

COMMUNION  
ECCLESIOLOGY  
in a racially  
polarised  
South Africa



**KELEBOGILE T. RESANE**

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# Foreword

Some of the legacies of the twentieth century – the renewed interest in the church and the human propensity for violence – have continued unabated to this day. The strange vicissitudes of the church in her global growth and the simultaneous decline in the West remain an intriguing focus for theological reflection.

Many attempts have been made to construe ecclesiologies which might ‘fit’ these changing conditions. The dark face of mankind has found surprising expressions in the new century, especially in aggressive fundamentalism. The dream for greater tolerance and acceptance of the ‘other’ has proven to be an elusive ideal. Both of these features of the twenty-first century are addressed by this timely book *Communion Ecclesiology in Racially Polarised South Africa* in a uniquely contextual manner.

I became acquainted with the author, Dr Kelebogile Thomas Resane, at the Faculty of Theology at the University of the Free State. I soon realised that his abilities as a teaching and learning specialist in higher education are matched by his interest in and mastery of Systematic Theology. In a short time, he has become an esteemed colleague who combines his work as teaching and learning manager with research and publication in Dogmatics.

This book gives a clear glimpse into the theological mind of Dr Resane. The chapters on a biblical, historical, contemporary, African, South African and pastoral approach to a communion ecclesiology, evidence a specific way of doing theology, which is most striking and commendable. Rarely do we encounter theological reflection as comprehensive and inclusive. Communion ecclesiology has become one of the major trends in scholarly reflection on the church, especially since Vatican II. Sadly, it has never received thorough reception in a country deeply scarred and alienated by the apartheid ideology.

This work by Dr Resane is long overdue. Not only does it convey important developments in the state of scholarship on ecclesiology but it also exemplifies much needed contextual engagement. The theological intuitions embodied in this book should remain a challenge to all involved in theology in South Africa.

The focus on communion signals a crucial shift in intellectual work during the last hundred years. Scholars have realised that a new category of thinking is emerging that replaces the long grip of the substance philosophy – relationality. But more is at stake than a mere category replacement; relationality also conveys something inherent to the very nature of being as such. A deep connectedness – an interwovenness of life – is a fundamental ontic structure.

On even more profound level, theologians have started to realise that the Divine should be re-imagined in ways congruent with these insights: God is in God's very identity relational; this is the meaning and implication of the trinitarian confession.

If relationality is the key to understanding the human cognitive structure and the nature of being, and the identity of the Divine, then the consequences are immense. Theologians will have to think differently about anthropology and about ecclesiology. Life is relational; the new humanity – the church – is the new community.

The ramifications for a country like South Africa are obvious and at the same time disturbing. Apartheid was inherently a violation of this ontological and theological insight. Sadly, separate churches along racial lines institutionalised this aberration. The history of the church in South Africa is the tragic history of failure to be the icon of the very life of the triune God – life in loving communion.

Many healing changes have been taking place in South Africa. Disturbingly, churches lag behind in coming to terms with a new constitutional dispensation. The work by Dr Resane is a most important wake-up call to rethink the continued divisions and alienations that still mar the face of the church in South Africa. May this vision – persuasively argued from various perspectives

– become a motivation for greater communion and make us more human, and a more obedient image of the Triune God.

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# Introduction

The church is no more visualised as a parochial or structured operation with problematic legal restrictions, marked by numerous cul-de-sac signposts. In our postmodern era, the church is closely associated with conceptual metaphors of 'community', 'communion', 'fellowship', 'togetherness', *koinonia*, 'the one another' and many other related terms, such as 'partnership', 'connectedness', 'participation', 'relationship' and 'cooperation'.

Humanity has always been the center of the narrative of creation whereby God and humanity coexist in some form of symbiosis – the relationship in which members value the reality and the contribution of others. From the Old Testament era, God has always communed with his people. In their nomadic lifestyle or geographically settled pattern, he has always been there in their midst. The nation of Israel never saw itself as an independent dynasty without Yahweh as a full member and participant of the community. God's people camped with God. The members come together at the point or center of the Word. It is the Word that makes this symbiosis inseparable. I associate myself with Willem VanGemerem when he affirms that

the Bible is the book of God and man. God speaks through the mouths of men, and men and women hear the voice of God. Though the men God spoke through lived millennia ago, the church still listens. (1988:17)

God has used the metaphors to express his presence among his people. The community under his Word gathered around some altars built by the patriarchs, around the tabernacle and later around the temple. Sacrifices and the priestly services were the means to commune with God. The Old Testament communion was a complementary relationship, whereby Yahweh's concern was establishing a world in which humanity could experience God's

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presence as they commune with him. Individuality or individualism was never a part of God's grand plan. VanGemeren asserts that 'the community worships, but individuals feed their own soul. The polarization of community and the individual is regrettable and can lead only to an impoverishment of the Christian community (1988:35).

The New Testament communion is characterised by togetherness. The early church of the Book of Acts was strong and exigent on two major concepts: *homothymadon* and *koinonia* (togetherness and fellowship). The concepts were inseparable as they marked their unity with each other and with Christ. Immediately after Christ's ascension, his followers gathered together in unity for mutual emotional support. They saw themselves as one body and found that this coherence to each other was their strength. The strength derived from unity was the mark of their communality. Unity does not bear on homogeneity but on heterogeneity. Unity is made out of diversities. The Word (apostles' doctrine) was the rallying center for *koinonia*. It was a unity around the Word.

Their unity was a community bound by the Spirit in fellowship. The Greek word for fellowship is *koinonia*, which means that which is in common. According to the *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary* (Tenney 1977), 'fellowship' can be:

1. Partnership or union with others in the bonds of a business partnership, or social or fraternal organisation, or just propinquity. Christians are told not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14-18)<sup>1</sup> because such a union, either in marriage, business, or society, is incompatible with that fellowship with Christians and with God.
2. Membership in a local Christian church or in the church. From the very beginning of the church at Pentecost, 'they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread, and in prayers' (Acts 2:42).
3. Partnership in the support of the Gospel and in the charitable work of the church (2 Cor. 8:4).

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1 Scriptural quotations throughout the book follow the *New International Version*.

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4. That heavenly love which fills (or should fill) the hearts of believers one for another and for God. For this love and fellowship, the Scriptures employ a word, 'agape', which scarcely appears in classical Greek. This fellowship is deeper and more satisfying than any mere human love whether social, parental, conjugal or other.

Speaking of *communion ecclesiology*, one of the common Greek words in Christian vocabulary is '*koinonia*'. The modern New Testament scholarship usually translates it as fellowship, partnership, sharing or even stewardship. It significantly carries the meaning of God's relationship with his people. In this sense, it means Christians are literarily partners with God. They are bonded together with God for a common purpose. Nothing is withheld in a true partnership. The resources of each one are shared with the other. It is beautifully expressed by Paul in Philipians 1:3-7 where the Philippian Christians are directly involved with sharing in Paul's suffering, poverty, message, and their own lives with him as partners in the gospel.

Sharing implies the release of everything one has with one who is in partnership with. God has given the communion everything needed for life and godliness. Communion members now share in his divine nature. This means that members receive that which is divine into their lives.

*Koinonia* as stewardship is when members are entrusted with a relationship to God, and are, therefore, expected to be good stewards of all that God provides. This refers to the resources of God and letting them flow through *communion* to the rest of the creation of God. As stewards, members receive not what is theirs, but what is someone else's. God has the purpose for what he has given us (1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 6:1.)

*Koinonia* is fellowship with God. He desires fellowship with his people. The church has the smooth interaction with God. She is called to love him since he first loved her. The *communion* is called to have *koinonia* with God and with one another in order to experience the fullness of life. The important aspect of fellowship is communication. The New Testament's use of communication gives the sense of sharing (John 11; Rom. 15:27, 1 Tim. 5:22, Heb. 2:14,

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1 Pet. 4:13, 2). It is principally the idea of *sharing together*, as it is depicted by Acts passages, such as in 2:44, 4:32 and 36.

The believers of the apostolic church had fellowship in what some English Bibles call 'one accord' or 'together in one place' or habitual meeting together'. For instance, 'They all *joined together* constantly in prayer' (Acts 1:14), 'When the day of Pentecost came, they were *all together* in one place' (2:1), 'All the believers were *together* and had everything in *common*' (2:44), 'Every day they continued to meet *together* in the temple courts ... and ate *together* with glad and sincere hearts' (2:46), 'All the believers were *one in heart and mind*' (4:32), 'And all the believers used to *meet together* in Solomon's Colonnade' (5:12) [emphasis added].

The Greek word for this togetherness is *homothymadon*. It occurs eleven times in the Book of Acts. Apart from the texts cited above, others that convey this *togetherness or one accord* are 4:24, 7:57, 8:6, 12:20, 15:25, 18:12 and 19:29. Romans 15:6 can be added to these. One can observe that *homothymadon* was either for positive or negative intentions. The fundamental principle behind *homothymadon* is 'Unity is Strength'. In every instance, when Christians were of the same spirit and mind, God did something extraordinary – a miracle, conversions or guidance. Theologian and Bible teacher, Peter Wagner comments on this fellowship:

While they were growing in their vertical relationship to God, the new believers were also growing in their horizontal relationship to each other in Christian fellowship. This relationship is heavily stressed here, mentioned in four of the six verses in the passage. One of the key factors of church health is to design ways and means for fellowship to be an integral part of church life week in and week out. If it is absent, the church will tend to plateau or decline. New members must be absorbed ferily rapidly. This is one of the reasons the cell church movement is having an increasing impact, not only in Korea where it is most highly developed, but also in many other parts of the world. (1994: 104)



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This was the secret behind their growth. One of the key factors of church health is to design ways and means for fellowship to be the integral life of the church at all times. If this does not happen, the church starts to plateau or decline.

Fellowship is one of the marks of the Spirit-filled community. Living in fellowship with one another is one of the effects of Pentecost. When people are baptised and filled with the Holy Spirit, they start to enter the new era of cordial relationships. The early church took relationships seriously. In submission, they were eager to receive the apostle's teachings. In love, they were related to each other and as a result became a loving, caring and sharing Spirit-filled community. In worship, they were related to God by worshipping him in the temple and in the home, in the Lord's Supper and in prayers, with joy and with reverence. As a communion of love, they were related to the world through outreach. They were engaged in continuous evangelism. For them, no self-centred, self-contained church that was absorbed in its parochial affairs could claim to be filled with the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a missionary Spirit. So a Spirit-filled church is a missionary church.

*Koinonia* is having something in common. *Koinonia* is strengthened by *homothymadon*, which means one accord or same in mind or spirit. It means brothers living together in unity (Psalm 133). *Koinonia* engrosses a common salvation through a common faith in God and in his Son, Christ Jesus. 'We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ' (1 John 1:3).

The basic idea behind enhancing communion ecclesiology is that Christians should strengthen and stimulate one another. Christian assemblies are intended to have a positive and helpful outcome, which is encouraging one another. Communion ecclesiology is a fellowship in that which is common. It means a partnership with others. It is, principally, the idea of sharing together. It is the communion of the faithful with God in Christ through the Spirit, and hence the common participation in Christian goods. Each member is in communion with God, and all are also in communion with one another. It

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is the communion that we enter by the act of faith. Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) captures it correctly: ‘The act of faith incorporates human beings into the community, on the other; it is simultaneously sustained by that community’ (2008:128).

However, living together in community or communion does not mean perfection. Fundamentally, the church is a communion of saints, a gathering of believers. It is called together by the Holy Spirit. It is where the Word is proclaimed and the holy sacraments are administered. The church is both a hidden community and a visible fellowship. It is hidden because faith is the conviction of the things not seen (Heb. 11:1) and visible because of the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments.

In line with the concept of the community, the inner life of the church is the priesthood of Christians for each other. This priesthood flows from the priesthood of Christ. Sharing in Christ’s priesthood gives the right to come before God in prayer and teaching for others. The priesthood for all believers means the right to preach the word and administer discipline. The whole church is authorised to proclaim the forgiveness of sins, which is the task that gives the community some assertiveness as representative of Christ here on earth.

The communion, as a caring community, plays a major role of teaching, cherishing and carrying humanity in the womb and lap and arms. It continues to shape and perfect humanity according to the form of Christ until its human members grow to become perfect people. The church as the community insists on the right and gifting of each believer for ministry as equal partners. The community has the access to God – both individually or corporately. The members are, therefore, not the spectators but the participants in ministry for the sake of other believers.

Just as the community lives by consensus and experience, the church experiences God mystically as supernatural. The church is not just an institution, but the fellowship experienced in everyday life. The church is the community of all who believe in Christ and exists for the purpose of extending the mission of

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Christ here on earth. The mission includes social justice such as reconciliation, poverty alleviation and education, and interventions during natural disasters ,such as floods, civil uprisings and earthquakes. The prophetic role of the communion is to denounce evil in society, especially if the prevailing regimes apply unjust methods that undermine human worth and dignity. In South Africa, communion ecclesiology cannot be experienced when the church is silent to evils of colonialism, apartheid, corruption, etc.

The members of the *communion* are not all perfect. There are the paraplegic, the deaf, the mute and the blind, among others, in membership. The church is the same. The common thread for the church is the relationship with Christ and the experience of God, regardless of socio-economic status.

We live in the post-modern era where there is a strong proclivity towards privacy and individualism. Communion cannot thrive with these leniencies, as it is designed to work in unity.

The New Testament lends no support to the idea of lone Christians. Close and regular fellowship with other believers is not just some euphoria but an absolute necessity for the encouragement of Christian values. The church is the fellowship of eternal community. It is a community where one gets values and beliefs and training in the Christian life. It is the community where one establishes the deepest and most enduring relationships in life. It is where one derives the name as a Christian and obtains identity as God's child. It is the community where one finds a sense of purpose in life. It is a vehicle that God uses to create a platform to serve him. The church is the family of God that is entered by faith in Christ.

Communion ecclesiology speaks of the unity in the faith whereby all members receive empowerment to live and carry out God's purpose for life. As one reads Ephesians 4:13: 'Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ', one realises that the Apostle, Paul, explains how the various offices in the ministry and the work of the ministry lead to the edifying, the building up, of the body of Christ. The former executive secretary for theology and

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the interfaith desk of the All Africa Conference of Churches, the Rev. Arnold C. Temple defines 'communion ecclesiology' as

the act of communing; spiritual intercourse or contact; fellowship; the interchange of transactions; union of a number of people in a religious service; the body of people uniting in such a service (2001:74).

The unity in the faith is not the union of nature, but the union of plan, of counsel, of purpose – seeking the same objects, and manifesting attachment to the same things – and the desire to promote the same ends. The unity of the faith further speaks of being in God and in Christ. It is a union among all Christians founded on and resulting from the union with the same God and Saviour. It is the union that eschatologically leads to the state of complete unity and to entire perfection. The ongoing endeavours of this unity are that, eschatologically, all members of the communion hold to the same truths and have the same confidence in the Son of God.

The final truth of the unity of faith is faith in the Son of God. This is when all confessing Christians come to the unity of the faith concerning the person, works and teachings of the Son of God. This is the journey of arriving at the maturity or perfection. This perfection or maturity is not an esoteric or a mystical experience. The way to attain it is to, first and foremost, grasp this unity of the faith concerning the Son of God. The faith is the beginning, the first step, which is absolutely essential. It is the first step, which leads to the final stage in which our faith will be perfect, with nothing lacking in it and nothing missing from it. When we attain this perfection of faith, we shall all be saying the same things and believing the same things, for then we shall know Him and see Him as he is. It will then be a perfected faith.

This faith in the Son of God is far-reaching and comprehensive. It clears the uncertainties concerning Christ's person – he is the Son of God, but he is also man. The unity of the faith embodies both. He was both Son of God and Son of Man. All Christian confessions strive, towards that perfection.

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In thinking about all this, one is left with wonder and marvel of the incarnation and all that led to it. It is a part of the faith of the Son of God to know that God, before time, purposed all this and appointed his Son heir of all things and gave him the church to be his people. And so the Son came, accepting the plan and his part in it voluntarily. The way to attain that final perfection is to look into these things, to grasp them, to understand them and to meditate upon them. We must believe in God's plan of redemption, his scheme of salvation, as prophets foretold it. It is all the part of this faith of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The more we know about God's purpose for this unity of faith, the more we shall grow and mature.

The unity of the Spirit and the unity of the faith are ongoing processes. Christ is still busy working in us to bring us to this unity. We need to avail ourselves for the Holy Spirit to work in our lives so that we may come to this perfection.

The unity of the Spirit is a demonstration or a characteristic of *koinonia*. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). The central object of salvation is to reunite, to bring together again, to restore the unity that existed between God and humanity before the fall. The new life found in Christ is the unity in Christ between the Jews and the Gentiles. It is the mystery that has now been revealed. The desire of God is that humanity, especially the communion of the saints, should preserve this unity since it is God's grand design. It is what displays God's glory above everything else.

The unity of the Spirit speaks of a united spirit or oneness of spirit. This does not refer to the fact that there is one Holy Spirit but it refers to the unity of affection, of confidence, of love. It means that Christians should be united in mind and affection, and not be split into factions and parties. It may be implied here, as is undoubtedly true, that such a unity would be produced only by the Holy Spirit and that as there was but one Spirit that had acted on their hearts to renew them, they ought to evince the same feelings and views. There was occasion among the Ephesians for this exhortation, for they were composed of Jews and Gentiles and there could have been a danger of divisions and strifes as there had been in other churches. There is *always* occasion for

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such an exhortation, for a unity of feeling is eminently desirable to honour the gospel and there is always the danger of discord where people are brought together in one society. Because people have different tastes and habits, a variety of intellects and feelings, diverse modes of education and different temperaments, there is a constant danger of division. Hence, the Scriptures dwell so often on the subject, and hence there is so much need of caution and of care in the churches.

*Through the bond of peace*, there should be the cultivation of that peaceful temper which binds all together. The Native Americans usually spoke of peace as a 'chain of friendship', which was to be kept bright. The meaning here is that we should be bound or united together in the sentiments and affections of peace. It is not a mere *external* unity; it is not a mere unity of creed; it is not a mere unity in the forms of public worship; it is such as the Holy Spirit produces in the hearts of Christians when he fills them all with the same love, joy and peace in believing.

The unity the apostle is concerned about in Ephesians 4:3 is a living and a vital unity. It is not a mechanical unity. It is the unity of the Spirit that starts from within and works outwardly. It is something essentially organic and vital, therefore, not artificially produced. It is something that is inevitable because of its very nature. It is not just external but also an internal unity. It is the unity that can only be understood as the work of the Holy Spirit. Those who fail to understand the doctrine of the Holy Spirit will fail to understand this unity. If one thinks of the Holy Spirit as a neuter, a forceful power or just a soul, and does not realise that he is the Third Person of the blessed Holy Trinity, one will not understand this unity, and it will be non-existent. This unity cannot be sensed or experienced or put into practice unless the Holy Spirit graciously reveals it. The communion is called to keep, to guard, to hold fast and to preserve the unity of the Spirit. We are not asked to make or to create it but to preserve it. It exists because we are Christians, and we are to guard it.

The apostolic and the post-apostolic church went through ideological and theological turbulences aimed at destroying the communion, however, each

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emerging force was met with challenges that left the church's communion unchallenged. The New Testament church was invaded by ideologies such as Platonism, Gnosticism, Epicureanism and Stoicism, as well as those propagated by the likes of Marcion, and Valentinus, however, these could not annihilate the church. During the patristic period up to the Reformation era, the church was marred by philosophies that, to some degree, caused schisms, yet the communion of the saints remained unmoved. The attacks were from both the throne and the pulpit, yet the church remained steadfast.

The first two chapters in this monograph establish the biblical and historical basis of communion. Chapter 3 considers traditional and contemporary views of communion ecclesiology and deals extensively with the Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant and African Initiated churches' views on communion ecclesiology. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 focus on the South African situation – the history and theological milestones of communion ecclesiology with special appeal to the metaphors such as '*ubuntu*' (communion ecclesiology from African perspective), the '*laager*' (communion ecclesiology from Afrikaans Reformed tradition) and '*matlo go ša mabapi*' (communion ecclesiology from the English churches, evangelical movement and the African Independent churches' perspectives). Chapter 7 continues where the three previous chapters left off by including the South African forgotten population groups of Coloureds and Indians. The extended family among the Coloured population, especially of those in the Cape, where Christians and Muslims interact harmoniously, is used as a metaphor for communion ecclesiology. On the other hand, the traditional Indian *kutum* is metaphorically used to express communion ecclesiology as presented in the New Testament to explain the households' conversions. Chapter 8 is the climax of the book and refers to the pastoral application of communion ecclesiology where the six functions (identity, dialogue, integration, policy, management, and reconciliation) are highlighted. The final chapter is missiological in content and provides practical missional steps to be taken to make communion ecclesiology an experienced and effective cultural synthesis. It concludes by giving various citations on communion ecclesiology by different church traditions.

## Chapter 1

# The biblical understanding of communion

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*The Word of God must be channelled from past history into ongoing history. Those who have received the Word of God are called upon to pass it on. This process passes through human hearts, human minds and human patterns of behaviour. It involves communities and institutions. It is a never-ending task, which we call biblical hermeneutics. Hermeneutics retrieves the meaning of the Word of God from these ancient documents and interprets it in such a way that it speaks authoritatively and redemptively to our contemporaries in their own situations (Nürnberg 2004:7).*

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### 1.1 The Old Testament communion

The Old Testament scholars over the years, are in agreement that the God of the Old Testament is the God who always sought communion with His people. Not only that, He is the God who is communion himself. This is demonstrated by the involvement of the Trinity in the creation story. The motif: 'Let us' in the Genesis (1:26, 11:7) record is a unifying communal notion of the communion of the Trinity. The God seeking communion with his creation was compelled by the *imago Dei* that human beings carry. The persons of the Trinity always consorted and consulted for mutual decisions and actions. It is not surprising to hear the theological debates on the diverse roles of each of the persons of the Trinity in creation.

From the Old Testament, the children of Israel worshipped God in a unique way. God was never seen as a remote being controlling the events of the universe.

Hence, the Old Testament refers to God in anthropomorphic descriptions such as loving parent, considerable friend, and powerful king but still the stress is none frequently on the distance between God and man, perhaps because Old Testament writers were reacting to the cultic religion of Israel's neighbours (Alancheril 2014, par. 1.1).

God and the worshippers saw themselves as the intertwined corporate personality. In other words, wherever His people were, there you find their God. The patriarchal period particularly surfaces God as the nomadic God – moving with His people wherever they went. The people responded to this nomadic God by building the altar for Him wherever they settled. These altars were the visible presence and significance of God dwelling with His people – the communion that was not just acknowledged and realised but also experienced and appropriated.

From the patriarchal period to the time of wilderness wanderings, God has always been in communion with His people. The nation of Israel always sought unity with God in their worship, regardless of diversities that were notable among them. Their worship manifested the need to enter into communion

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with God. Thus God saw himself as the genuine member of the community with His people. He anthropomorphically described himself to his people. They did likewise by describing him as a loving parent, friend, and king over their lives. This, however, did not bring them closer to him as they frequently expressed the distance between God and humans. This made their faith unique – not to be confused with the religions of their foreign neighbours. The Old Testament discusses the notion of communion by stressing the mutual sharing among God's chosen people, who co-exist as corporate entity.

The patriarchal period reflects some form of restlessness and nomadic lifestyle of the people of God. In fact, from the time of Noah (Gen. 8:20) to the time of Jacob at El-Bethel (Gen. 35:7), building the altar was the acknowledgement of the presence of God in their midst. In reference to Abraham's settling in Shechem and the Negev, Eugene Merrill (1994:77) points out that 'at each of these places he built an altar, a symbol of his new faith and of the awareness of the presence of his God wherever he went (Gen. 12:4-9)'

These symbols, in some instances, were given names as a memorial of God's communion with His people. This can be captured by the altars known as *El Elohe* (Mighty is the God of Israel) by Jacob in Shechem (Gen. 33:20); and the other one in Bethel, called *El Bethel* (God of Bethel). Wherever they settled, they acknowledged God's communion with them through these symbols.

The altars as the symbols of God communing with and among His people continued through the Mosaic era. In fact, Moses himself built an altar (Exod. 17:15) and called it *Jehovah Nissi* (The Lord is my Banner). This was a reminder to the nation of Israel that their God dwelt among them, despite the surrounding hosts of enemies. God is with His people even if they are in the seas of masses of other people. As a communing God with His people, He is with them wherever they go. When God appeared to Moses in a theophany on Mount Horeb in a burning bush, for the first time after four hundred years, God revealed himself in an audible voice by identifying himself as the I AM (Exod. 3:14, 6:3). Merrill explains:

*Communion Ecclesiology* by Dr. K.T. Resane explores the concept of a communion ecclesiology in South Africa. The book provides the reader with a comprehensive overview of the concept in the Bible, in history and in different church traditions including the African Initiated Churches. The book also focuses on the different cultural groups in South Africa as they were organised within theological traditions.

- Prof. S.D. Snyman

*University of the Free State*

The use of *ubuntu* to advance his argument for communion ecclesiology is a fascinating way to broaden the theological thinking of the readers of this book.

- Prof. Leepo Modise

*University of South Africa*

Resane argues wisely, forcefully and persuasively that in a racially polarised South Africa, the mutual communal affirmation as enshrined in *ubuntu* has a significant role to play. In the context of *ubuntu*, therefore, communion ecclesiology expresses compassion, justice, reciprocity, dignity, harmony and humanity – important elements of nation building. This is indeed a must read!!

- Dr Elijah Mahlangu

*University of Pretoria*

Dr Resane touches on the evils of the past South African government that divided people, including the church. The church should not compromise in order to rise above the current odds. This monograph is a must read for better equipping of students for ministry!

- Dr Frank Shayi

*International College of Bible and Missions*



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