

A Prisoner of His Own Creative Imagination

A Decolonial Discourse with David Bosch's Missional View of a Church as an Alternative Community

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ABSTRACT

DAVID BOSCH'S ECCLESIOLOGY REMAINS one of the most influential in missiological circles globally. This article sought to interrogate Bosch's creative imagination, with particular reference to his missional ecclesiology and in particular his view on the church as an alternative community from a decolonial perspective. What prompted this study is the ambiguity and at times, contradictory posture or even what seems to be a betrayal of Bosch's thought in comparison with his praxis. This article discovered that Bosch was not just a prisoner of his creative imagination, but also a prisoner of his faith, his views on truth, unity of the church, transformation, violence and reconciliation and of hope.

INTRODUCTION

BOSCH'S WRITINGS AND MISSIONARY thought continue to shape missiological conversations in our times (Verster 1997, 1; Kim 2002, 1), especially his understanding of the *mission Dei* (Bosch 1991, 10) and his views on the church as a transforming agent in its missionary encounter with the world (Bosch 1991, 16). In his efforts to creatively reimagine a contextually relevant theology of mission, it led Bosch to reimagine emerging paradigms as recorded in his *magnum opus*, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. This brilliant imagination, as articulated in his writings, project Bosch, and correctly so, as a theologian of paradigms. However, Bosch's praxis remains that of a person who was captured in the prison of whiteness and white privilege and has led to the "in-between tension" in Bosch's life and work.

Zooming into the discourse on Bosch's missionary ecclesiology and in particular his thought on the church as alternative community, various scholars have come to different conclusions. Some saw Bosch as a "missiologist on the road" (Livingston 2013; Kritzing and Saayman 1991, 1). Others saw Bosch as an idealist who continued to theologize from above and not below (Livingston 1999, 26). His protégés and colleagues, Kritzing and Saayman (2011, 7), agree with those who see Bosch as a missiologist on the road but sharply refuted any suggestion of Bosch being an armchair theologian. Kritzing and Saayman (1996) embraced his thought and praxis thereof as bold humility. However, Wyngaard warns against the reinterpretation of Bosch as a "safe" theologian, envisioning an alternative community which can continue without a slashing open of "the abscess of hate and mistrust and fear" (2013, 9). Botha (2011, 21–22) followed the same line, opening this "abscess," by criticizing Bosch for having not taken the African context and African theologians serious enough to include them as his interlocutors in his *Transforming Mission*. The most inevitable question which this article seeks to answer is: How serious was Bosch in terms of engaging the ecclesiological praxis of

the African churches and how liberated were Bosch's views on the church as an alternative community?

By asking how liberated his views were, this article, intrinsically, asks how decolonial his views were in particular towards blacks. This is discussed in the light of the decolonial agenda in the late 1970s (Bosch 1979, 18). This is quite critical for two reasons: First, Bosch's views on the church as an alternative community were birthed and shaped within the context of apartheid, a system that was supported by the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), the church where he served as a member, a missionary and pastor. Second, Bosch had close affinity with the very blacks who were victims of the apartheid machinery and would have continued to work very closely with blacks at both grassroots and academic spheres. It is important to raise this issue because, as much as David Bosch had the heart for blacks, the truth of the matter is that he also enjoyed the privileges of whiteness (Bosch 2011, 34). Adding to this, Takatso Mofokeng, who was also very close to David Bosch, marveled at his courage to bring whites and blacks together for numerous conversations around the Bible and political issues of his time, but at the same time was confronted with the same reality of white privilege and this is what he had to say: "I knew that, as a white person, he was more protected by his whiteness" (Mofokeng 2011, 47). Building on Mofokeng's views, this article seeks to argue that Bosch's theology on the church as an alternative community seems to run ahead of his social location. For all his movement toward decolonizing mission and critiquing apartheid, he remained protected by the system and his theology remains thoroughly western. Bosch was never able to disentangle himself from an ecclesiology that he considered to be not ideal and viable in that he remained a loyal member of the Dutch Reformed Church even after he had declared their views on apartheid "nothing but heresy." Bosch's praxis seems to contradict his theological expressions on emerging paradigms which should have prompted him not only to reimagine church as an alternative community but also engage in a journey that is liberating from whiteness and ecclesiological praxis that remains exclusive to this

day. Speaking in the context of Bosch's continued membership in the Dutch Reformed Church, Nicol shares the same sentiment: "It seems unthinkable today that he managed to remain an active member of the congregation, sometimes even a member of the church council" (2011, 52). When Bosch did not act in the manner that seems obvious, this article concludes that he was a prisoner of his creative imagination. He creatively reimagined an alternative community as part of the new paradigm, but because of his social location, Bosch's praxis remained exclusive as well. Consequently, this article revisits Bosch's missional ecclesiology and his thought on the church as alternative community from a decolonial perspective. The article seeks to determine the extent to which he was a prisoner of his own creative imagination in light of his thought and praxis.

SETTING THE TONE: A MISSIOLOGICAL CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF MISSIONAL ECCLESIOLOGY AND DECOLONIZATION

Missional Ecclesiology

This research is based within the broader missional ecclesiological paradigm that places the *missio Dei* (the mission of God) at the heart of ecclesiological praxes. Dreyer captures this as follows: "Central to missional ecclesiology is the theological concept of the *missio Dei*. The essence of being church is to be found in its participation in God's mission to the world" (2013, 4). In the reconceptualization of the Christian mission, the church is no longer viewed as a sending agent, but one sent to be a witnessing community of God's missional acts in the world (Guder 1998, 4–5). This understanding of mission is reflected in the works of many missiologists (Niemandt 2012, 1; Dreyer 2013, 3–4; Bosch 1991, 390). David Bosch's understanding of a church as an alternative community and the critique is placed within this framework.

Decolonization

The discourse around decolonization in Africa has historical roots in the colonial past and was very tied to “colonial power matrix.” This can be traced back to the Berlin conference of 1884 that divided the African continent and placed its countries under European powers (Ngugi wa Thiong’o 1986, 4–5). Decoloniality is premised on a coloniality of power and knowledge (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015, 489–90) and a coloniality of faith (Mashau 2018, 3). Theologically, the decoloniality project relates to the use of Christianity and Christian missionaries by the empire to advance Western domination and hegemony in all areas of life. In South Africa, the discourse is tied to the apartheid past with whiteness, white supremacy and white privilege at the center of white domination over the black majority. However, it should be noted that racial hangovers remain very much part of the post-apartheid discourse in South Africa (Snyman 2011, 464).

REVISITING BOSCH’S MISSIONARY ECCLESIOLOGY

The Missio Dei as the Foundation of the Missionary Church

What makes Bosch’s contribution even more valuable in current missiological discourse is that his missiology was Trinitarian through and through. Theologically, Bosch propagated a new missionary paradigm shift which was rooted on the “*missio Dei*,” the mission of God (Corrie 2016, 193). Bosch’s ecclesiology was thoroughly Trinitarian (Bosch 1991, 390). Accordingly, the church does not have any mission; therefore, it only participates in God’s mission in the world and as such serves as an instrument in the hands of the missionary God.

Three Dimensions of the Church as a Missionary Community

In his theology of mission, Bosch understood church as a missionary community in nature and character (Bosch 1980, 82). The church stands in the service of the missionary God and therefore “mission is an essential aspect of the life of the church and of the individual Christian” (Bosch 1980, 198). In his analysis of Bosch’s missionary ecclesiology, Livingston (1990, 5) identified the eschatological (the church as the *kingdom community*), ecclesiological (the church as the *alternative community*) and soteriological (the church as the *reconciled and reconciling community*) motifs as underlying factors necessary for the church to fulfil its missionary mandate. While all three dimensions are important, this article pays special attention to the ecclesiological dimension.

BOSCH’S THOUGHT ON THE CHURCH AS ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITY

According to Wyngaard, “The notion of the church as ‘alternative community’ was a central theme in the work of Bosch and was also directly related to his own response to apartheid” (2013, 1). Historically, this concept was used by Bosch to define an alternative community of Jesus in comparison with the four main Jewish communities of the first century, namely: the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the Zealots and the Essenes (Bosch 1982, 5). According to Bosch (1982, 9), the new community of Jesus was not only radical but also represented a different order as compared to the other four. Hence the four main Jewish communities conspired to destroy Jesus and his movement. In his response to apartheid and keeping in mind the creative tension that the church finds itself in of being both *in* and *not of this world*, Bosch coined the notion of the church as alternative community. Bosch defined this community as: “The community of believers, gathered by divine election, calling, new birth, and conversion, which lives in communion with the Triune God, is granted the forgiveness of sins,

and sent to serve the world in solidarity with all mankind” (1980, 222–23). Bosch’s understanding of human solidarity is one that transcends humanly created barriers such as allegiance based on race, language and political convictions. It is a solidarity grounded on newness in Christ who gave birth to a “single new humanity” (Bosch 1980, 223).

It is this understanding of church that placed Bosch in collision with the Dutch Reformed Church because it is an ecclesiology that destroys the very fabric of apartheid. Kritzinger and Saayman (2011, 76) concluded that Bosch’s ecclesiology on the church as an alternative community was a central point of difference between Bosch and the leadership of the Dutch Reformed Church. Part of the argument that Bosch raised was the need to bring down the invisible Berlin walls separating black and white that made every city in South Africa a divided city (Bosch 1979, 20). There is no doubt that he was very assertive on the need to challenge evil and the powers that be (Bosch 1980, 225).

Speaking in the context of the need for the church to be a faithful witness of the gospel, Bosch’s thought and heart become blunter. This is what he had to say:

To all this we must say that, whenever the church’s involvement in society becomes secondary and optional, whenever the church invites people to take refuge in the name of Jesus Christ without challenging the dominion of evil, it becomes a countersign of the kingdom. It is then not involved in evangelism but counter-evangelism. (Bosch 1987, 102)

These, according to Bosch, become nothing but the church offering cheap grace to people and in the process denaturing the gospel (1987, 103). It is clear, as we conclude this section, that Bosch’s understanding of being church in the context of exclusion and separateness was one of unity. However, what is surprising is that Bosch chose to remain part of the DRC even after he had concluded, with regard to their theological justification of apartheid, that it was “nothing but heresy.” It is quite difficult to comprehend how such clarity in thought is compromised by the praxis thereof.

Hence the need to reflect on Bosch as a prisoner of his own creative imagination below.

BOSCH AS A PRISONER OF HIS OWN CREATIVE IMAGINATION

Bosch as a Creative Being

David Bosch was a creative thinker (Bosch 2011, 36) whose creative imagination brought clarity in terms of the liberative ecclesiology that South Africa needed in his time. He was able to envision theological and political possibilities beyond the DRC frameworks he inherits. But Bosch could not apply it in his ecclesiological praxis and therefore remained a prisoner of his creative imagination.

The Use of the Metaphor: Prisoner of His Creative Imagination

The use of the metaphor “prisoner of his creative imagination” is two-fold. First, I have borrowed the notion of a prisoner from Bosch’s own creative imagination as articulated in his article, “Prisoners of History or Prisoners of Hope?” In his efforts to expose the ideological nature of apartheid and the Afrikaner civil religion in which it was embedded, Bosch concluded that Afrikaners were prisoners of their own history and afraid of the future (Livingston 1999, 29–30). Because of the atrocities suffered by the Afrikaners in the concentration camps during the Second Anglo-Boer War, they could not imagine a future where South Africans would be united as one nationality, black and white. This unfortunately translated into how the Dutch Reformed Church imagined their ecclesiological praxis of separateness and even supported the apartheid regime to that effect—something which Bosch denounced, as we shall see later.

Second, Bosch had the ability to read the signs of his times and make projections in terms of future trajectories. However, there are some serious inconsistencies between Bosch’s ideal view of

church and his praxis. In the efforts to mitigate these inconsistencies and indecisiveness, Kritzinger and Saayman (2011, 7) came up with the concept of “delicate interplay.” This concept was coined to mitigate between his sense of agency, his spirituality, his theological ideas and his concrete actions. In his ecclesiology of the church as alternative community, Bosch sees the DRC as a prisoner of its own history, but at the same time he commits the same mistake by not applying his firm beliefs regarding human solidarity and oneness in Christ. While Bosch’s ecclesiological thought pushes beyond apartheid and imagines ecclesial faithfulness in terms of racial equality, justice, and reconciliation, he could not bring his theological convictions to bear on some concrete practices. Bosch was not as radical when it came to breaking away from the DRC or at least seeing black churches as an alternative community to the church whose support of apartheid he has denounced. Bosch’s formation as a white Afrikaner, with white privilege that came with it (as we shall see in the examples below) held him back from recognizing the decolonial and Africanization impact of his work.

The Church in Creative Tension with the Public

In defining a new ecclesiological paradigm, Bosch identified three different tensions faced by the church in the worldly context, namely: abiding, creative and destructive tensions (Bosch 1991, 381). His understanding of abiding tension is summed up as follows:

The new paradigm has led to an abiding tension between two views of the church which appear to be fundamentally irreconcilable. At one end of the spectrum, the church perceives itself to be the sole bearer of a message of salvation on which it has a monopoly; at the other end, the church views itself, at most, as an illustration—in word and deed—of God’s involvement with the world. (Bosch 1991, 381)

It is rather difficult for Bosch to integrate these two ecclesiological visions; hence the need to respond in such a way that the unity of

the church is not compromised. In order to achieve this, the abiding tension should be embraced creatively rather than being destructive (Bosch 1991, 381). In order for one to mitigate between the two views of the church, you should either choose a middle or alternative way, but without being offensive, confrontational and violent. Hence the notion of creative tension became very much part of Bosch's language as applied to the church as an alternative community. Bosch's understanding of church in creative tension refers to being "in the world but not of the world" (Wyngaard 2011, 156). This prompted Saayman (2011, 9) to view Bosch's understanding of the church not only as an alternative community, but also as an antibody. This analogy was used to justify why Bosch remained in the DRC even when there was a need for an alternative community. Saayman argues that the fact that Bosch remained in the Dutch Reformed Church even after declaring its ecclesiological support of apartheid as heretic and even after they had shown so much resentment and even rejected him and his family (Bosch 2011, 30), simply points to a creative tension between his ecclesiology of the church as an alternative community and the praxis thereof.

Bosch in Creative Tension

There are two critical issues that serve as examples when discussing Bosch in creative tension as applied to his understanding and practice of the church as an alternative community.

Nothing but heresy: In his response to apartheid as a political ideology supported by the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), Bosch declared that it is "nothing but heresy." However, his conviction, which should be applauded, could not set him free from his own prison of an oppressive and unjust church. There is no doubt in my mind that Bosch had full appreciation that the DRC, in their support of racism, were being heretical according to the vision of church as the alternative community. But, when presented with the keys to be free from such a church, Bosch chose to remain in the DRC until his untimely death.

In-between existence: In her narrative, Mrs. Annemie Bosch reveals that their lives together were largely a story of a life of in-between existence—between black and white (2011, 35). One gets a sense of a divided loyalty in the process. With their rich missionary experience of working with blacks in the Transkei, it would not have allowed them to be at peace when the majority of blacks were subjected to dehumanizing and unjust treatment from whites. Yet at the same time they could not just walk away from fellow Afrikaners. This “in-between existence” placed Bosch in a prison of his own creative thinking. I will come back to this point when dealing with the decolonial discourse.

Making Sense of David Bosch’s Prison

At face value, the foregoing exposes Bosch as having betrayed his creative imagination when coming to the praxis thereof. This should prompt us to ask difficult questions as to why such a great thinker would have in some instances failed to live what he preached? What are the underlying issues that would have pushed him to betray his own brilliant views about church as an alternative community? Upon further investigation, this article argues that Bosch’s prison of his creative imagination was multifaceted.

First, Bosch was a prisoner of his faith. Annemie Bosch described Bosch as a man of faith and humility (Bosch 2011, 37). Bosch’s faith and his love for the church made him stay in the Dutch Reformed Church until the very end, even when he would have denounced publicly their support for apartheid.

Second, Bosch was a prisoner of his views on truth. In his scholarly encounter with David Bosch, Yates (2009, 72) came to know Bosch as the man who was committed to the truth and would go an extra mile to dialogue and engage, irrespective of extreme personal discomfort. However, his understanding of the truth remained one of creative and not destructive tension. This would have pushed Bosch to embrace the alternative way, which could be described as a gentle tension. Speaking of Bosch’s views on the truth, Annemie Bosch noted, “As he did in much of his

writings, he simultaneously held on to more than one perspective of the truth, because he could see the necessity and validity of a range of perspective” (2011, 32). She further remarked that: “This led to the term he used so often: ‘creative tension’” (2011, 32).

Third, Bosch was a prisoner of his view on the unity of the church. In answering the question how the church could contribute to social change, Nicol remarked, “For Bosch the unity of the church precedes her contribution towards social change” (1990, 92). What Bosch “had in mind,” Wyngaard remarked, “was racial unity and reconciliation” (2011, 162). Bosch had clarity that the church should always stand in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, but he kept a distance with regard to active involvement in dethroning the powers that be. Instead of the church becoming a site for the struggle, Bosch pleaded a position where the church keeps a critical distance from any specific historical movement that participates, for instance, in the struggle against apartheid (Nicol 1990, 93).

Fourth, Bosch was a prisoner of his views on social transformation, violence and reconciliation. According to Livingston (1990, 13), Bosch used the concept of alternative community as a legitimate strategy for social transformation. However, this strategy was never meant to be political (Kritzinger and Saayman 2011, 76). Therefore Bosch believed that violent means could not be sanctioned to justify the liberation of the oppressed. With the influence of his Mennonite friend, John Yoder, and together with him, Bosch opted for non-violent means as a way of transforming the oppressive system from within. This approach would have prompted Bosch to opt for reconciliation rather than confrontation. “He firmly opposed the apartheid government, but refused to consider responding to violence with violence as inevitable, even in the face of the brutal events of the 1980s” (Wyngaard 2011, 163). Bosch believed that the use of violence by the church is nothing but the use of worldly ways, which renders the church’s witness redundant (Yates 2009, 73). However, Bosch overlooked the violent nature of the apartheid system in the manner that it was applied towards black South Africans.

Fifth, Bosch was a prisoner of hope. Bosch firmly believed that the church is an establishment that should remain hopeful and wait upon God even when faced with the evil of apartheid (Livingston 1999, 30). In the face of helplessness and hopelessness, Bosch would will hope against hope. This is captured by Annemie Bosch: “David, however, was a man of hope. He always said that he was in the hope business, and that gift of hope was obvious and noticeable in everything he did—at home and elsewhere” (Bosch 2011, 32). This translated into his understanding of the church as an alternative community. This hope is something that would have prompted him to remain in the Dutch Reformed Church, even when the opposite seems too obvious.

A DECOLONIAL DISCOURSE WITH BOSCH ON CHURCH AS AN ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITY

However, when coming to Bosch’s ecclesiology and commitment to provide an alternative community to apartheid, diverse views, which prompt me to seek a decolonial discourse with Bosch, emerge.

Bosch as Afrikaner

This section is not so much about providing historical facts about the birth, growth and academic formation of David Bosch (which are readily available in various literature) but to point out certain elements about his upbringing that have a bearing on our decolonial discourse. David Bosch was born in South Africa as a son of the African soil, but one who owed his being and loyalty to his Western heritage. The readily available sources about Bosch’s life and praxis make this clear.

First, David Bosch was born as an Afrikaner who was conscious of his whiteness and white privileges. He was raised to embrace white supremacy and struggled with this reality in how he related to blacks. While he is perceived by many scholars to be

liberal and progressive in his agency, Bosch remained conscious that blacks were never his equals. Second, Bosch was raised to embrace the politics of the day even though his conscious remained forever in creative tension. Livingston (1999, 26) remarked that: “while acknowledging that he continued to hold deeply paternalistic attitudes toward black people, he believed that his missionary years taught him to trust people, particularly his African Christian coworkers.” His calling and heart to work with blacks can never go unmentioned. It is something that caused much strain in his family (Kritzinger and Saayman 2011, 66).

Bosch as an African or a Member of a “White Tribe of Africa”?

Bosch’s identification as an African is one of the highly contested issues from a decolonial perspective. Bosch was always conscious of his European ancestry and heritage. Writing about African theologians, the dividing line of “us” and “them” will always be clear; something that is absent when referring to European colleagues. Even though Bosch was born and raised in South Africa, his Africanness can indeed be best described as a member of a “white tribe of Africa.”

Bosch as a Prophet of the West in Africa

Bosch was raised as a protestant who embraced Calvinism from his early childhood. He grew up to become a pastor and missionary of the Dutch Reformed Church, a lecturer of theology and a professor of Missiology at UNISA. There is general consensus that Bosch was schooled in the Western epistemic traditions. Two critical issues should be noted in efforts to engage in a decolonial discourse with Bosch. First, Bosch’s encounter with blacks was never one of trust, but fear (Bosch 1982, 26). He learnt to overcome his fear and to embrace the *imago Dei* in them progressively (Livingston 1999, 26). Secondly, Bosch should be credited for his decisiveness

in learning isiXhosa and using this indigenous language in his preaching (Bosch 2011, 17). In this regard his approach to mission should be lauded for taking indigenous knowledge system serious. Thirdly, Bosch's interlocutors in all his major works remain Western scholars from the Western culture and context. Only passing reference is made to Africa.

BOSCH AS A DECOLONIAL SCHOLAR FOR THE CHANGING PARADIGM

Bosch's Consciousness for a Need for a Paradigm Shift

His ecclesiological thought reveals high consciousness of the need for paradigm shift. Bosch, in my view, deserves to be called not only a theologian but a prophet of paradigms. *Transforming Mission* and all his major works are clear testimonies to this effect. In his analysis of "creative tensions in mission," Corrie remarked, "he recognized that the world of the 1970s and 1980s was changing profoundly, and that in the West a post-enlightenment, post-modern, post-colonial, post-everything world was forming a cultural paradigm shift which was gradually becoming globalized" (2016, 192). As a decolonial scholar and a son of his time, Bosch chose decolonial paths that placed him on a collision course with his vision of church as an alternative community—with racial and other humanly erected divisions brought down by the power of the cross of Christ and the work of the Spirit of God.

On the Church in Creative Tension with the World

Bosch's biggest dilemma was the use of violence to attain liberation as already noted. Bosch failed to reflect deeply on the political and structural violence perpetuated by the system of apartheid. First, while Bosch maintained a non-violent posture, he failed to stand in the gap in terms of stopping the violence perpetuated by the apartheid regime to blacks. Second, police-brutality directed against blacks by the apartheid regime was a kind of violence

that was defined by race. Bosch, even though he was very vocal in fighting apartheid, was protected by the system. Bosch could easily move from townships (among blacks) and to the suburbs without fear. Thirdly, the attack on black family structure through the separation policy and restrictions imposed by apartheid legislation. This is one area that Bosch could have stood in solidarity with as the many blacks who were affected by apartheid laws that restricted them from staying with their families in their places of work, which was exclusively white areas. Fourth, Bosch forgot to reflect on the violent God who would use violence to liberate the Israelites and give them an inheritance like land. This includes violence directed against Christ on the cross; God sanctioned it as a way to attain reconciliation with his people. Reflection on these acts of God would have assisted Bosch to take a firm stand with the marginalized blacks and to accept the notion of church as a site of struggle. Lastly, Bosch forgot to reflect on “the hermeneutic of madness” as adopted by Christ when people had turned the temple into a den of thieves—he violently used a whip to bring order and to liberate the very people from abusing religion for their own selfish benefit. The same liberating framework could have been adopted by Bosch to mitigate the oppression of blacks in South Africa.

Bosch's In-Between Existence

His in-between existence (Bosch 2011, 35) that manifested in his solidarity with the oppressor on one hand and the oppressed on the other, did not just place his praxis in a paradox of sorts but also a high level of ambiguity. Because of this position (in my view and I might be wrong) Bosch held an ambivalent praxis. The liberation hermeneutic demands an intentional need to be decisive in choosing to stand where God stands with those in the margins and the oppressed, and not the middle way.

Between Colonial and Post-Colonial and Apartheid

His article “Racism and Revolution: Response of the Churches in South Africa” introduced the debate around “democratization” and “decolonization.” This was used to introduce and justify the discourse around the Bantustan policy. The notion of Afrikaner nationalism versus African nationalism is important. Firstly, the discourse was highly influenced by wanting to settle a score with the colonial Britain—the Anglo Boer wars, concentration camps, economic depression, the great trek—the laager mentality—folk identity—the purity of the Afrikaner blood in the same vein as the election of the Israelites as the chosen people. Secondly, fear of the unity of blacks in South Africa through black nationalism and consciousness—hence the separate development of the legislation of apartheid and theology. In providing a summary of areas where Bosch is found wanting, four issues can be highlighted.

First, Bosch’s failure to sign the Kairos document. Of course he was also influenced by Tutu’s notion of reconciliation without violence. Second, with Bosch remaining in the Dutch Reformed Church. Of course, others will hail Bosch for it and call him an “internal critic” or use the phrase “outside the Afrikaner camp without leaving it.” Of course we can say all of these, but the reality is that it was safe to remain inside. Mofokeng (2011, 47) asserts that irrespective of the good work among blacks, Bosch remained a white man who was protected by whiteness. Third, the issue of loyalty to the DRC to the very end versus loyalty to Christ and loyalty to God in solidarity with the oppressed. Fourth, Bosch chose advocacy which is not demonstrated by incarnational acts. He failed to transcend language, cultural and racial boundaries in his efforts to fight the injustices against blacks in South Africa. That is another area where Western theology and ecclesiology must die, by amplifying the voice of the oppressed by giving it back to them. When confronted with a choice whether to be neutral or be judgmental in terms of condemning the church’s response to racism, Bosch chose to be a prophet who works from within the same space. This is what he had to say: “I believe that this third

perspective is the only Christian one. It is the easiest thing in the world to criticize but desperately difficult to be prophetic. That presupposes solidarity. The critic condemns from the outside, the prophet confesses from within. The critic judges, the prophet weeps. The former therefore remains unscathed while the latter receives blow upon blow” (Bosch 1979, 20). Bosch preferred to remain in “prophetic solidarity” (Yates 2009, 73).

CONCLUSION

This article has provided a critical assessment of Bosch’s view on the church as an alternative community from a decolonial perspective. While Bosch’s ecclesiology could be hailed for his creative imagination, it failed when coming to its praxis. The result was ambiguity and creative tension between theory and praxis, especially when Bosch chose to remain within the Dutch Reformed Church instead of forming an alternative community. This article has discovered that Bosch was not only a prisoner of his creative imagination, but his prison was multifaceted, namely: Bosch was a prisoner of his faith, his views on truth, unity of the church, transformation, violence and reconciliation, and hope.

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