and Spirit.²⁰⁵ He develops therefore a ‘pneumatological ecclesiology’ that conceives of the church as ‘an organic, dynamic, and eschatological people of God called after the name of Jesus and constituted in the fellowship of

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²⁰⁰ Ibid.
²⁰¹ Ibid., 112.
²⁰² Ibid.
²⁰³ Ibid., 112, 115.
²⁰⁴ Amos Yong, The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 121.
²⁰⁵ Ibid., 122.
the Holy Spirit’. In short, the ‘basic idea is that a pneumatological approach to the church emphasizes the holistic (multidimensional), transformative, dynamic, and eschatological dimensions of what it means to be the people being saved by God’. Further to this, the marks of the church, rather than being an addendum to the ecclesiological thrust, if ‘reread in the pneumatological key, contribute to this ecclesiological vision’.

Yong’s ecclesial concept also includes an overarching global theme. While he delineates that within his ecclesiology it is the coming together of ‘Spirit and Word’ that creates the ‘communal context’, he further argues for the ‘notion of community in its broadest sense: the human community’. He states that theological interpretation is ‘not only by the Church and for the Church, but also in, to, and for the world’ and as such it is ‘directed also toward discerning the world, and the Church’s relationship to the world’. He does this without neglecting of course the understanding that:

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206 Ibid. For a fuller presentation of Yong’s outlining of the church as charismatic, see Amos Yong, ‘The Church Is Charismatic’, in The Many Marks of the Church, ed. William Madges and Michael Daley (New London: Twenty-Third, 2006), 85–89. Of noted interest within Madges and Daley’s work, they present thirty-four ‘marks’ of the church in addition to the classical four, which, in their presentation, can be received with equal value and weighting in this postmodern period. While Yong contributes a chapter to this work, not once in the chapter does he list ‘charismatic’ as a ‘mark’ of the church to be added to the classical four. This is likely due to his trinitarian theology, which is heavily influenced by Eastern Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas’ work in Being in Communion, and which maintains the identities of the divine Persons as separate even as they are in communion. In this way, the pneumatological framework of Yong’s ecclesial expression exists as transcendent in relation to the church and as an expression of the Spirit’s charismatic action.

207 Yong, Spirit Poured Out, 166. Said another way by Yong: ‘Ecclesiality refers to the distinctive Christian way of being in the world. More specifically, it is a way of life that is birthed, sustained, led, and consummated by the Spirit’. Spirit-Word-Community, 234. Regarding the eschatological, Yong also suggests in ‘Church Is Charismatic’ that ‘the church as an eschatological community of the Spirit’ is to be understood as ‘living between the ascension and parousia of Christ’ (88).

208 Yong, Spirit Poured Out, 166.

209 Yong, Spirit-Word-Community, 297.

210 Ibid. In another publication Yong also writes: ‘In a dynamic way, the church’s relation to the world involves both giving and receiving. The church not only shapes, but is also shaped by its environment’. ‘Church Is Charismatic’, 88–89.
the Christian claims to truth can never be only for Christians, but should be – if indeed all truth is God’s truth – coherent within the universe of human understanding as the correspondence of their claims to reality … [and] subject to confirmation by other communities of inquiry, as well as by reality as it is or finally (eschatologically) unveils itself to be.\footnote{Yong, Spirit-Word-Community, 297.}

In summary, Yong’s pneumatological ecclesiology encompasses the themes of the Trinity, soteriology, eschatology and globalism and provides the backdrop for his engagement with and understanding of the marks of the church.

The document chosen to engage with Yong’s Pentecostal perspective on the marks is his article entitled The Marks of the Church: A Pentecostal Re-Reading, which views the marks of the church through a ‘pneumatological’ lens.\footnote{Yong, ‘Marks of the Church’, 49.} His stated goal in engaging with the marks is twofold: to gain insight into the Pentecostal problem of ‘self definition’ and ‘self understanding’, and to pursue a form of ‘Pentecostal ecumenical engagement’.\footnote{Ibid., 45–47.} He hopes to do this through the method of ‘developing a critical Pentecostal ecclesiology in dialogue with the traditional marks of the church’.\footnote{Ibid., 46.}

He suggests that ‘Pentecostals have much to learn about ecclesiology from the Christian tradition’ and hopes that through this process ‘Pentecostal ecclesiology might be enriched by the doctrine of the ecclesial marks … even while Pentecostal perspectives might make a contribution’ to the Pentecostal–Roman Catholic dialogue.\footnote{Ibid., 46–47. Yong notes that while Pentecostals are involved in various dialogues (e.g. the Pentecostal–Roman Catholic Dialogue since 1972 and World Alliance of Reformed Churches since 1995), Pentecostal participants ‘do not represent their denominations, but only themselves’. Ibid., 46, note 2.} He outlines that he will build

Drawing from the work of Catholic theologian and Jesuit priest Francis Sullivan, Yong points out that ‘the marks have remained an undefined doctrine of faith in that they have been asserted but never elaborated on dogmatically’, therefore they raise questions for Pentecostal ‘newcomers on the block’. 217 Yong suggests that this state of affairs may be because there has been no felt need to ‘define what seems self-evident’, and he challenges back that if ‘dogmatic pronouncements’ are made without ‘dogmatic commentary’, then it ‘frees the church to reflect, ponder and explore such declarations’. 218 Therefore, because ‘the church has and will always wrestle with the marks so long as self-understanding is sought’, he will ‘attempt to retrieve, reappropriate and perhaps reconstruct’ an understanding of the marks ‘so long as it is remembered that the last word has never been said’. 219

In developing his work on the marks as a ‘Pentecostal re-reading’, Yong draws from a variety of theologians, but most frequently from Catholic theologian Yves Congar, in order to outline the ‘pneumatological perspective’ of the marks. 220

216 Ibid., 47.
217 Ibid., 48. I raise this precise point in chap. 1 of this thesis as an issue for the contemporary church in regard to dialogue on the marks.
219 Ibid.
220 For example, he notes that Catholic theologian Yves Congar says that within the Nicene Creed the article on the church is linked to the Holy Spirit, and that United Methodist theologian Thomas Oden states that: ‘To say the church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic is to confess the Holy Spirit as the one who unites, cleanses, and sends the church to the whole world’ (Ibid., 50). For the purposes of this thesis, I
The rationale for engaging this article of Yong’s for the task of this chapter is that he wrote the article specifically to engage with the marks of the church through a Pentecostal lens and, further, because, through it, he attempts to enter into ecumenical dialogue. Yong has also written on the marks in other published works, including *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology*, and *Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective*. In what follows, these publications will be referenced where needed in order to clarify, or add to, the presentation of his work in the main document being referred to. To Yong’s treatment on the marks I now turn.

In regard to the ‘oneness’ of the church, Yong makes three points: (1) ‘the Spirit is the source of unity amidst diversity, plurality and difference’; (2) ‘Christ is the author of the church and head of the body’, but it is the Spirit ‘who brings everything about’ as the ‘transcendent effective personality of the Church’; and (3) unity in the church is ‘understood concretely in the everyday lives of believers’ who are empowered by the Spirit, even as this unity will come about as an ‘eschatological work of the Spirit’. This Pentecostal account of ‘ecclesial unity’ is ‘both spiritual and embodied’ as a ‘unity in diversity’ that incorporates a ‘Pentecostal sacramentality at work’, which can ‘acknowledge the Spirit’s being made

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221 For the most part, the section Yong offers on the marks of the church in this book in 2005 (section 3.2: ‘The Marks of the Church: Pentecostal and Pneumatological Perspectives’, pp. 134–51) is a restatement of what he has already offered in the 2002 publication that is being engaged with in this thesis.

present and active’ in the wider scope of ‘congregational life’. It is through the Holy Spirit that this one ‘body of Christ composed of many human members … features a diversity of gifts … distributed to the different members’. Further, ‘these gifts are orchestrated by the Spirit so that it is the members themselves who minister to, build up, and edify each other … in and through the Spirit’.

Yong notes that, while Pentecostals do ‘affirm spiritual unity over institutional or structured unity’, this is not to deny the ‘concrete manifestations across the spectrum of Christian life’. Rather it is simply to assert that Pentecostal theology understands ecclesial unity to ‘be experienced in the Spirit who brings those otherwise separated together in Jesus Christ in anticipation of the eschatological union before the throne of God’.

In regard to ‘holiness’ as a mark of the church, Yong finds much agreement between Pentecostal theology and that of Roman Catholic theology. Specifically he notes the ‘eschatological emphasis’ of holiness, by which it is to be received as ‘a gift’, because it is the ‘pouring out of the Spirit into the body of Christ’ as a ‘dynamic event’ for the ‘now and not yet’ ‘community of sinners’ who will be ‘transformed to saintliness’.

As for what Pentecostal theology can add to Roman Catholic theology on the mark of holiness, he offers a ‘pneumatologically robust notion of...

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223 Yong, ‘Marks of the Church’, 52.
224 Yong, Spirit-Word-Community, 32.
225 Ibid.
226 Yong, ‘Marks of the Church’, 54.
227 Ibid.
228 Discussion on ‘holiness’ is also found in Yong, Spirit Poured Out, 139–42.
sanctifying transformation’. 230 He explains that fundamental to the concept of ‘holiness’ is that the church is ‘set apart’ for the ‘service of God’. 231 From the ‘Pentecostal perspective’ he adds that it is the ‘Spirit’ who ‘sets apart members of the body of Christ … from the world for the work of the kingdom of God’ and ‘clothes the believer’ with ‘power from on high’ in order to witness and proclaim the good news of the kingdom throughout the earth. 232 Yong determines that for ‘Spirit-filled believers’ this witness goes beyond ‘verbal testimony’ to include the ‘calling of the church toward participation in the prophetic activity of socio-ethical engagement’. 233 Drawing from biblical examples, Yong outlines how the ‘prophetic words and deeds’ of Jesus were ‘redemptive’, subverting ‘structures of oppression’. 234 In the same way, as noted in the biblical account of Acts, the early church provided for a ‘communitarian re-structuring’ by believers’ being ‘together’ and ‘holding all things in common’ in their care for ‘widows’ and those who were ‘socially vulnerable’. 235 Therefore Yong suggests that as an act of holiness within the church, these ‘prophetic words’ and ‘prophetic actions’ can be considered as the work of the ‘divinely consecrated, anointed and appointed’ ‘prophetic saints’ of the community who were acting in a ‘holy’ way by the ‘transformative power of the eschatological Spirit who [came] upon them’. 236 It is therefore important to ensure that prophecy within ecclesial communities is not being ‘rejected’, because, in doing so, ‘the sanctifying work of the Spirit of God’ is also

230 Ibid., 55.
231 Ibid.
232 Ibid., 55–56.
233 Ibid., 56.
234 Ibid. Biblical examples used by Yong include the parables of ‘the persistent widow’ and ‘the Pharisee and the tax collector’, and examples of Jesus’ ‘treatment of women’ and his ‘attitudes toward the Samaritans’. Ibid.
235 Ibid.
236 Ibid.
being rejected. Furthermore, this ‘rhema word’, which comes from the ‘Spirit of God’, is for the entire church of ‘individuals-in-community’, indicating its ‘formative and transformative’ presence, which is ‘directed toward the eschatological kingdom when all saints will be finally and fully free from sin and its effects’. In regard to the ‘rhema word’, Yong states that it is what ‘pentecostals’ use to refer to ‘God’s word anew and afresh to the here-and-now situation of a believer and the believing community’. It can be heard spoken ‘in the contemporary sermon, the central form of kerygmatic proclamation of the living word of Christ by the power of the Spirit. But because the Spirit of God is no respecter of persons and has been poured out upon all flesh, the rhema word can be spoken at any moment and by any one’.

In regard to ‘catholicity’ as a mark of the church, once again Yong finds commonality and agreement between Pentecostal and Roman Catholic theology on the fundamental understanding. He suggests that characteristically ‘catholicity’ is to be considered as the ‘eschatological’ and ‘universal mission of Jesus’ that is also experienced ‘fully’ in the ‘present’ context; that is, the ‘church is catholic and being made catholic’. While experienced ‘locally’, each congregation is a part of the larger ‘whole’ known as the ‘Body of Christ’. To this understanding of catholicity, Pentecostal theology would be quick to further affirm the importance of the role of the Holy Spirit, who ‘anoints’ Jesus in his universal mission and also

237 Ibid., 57.
238 Ibid., 58.
239 Yong, Spirit Poured Out, 162.
240 Ibid.
241 Yong, ‘Marks of the Church’, 58–60. Discussion on ‘catholicity’ is also found in Yong, Spirit Poured Out, 143–46.
242 Yong, ‘Marks of the Church’, 58.
anoints, guides and directs the followers of Jesus as this ‘eschatological Spirit … continues to accomplish, shape and form the church catholic’.\textsuperscript{243}

By way of difference from Roman Catholic theology, Yong makes two interrelated points concerning: (1) the importance of the particular over the universal and (2) the distinctive link between missionary witness and the outpouring of the Spirit. Regarding the importance of the particular, Yong explains that ‘ecumenism’ in Pentecostalism theology does not focus on the ‘structural’ or the ‘institutional’ church. Rather what ‘binds’ Pentecostals is an ‘ecumenical experience’, specifically ‘their experiences of Jesus in the power of the Spirit’, which allow for a unity ‘amidst the peculiarly Pentecostal congregations and liturgies’ enabled by the ‘universality of the Spirit’s presence and activity’.\textsuperscript{244} In the same way, regarding the ‘church’s missionary witness’, it is the ‘outpouring of the Spirit’ that can produce unity despite the diversity of ‘tongues’ that exists.\textsuperscript{245} Further, although ‘catholicity’ of the gospel is for the ‘whole world’, it still must be received ‘in its own idiom, cultural space and historical time’.\textsuperscript{246} Therefore, rather than the spreading of the gospel containing an ‘issue of syncretism’, the work of the Spirit’s ‘indigenization’ of the gospel can be ‘accommodated, acculturated and assimilated into local contexts’.\textsuperscript{247} Yong concludes that the discerning of the catholicity of the church cannot be measured without considering whether it is ‘also one, holy and apostolic’, because it is only

\textsuperscript{243} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{244} Ibid., 60. In Spirit-Word-Community, Yong writes: ‘Pentecost is the Spirit’s establishing the body of Christ, but in a way such that particularity and difference are not effaced by unity and catholicity. Hence the diversity of languages, tribes, peoples and nations who bring their gifts into the heavenly city (Rev. 21:24 –25; cf. Rev. 5:9 and 7:9)’ (103).
\textsuperscript{245} Yong, ‘Marks of the Church’, 60.
\textsuperscript{246} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{247} Ibid., 61.
this ‘fourfold criteriology’ that is better able to ‘identify the true church of Jesus Christ’. 248

In regard to ‘apostolicity’ as a mark of the church, Yong identifies the similarity between Pentecostal and Roman Catholic theology in terms of the ‘apostolic church’ being a ‘gift of the Spirit’ within the ‘eschatological task’ of ‘the mission of Christ’ as ‘shared and carried out by the power of the Spirit’. 249 Further, ‘genuine Christian ministry’ includes ‘apostolic teaching’. 250 Yong suggests that Pentecostals do disagree with Roman Catholic theology in regard to the concept of ‘episcopal succession’ because it places the ‘Petrine ministry’ over the ‘Spirit’s presence and anointing power’. 251 For Pentecostal theology, the Spirit provides the ‘endorsement of apostolic faith and ministry’. 252 To be clear, Pentecostals understand ‘apostolicity’ within a ‘pneumatologically and charismatically’ defined framework. 253 Therefore, ‘the ongoing apostolic office’ is to be ‘the Spirit-empowered ministry of missionizing, evangelizing, church planting and discipling’. 254 Further, it is the Holy Spirit that preserves the apostolic message and teaching. This is done through the ‘charismatic leading of the

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248 Ibid., 62.
249 Ibid., 62. Discussion on ‘apostolicity’ is also found in Yong, Spirit Poured Out, 146–51.
250 Yong, ‘Marks of the Church’, 62.
251 Ibid., 62–63.
252 Ibid. Drawing from Finnish Pentecostal theologian Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Yong appeals to his Roman Catholic audience to consider a ‘conciliar understanding of apostolicity’, which considers apostolicity as: (1) consisting in continuity with the faith of the apostles of the New Testament; (2) including the indispensable components of a charismatic life and worship; (3) having missionary proclamation of the gospel at its heart; (4) regarding Scriptures as the norm; (5) being a dynamic concept; (6) focusing on the whole people of God, not just laity or clergy; and (7) being a ‘heavily’ pneumatological concept. Ibid., 63. See also Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, ‘The Apostolicity of Free Churches: A Contradiction in Terms or an Ecumenical Breakthrough?’, Pro Ecclesia 10 (2001): 475–86.
253 Yong, ‘Marks of the Church’, 64.
254 Ibid.
Holy Spirit’, which exists in the ‘apostolic authority’ to ‘retrieve, reappropriate, and reinterpret the Scripture’ as ultimately ‘sanctioned’.  

Yong concludes that the marks of the church are to be understood within a ‘dynamic’, ‘eschatological framework’ that renders an account of the ‘experience of the Spirit’. He states that by ‘re-reading’ the marks this way, the church is then ‘one’, ‘holy’, ‘catholic’ and ‘apostolic’, even as it is ‘being made’ into this likeness.

In considering Yong’s communicative approach to the marks, one can see how in his treatment on the marks he has essentially outlined the main points of engaging in dialogue for ‘mutual understanding’ and ‘critique’, ‘teaching and confessing’ the marks, and ‘being open’. Encouragingly, Yong has thoughtfully considered the marks of the church from his own denominational perspective and has then attempted to engage with the perspective of another denomination. He provides a positive example and model of beneficial communicative practices that the gift-task paradigm would support and hope to see further created amongst other ecclesial expressions.

Considering Yong’s engagement with the marks in relation to the analytical framework of the paradigm, I would offer the following. First, more consideration needs to be given to the ‘gift’ aspect of the marks. Yong’s Pentecostal perspective could be informed by the understanding that the church already is one, holy, catholic and apostolic as a ‘gift’ to enjoy and celebrate, with further acknowledgement that this gift is initiated and sustained in the triune God (theological element). A second area for consideration would be the need to hold the marks together in creative

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255 Ibid., 65–66.
256 Ibid., 66–67.
tension. Within Yong’s treatment on the marks, he states that there is a preference for the local over the universal. The concern here is that there is a need for each church to see itself as connected to the larger body of Christ, not just theoretically or abstractly, but in a way that is visible and concrete. Otherwise, individual churches run the risk of neglecting their call to be connected to and in unity with the larger body of Christ. This engagement goes beyond just being visible in unity, but also speaks to the areas of the ‘communicative’ and ‘theological’. For example, if local churches spent more time in engaging with one another even informally, communication regarding ecclesial praxis and/or theological engagement could take place on a more regular basis. Ecclesial ideas (and ideals) could be presented and tested within a broader community, thus potentially creating an organic, on-the-ground relationship through which some level of ‘mutual understanding’ regarding ecclesiual praxis and theology might flourish.

Along the same lines but to a lesser degree, Yong’s treatment of ‘holiness’ appears to take an individualistic approach. Therefore, I would encourage fuller treatment on this mark and allow for it to be informed by ‘catholicity’ and ‘unity’. In this way the concept of holiness would extend past an individualistic appeal and understand its corporate nature, whereby as ‘one member suffers, we all suffer’ within the body of Christ. This would extend the expression of ‘holy’ beyond each local congregation to include other local congregations and the church universal.

Yong’s treatment of the marks in regard to the theological framework has already been alluded to in making other comments in this section. To that, I add that there is a need for a trinitarian understanding of the marks that includes more fully the Father and Son, as well as the Spirit. While
Yong is to be commended for bringing the Holy Spirit to theological attention when it is often the neglected third member of the Trinity, this should not be done to the neglect of the Father and the Son. As well as being empowered by the Holy Spirit, the church is the ‘body of Christ’ and as such needs to correspond to and emulate its head, Jesus. Jesus seeks to do the will of the Father and it is this ‘mission’ that the church engages in as it is empowered by the Holy Spirit. Yong’s primarily pneumatological focus is not a problem. It becomes problematic only when it is to the neglect of the fullest understanding that the marks are grounded within the nature and being of the triune God.

6.5: Concluding Discussion

In this chapter I set out to test the newly created gift-task paradigm. I did this by engaging with the academic work of four denominationally diverse theologians, who, in their own way, had written substantial works regarding the marks of the church. In so engaging them, I referred to and drew from table 1, at the end of chapter 5 of this thesis. This table outlines each of the three key elements (communicative, analytical and theological) and holds them together in tension and balance under a gift-task banner.

As would be expected (and as was presented in this chapter) each theologian’s offerings on the marks revealed their own particular nuance. As such, the gift-task paradigm (as a communicative, analytical and theological tool) highlighted various and specific points of illumination and critique in regard to their views on the marks. It is hoped that the paradigm might further enable current theologians the opportunity to assess whether
their views are comprehensive enough in order to address the current tensions regarding the marks.

As a communicative, analytical and theological tool, and by succinctly presenting these three elements with key points under each, the gift-task paradigm holds together the breadth of meaning of the marks as starting points for consideration, but not the depth. In other words, while the central content is presented with each element, there is no statically prescribed method on how to incorporate these elements into contextual praxis or ecumenical dialogue. This then leaves space and opportunity for others to be invited in to engage with the marks through their own contextual and denominational filters, while being encouraged to think beyond them. This method is characteristic of the gift-task paradigm in that it is offered as an encouraging tool for reflection and consideration on the marks without determining the final outcome. It points to the scope of the theology of the marks, in its communicative, analytical and theological engagements. Drawn together in the paradigm, I suggest that these illuminate the strengths and weaknesses of any particular theology of the marks. My hope is that this tool will enable higher quality interchurch dialogue, promote self-examination rather than self-justification, and inspire these efforts by grounding them theologically.
Chapter 7

Conclusions, Evaluations, Suggestions for Further Study

I engaged in this thesis because I had a sense or a feeling that the marks of the church within their current format were operating as ineffective measures and were perhaps being neglected by the twenty-first-century church. Initially I attempted to approach the project from a different angle, in which I was going to research, compare and present current denominational perspectives on the marks within Australia and how that translated into their theological and academic institutions. Essentially it was going to be aimed at reporting on the gaps between belief and action concerning the marks. I soon realised that I did not simply want to access the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of contemporary church concerning the marks. Rather, I wanted to create something that could be of benefit and use to the current and future church. I wanted to investigate my ‘hunch’ regarding the marks and diagnose the problems in order to find or research real and potential solutions.

Therefore, in this thesis I set out to address this question: Can the classical marks of the church have a continuing and contemporary relevance to the church in the twenty-first century? This question was raised after determining that there are at least five tensions that exist with respect to the marks within twenty-first-century church. Specifically, they are that (1) the marks are often declared dogmatically but are not visibly demonstrated; (2) despite the longstanding historical heritage of the marks as helpful resources, today they appear to be on the periphery of resources being utilised by the church; (3) although the marks are meant to be indicative of the entire ecclesial body, in fact they are employed by only some
denominations; (4) literacy concerning the marks has been reduced to an institutionally based understanding, and, as a result, (5) there has been a loss of critical theological functioning concerning the marks.

In chapter 2 of this thesis, I undertook a historical retrace on the marks of the church, starting from their early conceptions in the patristic period and culminating in their twenty-first-century position. The purpose of this retrace was to gain a better historical understanding of the use and treatment of the marks in order to use this information as a foundational directive for the current church and to find ways to engage with the marks by learning from past approaches.

The historical retrace revealed that although the marks were presented as a cohesive unit in the fourth century as descriptors of the church and statements to be made in faith and self-examination, they did not remain this way. Rather, the marks began to be utilised as individual elements that could be prioritised and employed to support any single group’s claim to understand the nature and mission of the church. This treatment of the marks persisted until the present day, where in the twenty-first century the marks are engaged with as institutional property and have as such followed the way of the institution and have become marked with division. Additionally, this institutional handling has translated into denominational preferences concerning the marks, creating an impasse on dialogue that churches seem unable to transcend. Furthermore, because of the preference for denominational priority, this has ensured that there has been a loss of critical theological functioning concerning the marks. In short, along with the division and institutional handling, the problems for the twenty-first-
century church have to do with static treatment of the marks, problems with
dialogue, and a loss of critical theological function.

The aim in chapter 3 was to engage with the marks on theological
grounds. This was done in an effort to move beyond the denominational
impasse by attempting to reclaim the critical theological function of the
marks. Chapter 3 was a case study of Barth’s contribution to the marks.
Barth located ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ within the nature and being
of the triune God. This understanding has profound significance for
ecclesiology and ecclesial practice, because it would suggest that the marks
are not authored and initiated at the institutional level but rather transcend it.
It also suggests something about how the marks are sustained. That is, being
from God and of God, their source is therefore necessarily in God, and not
in the church, even if they are to be appropriated as this level. Appropriation
of the marks by the church at the institutional level is a matter of
correspondence to the divine initiative. It is God who ‘seeks and creates
fellowship’ with and amongst humanity; it is Christ who continues the
mission; and it is the church empowered by the Holy Spirit who responds
towards its head with a corresponding action as it engages the task of being
one, holy, catholic and apostolic.

I argue throughout this thesis that the marks of the church are to be
understood as a ‘gift and task’. This argument is developed most in chapter
4, where I outline the concept of ‘gift’ more fully, determining that, because
it is God who ascribes the marks to the church, the church can confidently
confess that it is ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’, even when it is not
empirically evidenced as such. This is because it reveals and witnesses that
these attributes flow from the triune God. This in turn reveals the
transcendent and dynamic nature of the marks, by which they transcend the universal church and every local congregation, including every denomination, every context, every particular experience, every generation. In this way the marks can be offered as a fresh gift to every new generation in every context and in every place in history, understanding that their dynamic nature ensures that there is a fullness of meaning to be grown into concerning how the marks may be expressed and understood in any given context.

Yet while the marks exist as indicatives that are created and sustained from outside the church, they also present for the church an imperative in which the church is to demonstrate visibly the actual possession of this gift. In this way the ‘task’ of the marks is reflected in the attempts made by the church to express the marks as part of its ecclesial self-understanding. The marks of the church as ‘task’ present a goal, or a direction for the church to move in, as they create a visible demonstration and understanding of what it means for the church to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic. Together, the marks of the church understood as ‘gift and task’ remind the community as a whole of its common heritage, nature and mission.

As developed in chapters 4 and 5, I argued that an understanding of the marks as gift and task provides a foundation that can be built upon in order create a paradigm through which the marks can be historically understood, contextually assessed and theologically reclaimed. I suggested that this ‘gift-task’ paradigm could be offered as a fresh approach and as a means and method to create a way to discuss the marks of the church that transcends denominational division and its subsequent tensions. Further, it could be offered as an analytical tool of self-examination for the church,
aimed at engaging with the marks in a dynamic rather than static way, 
thereby allowing for interactive dialogue on the marks to take place. I 
determined that such a paradigm would require three fundamental elements: 
communicative, analytical and theological. The communicative element 
would need to outline a process of interaction with the marks that seeks to 
engage in dialogue for ‘mutual understanding’ and critique, teach and 
confess the marks of the church, and be open to others and God for deeper 
expression of the marks. Within the analytical element it would be 
understood that use of the marks is for the purposes of self-examination 
rather than self-justification. As an analytical tool, questions are raised to 
determine if the marks are being held together in creative tension, are 
received as a dynamic gift, and are practised as an embodied task. The 
theological element would need to outline an acceptance in which it is 
believed that the marks are located, grounded and sustained within the being 
and nature of the triune God. Further, all this is a gift that is ascribed to the 
whole church, even as it is a task that the church must engage in as it 
corresponds to its head through the power of the Spirit, in its effort to reflect 
God’s desire to seek and create fellowship.

By drawing the three elements together into a communicative, 
analytical and theological gift-task paradigm the intention was to create a 
tool that could generate a specific kind of dialogue as it encourages 
churches to enter into self-critique, while reminding them to appeal to the 
theological nature of the marks. The purpose of such a move was to hold 
together within one framework the breadth of what it means to receive the 
marks as gift and task, while allowing the depth of what that means to be
discovered in contextual and contemporary praxis amongst the ecclesial community.

In chapter 6, I offered a ‘testing’ of the paradigm to determine whether it could operate as a constructive tool for the current and future church. I engaged with the work of four denominationally diverse and internationally well-regarded theologians who have made a genuine contribution to the field regarding their discussion on the marks. In this exercise, I conducted a twofold test. First, I tested their individual theologies on the marks against the paradigm, and second, I tested the paradigm by assessing its illuminative qualities for each theologian’s views on the marks. In this way I determined that the gift-task paradigm as a constructive tool did in fact offer at various points helpful critique aimed at a fuller understanding and deeper appreciation of the marks.

Bearing in mind the foregoing summary of the work of this thesis, in the remainder of this chapter I offer my conclusions and evaluations on the work done, along with suggested areas for further study.

I propose that the work offered in preparation of the gift-task paradigm is valid. It has engaged with the marks historically, contextually, and theologically. From this preparatory work, it considered what would be required and what might be offered in order to address some of the identified current tensions being experienced in ecclesiology concerning the classical marks of the church.

In considering the gift-task paradigm, it is a comprehensive and constructive tool that holds together the breadth of the marks within its communicative, analytical and theological elements. Regarding the depth of the marks, because of their dynamic nature, this is a process that must be
considered within the ‘here and now’ context even as it is set against an eschatological backdrop. Therefore, measured consideration has gone into the type of communication that is needed, pinpointing specific analytical questions and foundational theology that would constructively and comprehensively hold together in balance the fullness of what it means to engage with the marks through a lens of gift and task. In this way the paradigm can be offered as a tool to inspire churches to engage afresh in opportunities for interchurch dialogue, self-examination, and theological reflection as they aim for something broader and deeper in the larger ecclesial context (and beyond), understanding that this is the fundamental calling of the church regarding the marks.

This means that the gift-task paradigm is idealistic in its appeal; this is both a strength and a weakness. It calls hopefully in faith to that which is not visibly seen, and encourages churches to grow into the fullness of their calling. As a perceived weakness, because the paradigm is idealistic, there is an ‘assumption’ it may be received as claiming too much, as if the paradigm will or can immediately ‘fix’ all the denominational and institutional issues and tensions concerning the marks.

Yet, the paradigm can be offered only as a tool and cannot ensure that churches will engage with this tool. The problem is that even the very best solution is only effective when it is applied. Furthermore, churches or denominations must determine for themselves whether they will engage with the marks or even whether they find value in them within ecclesial praxis. Even if all the churches/denominations did come on board and a ‘revival’ in the use and pursuit of the marks was engaged with across the ecclesial field, there would still be no guarantee that human fallibility would
not get in the way and thwart its effectiveness. Ultimately (and as is
highlighted within the gift-task paradigm), the marks are located, grounded
and sustained from outside the church within the nature and being of the
triune God. Yet, moving towards the eschaton is a dynamic process that the
church is part of. It can only head towards its future goal in a manner that
cannot predict new bumps or obstacles on the way. What is an effective tool
today may not in fact be effective tomorrow.

Furthermore, the gift-task paradigm as a useful tool in the hands of
craftspersons requires a certain ‘skill’ to be exercised. Craftspersons
(whether they be individual theologians, or church or denominational
leaders or commissions) must get used to holding the tool and manipulating
it until the tool becomes familiar and an extension of themselves, so that
engagement of it and execution of the task it is designed for become more
efficient and somewhat effortless. It is necessary to understand the tool’s
functions and limitations in order to determine its best use in particular
situations, and the times when it will be required to be laid aside. Further,
because the paradigm is a tool, meant to serve the purposes for which it was
created, as a created instrument it may require modifications to its overall
design in order to improve its effectiveness for future use. As a tool, it is to
be utilised for the purpose of a task, enabling craftspersons to complete the
task with greater efficiency and precision than they would without it. In this
way the gift-task paradigm is offered as a resource to the current and future
church.

Regarding the testing of the paradigm done within this thesis, both
strengths and weaknesses can be noted. Thoughtful consideration was given
to the task of ‘choosing’. Choosing the ‘right’ context to test the gift-task
paradigm was important if it was to be done in an authentic way. Therefore giving consideration to the current ecumenical context with theologians who were already engaging with the marks reveals that a concerted effort was made to test it against some of the best. This was in contrast to simply choosing authors who might be lacking in their treatment of the marks and who would therefore provide an easy opportunity to outline how the gift-task paradigm ‘filled in’ the gaps. Looking solely at the official denominational approaches would have been too limiting as well, since it was already outlined earlier in this thesis that, in the twenty-first century, the marks are statically defined along institutional lines, with little or no appeal made to their theological nature. Therefore, choosing internationally well-regarded theologians who themselves have thoughtfully considered the marks (ecumenically and in a creative, nuanced manner) provided a robust challenge and opportunity to test the paradigm against their theological views.

Conversely, then, as an unavoidable weakness in the work done, the paradigm was tested hypothetically against only a small sampling of the academic work of four theologians and therefore it was a theoretical offering. This work could have gone broader or could have allowed for responses from the theologians sampled; then those responses could have permitted further engagement with the process to further develop the paradigm. Perhaps this could be the goal of a future study in which the space limitations of this thesis would not present an issue for a more thorough investigation and treatment.

Towards that end, other suggestions for further study include a more comprehensive account of the various twenty-first-century denominational
positions on the marks, including denominations not represented in the present study. This would broaden not only the understanding of the marks but also the scope of the field for interchurch dialogue. Perhaps a similar study undertaken here that engaged more fully with the ecumenical work of the World Council of Churches’ interchurch dialogue and working papers (or any of the other bilateral ecumenical dialogues) could also add value to and broaden an understanding of the marks, as well as increase the scope of testing of the paradigm; thus allowing for fuller engagement in the process of further developing the paradigm.

On a smaller scale and at a more local level, work could be done by utilising the gift-task paradigm table offered at the end of chapter 5 and presenting it at ecumenical workshops or academic conferences to engage in face to face dialogue, with the view to ‘testing’ the paradigm in actual encounters and promoting its further development and modification.

Taking a different angle, academic study on the marks that considers more fully the biblical basis of the marks could be pursued. In this process passages of Scripture that relate to the concepts of ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ could be investigated with the aim to determine how such a project could more fully develop the paradigm.

The goal in any of these scenarios would remain the same as the goal presented within this thesis, that is, to find a way to answer the question of how the classical marks of the church can have a continuing and contemporary relevance to the church in the twenty-first century. To this I respond that one way is to view the marks through a communicative, analytical and theological paradigm that seeks to honour the gift of the marks while communicating its task across different contexts.
Conceptually speaking, the church can be likened to that of a ‘pilgrim’ on a journey who navigates the here and now and moves towards the eschaton. The church is meant to be contextual, dynamic, and changing in its structures and forms to meet the variety of contexts it engages in. Static views or responses to context risk the church’s becoming irrelevant. The church as a pilgrim people grows in its understanding of the marks (and in all theology), forever finding new ways of engaging in a global, plural, postmodern world. It is my hope that the gift-task paradigm that is offered in this thesis better enables the church to fulfil its journey.
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#LoveMakesAWay.


