

CHAPTER TWO

TRIUNE GOD: RELATIONAL AND MISSIONAL

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus, was an early Christian author from Carthage in the Roman province of Africa. Tertullian has been called "the founder of Western theology." Though conservative, he did originate and advance new theology to the early Church. He is perhaps most famous for being the oldest extant Latin writer to use the term Trinity and giving the oldest extant formal exposition of a Trinitarian theology. Other Latin formulations that first appeared in his work are "three Persons, one Substance" as the Latin "*tres Personae, una Substantia*" (Kirby 2001).

The discussion of the Trinity, especially a relational Trinity, reveals the core understanding of the researcher's viewpoint of missional ecclesiology and leadership. This chapter shows that the Triune God of love is a relational and missional God. It also shows that as a result of the total "oneness" of God, there is no hierarchical order in the Godhead and as such the Church should operate with the Trinity as model and example.

Writing about God is and will always be a very humbling experience to the researcher. He acknowledges and knows that no human will ever be able to define, fully understand or analyse God and therefore relies heavily on his understanding of God's self-revelation (2.2.2 Self-Revealing Trinity), when writing this chapter. With the focus of this research on relationships, it is important to discuss the Trinitarian relationship, as the community of the Father,

Son and Holy Spirit becomes the prototype of the human community. “In fact, the assumption that the most promising beginning point for a viable Trinitarian theology lies in the constellation of relationships among the three Trinitarian persons that has become so widely accepted that it attained a kind of quasi-orthodox status” (Grenz 2004:117) - the understanding is that "persons" is used in the human frame of reference and is trying to describe an undefinable God. It is not trite to say that the triune God stand at the very beginning and end of Christian life and faith. “The nature of God’s being, not just God’s commands, is integral to the character of Christian beginnings and ends” (Volf and Welker 2006:3).

For ages our ancestors in faith had experienced God in nature – Yahweh, the all-powerful distant Creator God of Genesis. Later they experienced God as Liberator and Lawgiver, the God of Exodus who freed his people from bondage in Egypt and gave them Ten Commandments to live by (Exodus 20). Early Christians continued to experience the God of the Old Testament, but they also experienced God in a new way, as Redeemer, the loving, healing, reconciling Word made flesh – Jesus of the Gospels in the New Testament (John 1:14). They saw Jesus die on a cross for the sins of the world even after mankind rejected Him. God’s undisguised love and His true intentions with mankind were revealed in Jesus on the cross, which became the centre of Christian theology. He was buried in a tomb which was found empty after three days, confirming His promise that He will rise again. Fifty days after his resurrection, during Pentecost in Jerusalem, they experienced God in still another way, as Spirit, the God of the book of Acts, the One who motivates and strengthens His followers for discipleship (Acts 1:8). The God who was always above them had walked amongst them, and the God who once walked amongst them now lives within them. Accordingly, after much deliberation and debate, early Christians concluded that God, although one in being, self-revealing in three ways, is a Trinity – “God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit” (Grenz 2004:121). Sweet sees the Trinity holistically involved in redeeming the world. God the Father is

missional, God the Son is relational and God the Holy Spirit is incarnational (Sweet 2009:25-26).

The researcher's viewpoint on the Church is missional, taking into consideration that missions is not a program or project with a budget but a 24/7 lifestyle "born in the very heart of God". The Church is relational but relationships are not autonomous, unaided or self-reliant and confined to certain programs or days of the week – it is "the presence of Jesus among His people called out as a spiritual family to pursue His mission on the Planet" (Cole 2005:53). The Church is incarnational and the embodiment of the Trinity on earth is the lifestyle of God's Church.

Missionality is fuelled by nurturing relationships, love-driven by the Holy Spirit from the heart of God. God loved the world enough to send His Son on a mission to build a redemptive relationship with His creation (Cole 2005:Kindle1496-1498). Mission cannot be successful without building relationships with those not living within Christianity or even opposing Christianity. The only example and model of a true and perfect relationship lies within the Trinity and the Godhead modelling and illustrating mission through the life of the Trinity (Balía & Kim 2010:20). Building the theory of relational missionality on the Trinitarian community and relationality, will hopefully assist the Church in their missional task. This will happen when the Church's leadership is placed within the *missio Dei* and functions as an agent of "God's redemptive initiative" in the world as He acts with love through the Church (Tennent 2010:Kindle701). The Latin theological term of *missio Dei* can be explained as the 'mission of God' or the 'sending of God'. Mission is understood as being derived from the very nature of God as the missionary initiative comes from God alone.

2.2 GOD IS A TRINITY

This study will not attempt to prove the doctrine of the Trinity but uses and mentions the following scriptures and documents to support and confirm the views of the researcher. It will also serve as a basis for all further discussion and reference to the Trinity that is the starting point and foundation of the writer's understanding of God. The researcher agrees with Grenz that the Trinity is the beginning, the essence and the core of the missional church and therefore also relational leadership. God's revelation to us is an illumination of the actual being of God. So if God appears to us as a Trinity the way He did in Matthew 3:16 - 17, this is because God's actual being is a Trinity (Grenz 2004:12). God is a trinity of three persons (the use of "persons" is used in the human frame of reference, trying to describe an undefinable God) and a unity of three persons named in the baptismal formula given by the Son in Matthew: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (28:19).

This is God's revelation of himself: a Trinity with one name (*ὄνομα* – Swanson 2001) but three persons, not icons or gods. The one name "God" joins the three persons together and makes this a divine community (Moltmann 2010:150).

2.2.1 Documents used by the Church affirming the Church's belief in the Triune God

- a. Christian churches have used the ***Athanasian Creed*** since the sixth century. In this creed the equality of the three persons of the Trinity is explicitly stated:

- And in this Trinity is none afore or after another; none is greater or less than another (25).
- But the whole three persons are co-eternal, and co-equal (26).
- So that in all things, as aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped (27).

(<http://www.ccel.org/creeds/athanasian.creed.html>

Viewed 13th July 2011)

b. It is important to note article 8 and 9 of the **Belgic Confession**:

- Article 8: The Trinity

In keeping with this truth and Word of God we believe in one God, who is one single essence, in whom there are three persons, really, truly, and eternally distinct according to their incommunicable properties – namely, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father is the cause, origin, and source of all things, visible as well as invisible. The Son is the Word, the Wisdom, and the image of the Father. The Holy Spirit is the eternal power and might, proceeding from the Father and the Son. Nevertheless, this distinction does not divide God into three, since Scripture teaches us that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit each has his own subsistence distinguished by characteristics – yet in such a way that these three persons are only one God. It is evident then that the Father is not the Son and that the Son is not the Father, and that likewise the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son. Nevertheless, these persons, thus distinct, are neither divided nor fused or mixed together. For the Father did not take on flesh, nor did the Spirit, but only the Son. The Father was never without his Son, nor without the Holy Spirit, since all these are equal from eternity, in

one and the same essence. There is neither a first nor a last, for all three are one in truth and power, in goodness and mercy.

- Article 9: The Scriptural Witness on the Trinity

All these things we know from the testimonies of Holy Scripture as well as from the effects of the persons, especially from those we feel within ourselves. The testimonies of the Holy Scriptures, which teach us to believe in this Holy Trinity, are written in many places of the Old Testament, which need not be enumerated but only chosen with discretion. In the book of Genesis God says, “Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness.” So “God created man in his own image” – indeed, “male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:26 – 27). “Behold, man has become like one of us” (Gen. 3:22). It appears from this that there is a plurality of persons within the Deity, when he says, “Let us make man in our image” – and afterwards he indicates the unity when he says, “God created”. It is true that he does not say here how many persons there are – but what is somewhat obscure to us in the Old Testament is very clear in the New. For when our Lord was baptised in the Jordan, the voice of the Father was heard saying, “This is my dear Son”; (Matt. 3:17) the Son was seen standing in the water; and the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of a dove. So, in the baptism of all believers this form was prescribed by Christ: “Baptise all people in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). In the Gospel according to Luke the angel Gabriel says to Mary, the mother of our Lord: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and therefore that holy one to be born of you shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). And in another place it says: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and

the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you” (2 Cor. 13:14). “There are three who bear witness in heaven – the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit – and these three are one” (1 John 5:7). In all these passages we are fully taught that there are three persons in the one and only divine essence. And although this doctrine surpasses human understanding, we nevertheless believe it now, through the Word, waiting to know and enjoy it fully in heaven. Furthermore, we must not the particular works and activities of these three persons in relation to us. The Father is called our Creator, by reason of his power. The Son is our Saviour and Redeemer, by his blood. The Holy Spirit is our Sanctifier, by his living in our hearts.

(<http://www.reformed.org/documents/BelgicConfession.html>.

Viewed 4th February 2012)

- c. A brief but clear statement by *Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J.* shows the **Catholic doctrine** on the Holy Trinity:

The mystery of the Holy Trinity is the most fundamental of our faith. On it everything else depends and from it everything else derives. Hence the Church’s constant concern to safeguard the revealed truth that God is One in nature and Three in Persons.

(http://www.therealpresence.org/archives/Trinity/Trinity_001.htm.

m. Viewed 9th July 2012)

- d. At the Centenary of the World Missionary Conference of Edinburgh 2 - 6 June 2010, the **Common Call** was issued to proclaim unequivocally the Church's belief and trust in the Triune God:

"Trusting in the Triune God and with a renewed sense of urgency, we are called to incarnate and proclaim the good news of salvation, of forgiveness of sin, of life in abundance, and of liberation for all poor and oppressed. We are challenged to witness and evangelism in such a way that we are a living demonstration of the love, righteousness and justice that God intends for the whole world".

(http://www.edinburgh2010.org/fileadmin/Edinburgh_2010_Common_Call_with_explanation.pdf. Viewed 9th July 2012)

- e. The Commission on ***World Mission and Evangelism*** (CWME) submitted a document as recent as 22 – 27 March 2012 to the CWME Pre-assembly Mission Event in Manila, affirming the Church's belief in the "Triune God who is the creator, redeemer and sustainer of all life":
1. We believe in the Triune God who is the creator, redeemer and sustainer of all life. God created the whole *oikoumene* in God's image and constantly works in the world to affirm and safeguard life. We believe in Jesus Christ, the Life of the world, the incarnation of God's love for the world (John 3:16).[1] Affirming life in all its fullness is Jesus Christ's ultimate concern and mission (John 10:10). We believe in God, the Holy Spirit, the Life-giver, who sustains and empowers life and renews the whole creation (Genesis 2:7; John 3:8). A denial of life is a rejection of the God of life. God invites us into the life-giving mission of the Triune God and empowers us to bear witness to the vision of abundant life for all in the new heaven and earth. How and where do we discern God's life-giving work that enables us to participate in God's mission today?

2. Mission begins in the heart of the Triune God and the love which binds together the Holy Trinity overflows to all humanity and creation. The missionary God who sent the Son to the world calls all God's people (John 20:21), and empowers them to be a community of hope. The church is commissioned to celebrate life, and to resist and transform all life-destroying forces, in the power of the Holy Spirit. How important it is to "receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22) to become living witnesses to the coming reign of God! From a renewed appreciation of the mission of the Spirit, how do we re-envision God's mission in a changing and diverse world today?

3. Life in the Holy Spirit is the essence of mission, and the core to why we do what we do, and how we live our lives. Spirituality gives deepest meaning to our lives and motivates our actions. It is a sacred gift from the Creator, the energy for affirming and caring for life. This mission spirituality has a dynamic of transformation which, through spiritual commitment of people, is capable of transforming the world in God's grace. How can we reclaim mission as transformative spirituality which is life-affirming?

(<http://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/mission-and-evangelism/together-towards-life-mission-and-evangelism-in-changing-landscapes.html> – Viewed 9th July 2012)

2.2.2 Self-revealing Trinity

This researcher is in total agreement with Volf, Grenz and others who explicitly stated that the only way to really know God is through God's self-revelation. God's self-revelation deals by definition with God's relationship with His creation (the so-called economic Trinity) and inevitably exposes the character and the essence of who God really is (the so-called immanent Trinity) (Volf and Welker 2006:4). Grenz warns that in attempting to establish the relationship between immanent and economic Trinity, one should be careful not to put so much weight on the latter that "the immanent Trinity, even if it is still distinguished from the other, becomes merely a kind of precondition for God's true, earnest self-revelation and self-giving" (Grenz 2004:195).

The understanding is that reference to the immanent Trinity is a way of referring to God's eternal existence and the internal relationships between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Referring to the economic Trinity is a way of considering God's activity in and towards His creation.

It must be said that this discovery takes place with the awareness and acknowledgement that God is greater than the human mind could ever describe or understand the Trinity and that every effort to know Him better will always happen in humility and dependence upon God the Revealer. Grenz (2004:39) mentions that the concept of revelation always "leads to a conception of the Trinity that includes both differentiation among the three and the equality of the three in their unity".

Nothing and nobody can reveal God but God Himself. Karl Barth, a leading theologian of the twentieth century, made it clear with his regularly quoted dictum, "God reveals Himself. He reveals Himself through Himself. He reveals Himself" (Grenz 2004:39) and hereby postulates that "God is the Revealer, the

Revelation, and the Revealedness in unimpaired unity but also in unimpaired distinction”. Barth unfolds the Tri-unity from the biblical witness of God’s self-disclosure where He reveals Himself as the Lord of the universe through “the act of self-revealing (sonship), in being inscrutable apart from this free act (fatherhood), and in the effect of this act (spirithood)”. The concept of revelation leads to a conception of the Trinity which includes both differentiation among the three and the equality of the three in the uniqueness of their unity (Grenz 2004:38-40, Moltmann 2010:149).

The Church accepts Jesus as God’s self-revealing gift to His people through the eyes of the Bible which not only tells the story about God's love and relationship with His creation but also reveals the Trinity to the world (McNeal 2009:26).

Mark heard Jesus’ teaching about God being One. When one of the teachers of the law asked Jesus which commandment is the most important, Jesus replaced the law with a love relationship with the Father and a missional love relationship to the world by answering: "The most important one, is this: Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:29 – 31).

In John 14 Jesus explains to his followers that He is the visible impression and image of the Father on earth while He also teaches about the coming activities of the Holy Spirit (John 15) – all of it describing the oneness and the interaction of the Trinity.

Jesus answered, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him. Philip said, Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.

Jesus answered: Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves (John 14:6 – 11)

Grenz mentions that Barth and Balthasar "believe that the basis for understanding God as triune, lies in the divine self-disclosure in Jesus Christ"(Grenz 2004:193).

2.3 TRINITARIAN RENAISSANCE

The unprecedented worldwide attention on the Trinity is one of the most interesting developments in the systematic theology of the last century. According to many, the Swiss theologian Karl Barth (1886-1968) gave the impetus for the renewed interest in the Trinity and according to him, this is the only way to know God. God reveals himself and his Trinitarian revelation is the starting point for Barth's whole theology. From there he structured his most famous work, the *Kirchliche Dogmatik* which provided a major impetus for the beginning of the renaissance in Trinitarian theology (Leene 2012:19-20). After Barth's widely published work on the dogma of the Trinity, this doctrine is seen as the most fundamental dogma of the church. Even though the word itself is not in the Bible, it makes it no less essential as the Scripture testifies at various locations of a Triune God. The Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck (1854-1921) articulated this as follows in his Reformed Dogmatics:

Met de belijdenis van Gods drie-eenheid staat en valt het gansche Christendom, de gehele bijzondere openbaring. Zij is de kern van het Christelijk geloof, de wortel aller dogmata, de substantie van het nieuwe verbond (1976:300).

(With the confession of God's trinity, Christianity as a whole stands and falls, the entire special revelation. It is the core of the Christian faith, the root of all dogmas and the substance of the new covenant.)

Within the global Trinitarian renaissance, there are several points of interest, such as the eschatological and ontological issues, but the attention given to relationality is the most prominent development (Grenz 2004:117). It has become a key concept (Kim 2008:215) since it affects all theological fields such as anthropology and ecclesiology. The development of relational understanding finds its origin not only in Trinitarian Theology, but also in Philosophy. The conversations about philosophical and theological relationality flows together and even merge to become one.

According to Kim (2008:215), who investigated the soteriological implications of three Trinitarian theologians, the renewed interest in the Trinity revealed definite characteristics related to relationality. There is a greater focus on the Three and the unity of God and it is inspired by the Eastern and Western theology of the Church Fathers. In the west Augustine is seen as one of the greatest role-players whilst the Cappadocians seems to be very important in the east (*Cappadocia: An ancient region of Asia Minor in present-day east-central Turkey. Heart of a Hittite state and later a Persian satrapy, it was annexed by the Romans in A.D. 17, <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Cappadocia>*). In the Renaissance the interaction between the Eastern and Western theology is striking. Kim also finds that this doctrine is not only limited to a dogma amongst others, but that it is the source of many other dogmas, and thus a framework theory for understanding all dimensions of human life.

2.3.1 Augustine

It was Augustine's (354-430) concept of a Trinitarian God that was decisive for Western theology and especially his book "De Trinitate" where Augustine describes his Trinitarian doctrine. In his book he warns that the Trinity is enigmatic, and he tells of his struggle to find words to describe this mystery (De Trinitate I 0.1 to 5, V 1.1). At the time Augustine wrote his book, Arianism was active and Augustine saw himself compelled to write in defence of the Trinity. His big problem with the Arians was that they confessed the subordination of the Son in relation to the Father and thus rejected the unity of the Three. Arius felt that the one who is sent is less than the one who sends. That means that the Father is greater than the Son and the Son, greater than the Holy Ghost. Augustine argued that the Son is not less than the Father - the sender is no more than the one who is sent (De Trinitate II 5-7). He specified that the unity of the godhead lives in joint action and that there's nothing they don't do together - *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa* (De Trinitate I-4-7, Meesters 2006:184). He expresses this fact on the basis of the theophany of the Old Testament and the sending in the New Testament. The Scripture as a whole shows a triune action. The argument is that each of the three persons could be incarnated. Augustine's views regarding the unit, admit that he found it difficult to discuss the trinity of God. He believed that human language is inadequate as it is asked: "Three what?"

Deo uno

Augustine struggled with the question of how one God can be three persons simultaneously without jeopardising the unity. He found the solution in the names, Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Meesters 2006:133). His distinction between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit lies in their relations. These names are relational terms that are related to each other, if they were different substances, there could not be one God. Augustine explicitly wanted to prevent that possibility and therefor explains relationality to defend the unity. It appears

that Augustine created relationality mainly from his defence of the unit but it is only mentioned when it comes to the Three. Yet it is not easy to define Augustine's "relational" because the relationship with the substantial is not entirely clear. The accusations of modalism could be refuted, but that does not mean that it is clear how the three Persons in the One are related, and what their identities are. Nevertheless, a Trinitarian doctrine does exist and helps to emphasise the relational. The relationship between substance and relationship is a difficult issue with Augustine (Leene 2012:45).

2.3.2 The Cappadocians

In the East it was Gregory of Nazianzus (329/30- ca 390), one of the three Cappadocian Fathers who first used the word relationality regarding the Trinity. The other two Cappadocian fathers were Basilus of Caesarea (330-379) and Gregory of Nyssa (331/40-394). All three were Bishops in Cappadocia and had not written any collective writings on the Trinity. In addition, all their writings have risen in controversy with opponents or in response to questions from others (Meesters 2006:27). It is important to discuss their thinking about the Trinity because in the current revival of a relational understanding of the Trinity, great inspiration came from the Cappadocian fathers.

Deo Trino

Many believe that the Eastern patristic theology emphasised the Trinity more than the One (Horrell 2004:2). In most cases authors then compared this theory with the West. This comparison does not mean that by definition an exaggerated attention is given to the Trinity at the expense of the One.

Meesters (2006:66,71) find Gregory Nazianzes' god concept an exception and sees it more as monotheistic because he never speaks of three hypostases. The beginning of the relational understanding of the Trinity might have begun with Gregory of Nyssa because he never used the Three in order to arrive at One. Of the Cappadocians, Basilus of Caesarea (330-379) is the one that draws the most attention. He sees the distinction between Father, Son and Holy Spirit in two things: First, in their place within the order of the deity and second, in the specific attributes that are assigned to the individual hypostases (Meesters 2006:49). Basilus situates their difference not so much in the Persons but rather in the way their hypostases exist: The characteristic of the Person of the Father's Fatherhood, the Sonship of the Son, and the sanctification of the Holy Spirit. Their differences are mainly in positional order. This cannot be found in Augustine's theory. Therefore, it can be concluded that mainly with Basilus, in comparison with Augustine, more attention is given to the Trinity, though this does not detract from the attention to the Unit. Does this take the accusation of tritheism away?

2.3.3 Tritheism and Relationality

In contrast to the monotheism or modalism in Augustine, the analogies of the Cappadocians might seem to be a problem by tending towards tritheism especially when they compare the Three individuals to human persons (Leene 2012:47). However, Meesters (2006:108) refutes this allegation by showing that the analogies used by the Cappadocians assume a unit from distinct parts and do take due account of the unit.

Contrary to popular belief, the accentuation of the Trinity does not mean a disregard of the Monotheism, but rather the radicalisation of the Trinity; it is all about the one-ness within God. The perfection of the relationship is more

fundamental than what is voiced. The one-ness of God is noticeable by the perfect relationship amongst the Three. Although with this thought of mind, it might seem that the Three is the primary consideration, but that is not the case. Neither the Three, nor the One, is more essential or substantial than the other, as Gregorius of Nyssa explains it by saying that he cannot think about the Unity or he would immediately be surrounded by the brightness of the Three, nor can he discern the Three or he is instantly pulled back to the Unit again (Leene2012:48).

Both Gregorius of Nyssa and Basilius emphasise the Unity, which is in the shared nature of efficacy (Meesters 2006:75). In the East there are no clear boundaries and therefore the Cappadocians accentuate the distinction. To the West, this seems like Tritheism, which is not the case.

2.3.4 Comparison between East and West

There seems to be some differences in thinking about the Trinity between Eastern and Western theology. Apart from all the differences and misunderstanding they both seem to agree with Tertullianus' formula: 'One Being and Three Persons'. One explanation of the differences between the East and the West would lie in their methodology: the basis of the Eastern approach, accentuates the threeness of God whilst the West emphasises the oneness. In the East, relationships dominate their theology whilst the West thinks more in terms of a subject and an object. Therefore it is difficult to elucidate these different approaches, but still there is a clear difference. In the Eastern theology the threeness of God overshadows the oneness, whilst in the West the threeness is outweighed by the oneness of God (Leene 2012:52).

2.3.5 Perichoresis

The term *περιχώρηση* as a technical term was first used in the fourth century by Gregory of Nazianzus. The most important goal of the term was to describe the unit without missing being meticulous about the three persons and thus find a dynamic between the one and the three; keeping them together (Kim 2008:50,164). This means a being-in-the-other and shows that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one in a natural relationship. The reality of the relationships between the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, can be described by perichoresis. Perichoresis also means that all three persons are involved in all the activities, such as creation and redemption. Therefore it cannot be said that the Father alone was the creator, the Son the redeemer and the Holy Spirit the helper (Leene 2012:62, 63).

East and West understand perichoresis differently. The East sees perichoresis as a perpetual and uninterrupted motion and the West as a spatial relationship. In the East it is movement and life and in the West it is an inner relationship within God. Moltmann approaches the Godhead from the Three and therefore for him, perichoresis is the proper view of the oneness of the Three. He describes the unity of the Trinity as a perichoristic unity. The movement within the Trinity is a movement of love. The idea of perichoresis makes it possible to distinguish between persons without isolating anyone (Moltmann 2010:150-160). A lot can still be said about perichoresis but the most important, both in East and West, seems to be the relational aspect. According to Meesters (2006:155) Moltmann accepts a divine unity without any subordination. The unity of the Trinity is fundamental to Augustine; it shows there is no question of subordination within the Godhead.

2.3.6 *Imago Dei*

After the Reformation, the dominant view on ecclesiology and missions from the Western tradition is Christological in nature. In the West, the *Deo uno* had priority over the *Deo trino* because substance seemed to be more important than relationship. This special consideration given to the *Deo uno*, gave more attention to the individual and Christology. When deliberating on the ecclesiology it may not be surprising that the unity of the church was accentuated. This is also seen in Barth. He had a strong focus on the unity of God and therefore also shows diversity in the unit. This unit indicates the identity of God and the Church, its purpose and mission. More specifically, this can be seen from the *image Christi*. The main definition of the church for Barth is the body of Christ (Leene 2012:215). According to Volf (1998:141-144), the body of Christ is not to be construed as the body of a person (Christ) because it is a metaphor of a community of people, which forms a unit.

2.4 RELATIONAL TRINITY

In the early church history, the term "relationship" was introduced by Tertullian to understand the relationship between the One and the Three - *Deo uno* and *Deo trino* (Leene 2012:34).

In the Trinity there exists an eternal, complementary, and reciprocal interchange of divine life, divine love, and divine fellowship. In the total oneness within the triune God a mutual love, mutual dependence, mutual submission and mutual honour introduces an authentic relationship and community to the creation and especially to the Church. According to Sweet, the concept of Trinity envisions the sacred as being relational. Church life is "missional, relational and incarnational" and this is exactly how he describes God (Sweet 2009:120).

Grenz notes that with the Western relational understanding, St. Augustine offers a strong basis for understanding the eternal workings within the triune God. “It declares that the foundation of the inner life of the divine Trinity lies in the relationship between the Father and the Son, and that this relationship, in turn, is the Spirit, who is related to both of the other two” (Grenz 2000:69). St. Augustine envisioned the Trinity as a relationship of love between God the Father and God the Son, expressed as God the Spirit (Sweet 2009:95). However, caution must be taken to ensure that the Holy Spirit is never defined independently and always as part of the relationship integral to the unity of the Trinity. It is very important that we do not see the Trinity in “abstracted states of being but in the loving relationships of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” (Sweet 2012:140). Elaborating on the immanent being of God, one cannot help to quote St. Augustine again in saying that “the meaning of being is self-communicating love” and the Jesus notion that no one is “other than me” but only “the other of me” changes everything (Sweet 2009:9). Jesus’ words confirms this when He said: “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

It is thus important to look at the scriptures to see how Jesus reveals the immanence of the Three and the economy it brings to the world. Jesus’ prayer to his Father in John is all about his relationship with Him, His relationship with His followers and His relationship with the world.

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I want

those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you love me before the creation of the world. Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them (John17:20–26).

The scripture describes the background and the essence of relational leadership and a missional God: The leader of leaders praying to his father (relationship), “that all of them may be one” (relationship), “just as you are in me and I am in you” (relationship), “may they also be in Us” (relationship), “that they may be one as we are one” (relationship and leading by example), “I in them and you in me” (missional relationship), “you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (missional and relational), “righteous Father” (relationship), “though the world does not know you” (broken relationship), “the love you have for me” (relationship) and “I myself may be in them” (missional).

The Church, as a Christian community is a missional community that lives in communion with the Triune God that is constantly reaching out to a lost human world with a human understanding by being Father, Son and Spirit to this world.

Notable is the fact that “mission” does not refer to the geographical expansion of the Christian faith but to the activity of the Father in sending his Son and Spirit. God himself rolled out a redemptive act through Jesus Christ and continues to act in redemptive missional love towards the lost world. God revealed His true nature of love when He himself became the truth, the life and the way in his Son Jesus Christ. For Bosch the *missio Dei* concept is not “primarily an activity of the Church, but an attribute of God”. God is a missional God and the one that sent the Son to redeem the world (Bosch 2005:390). The

Church has no salvation to offer but through the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There is no equality between God and creature and yet God gives of himself, the Son, to bring man up to greater parity. The possibility that man can be in a healed relationship with the almighty God could only have been organised and orchestrated by God himself. Martin Luther made the point by talking about the “wonderful exchange” between Christ and the sinner in a godly act to save the lost soul. The missional relationship and outcome of divine grace can be seen in a scripture like 1 John 1: :7 "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

This happens when Christ enters our frail earthly selves, indwells us, and makes his divine life to be our own (Flett 2010:6, 166 with Volf & Welker 2006:10). Jesus is claiming that he is not working under his own strength or on the basis of his own strategy but entirely at the impulse and commitment to the missional activity of his Father. Jesus confirms this in John 8: "But if I do judge, my decisions are true, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me. In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true. I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me" and he also confirms the fact that the Son and the Father is always acting together by saying: "The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone".

The Trinity “moves” within each other, through each other, around each other in a “shifting round dance” but never without each other. Each person exists and co-exists in the other, not as separate gods, but as three persons inseparable from the other (Moltmann 2010:154-155). This also means that each person of the Trinity is not autonomous but that they are interdependent and only moves with the other.

Enjoying Moltmann's description of "the shifting round dance", it brings to mind Sydney Carters still famous Lord of the Dance written in 1963. The story that takes you from Bethlehem to the resurrection end with a life-giving, relational invitation: "I'll live in you if you'll live in Me". It all happens with the total involvement of the Trinity with one goal in mind: restoring the relationship between the Creator and those He created in His image. The Church in turn takes part in the dance, God's dance, "dancing to the tune of the spirit (Sweet 2009:27)" keeping "in step with the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25), being part of the *missio Dei*.

Taylor's description of a love-leaking Trinity (2005:Kindle1626) is understandable when one understands the missional heart of "God is love" (1 John 4:8). "God is love" surely is missional but first of all it is a relational characteristic of the Trinity, within the Trinity and from the Trinity to the creation. Love firstly is a relational issue from which His missionality evolves. This love-relationship with the world belongs to His eternal being.

The act of God to renew the relationship between man and God is thereby seen as a movement from God to the world and the Church serving as instrument to achieve this mission. Church exists because of the mission and not vice versa. The Church merely participates in the movement of God's love toward the people (Bosch 2005:390). Flett continues to note how the Trinity relates to us with the Father our Creator, the Son our Redeemer – by his blood – and the Holy Spirit our Sanctifier – by living in our hearts (Flett 2010:6). The missional Church is a Church that knows that it is God who is on a mission and that the Church joins Him in reaching out to the world. One can never overemphasise the importance of the fact that mission is not first of all our action or program but an action of God. The suggestion is now that the Church finds out what God is doing and joins Him in it (McNeal 2009:23).

“Relationships didn’t begin as a human initiative”, instead, it all started with God and the relationship within the Trinity. He didn’t create human beings because He needed someone to talk to; He created humans as relational beings because “He exists as a relational being”. As we are made in the image of God it is not far-fetched for Saccone to assume that God’s desire for us is to enjoy the kind of community and relationship that “He experiences within Himself (Father, Son and Spirit)” (Saccone 2009:14).

2.5 EQUALITY WITHIN THE TRINITY

One of the biggest reasons for the emergence of the dogma of the Trinity and the creeds of Nicea and Athanasius in the first centuries after Christ, was the debate on subordination (Leene 2012:82). Despite the struggle of East and West against Arius, Eunomius and other advocates of subordination, it still attracts criticism today; therefore we start this discussion on subordination with Augustine and the Cappadocians. Although the Trinitarian renaissance is characterized by anti-subordination, the opinions on subordination are still divided (Volf 1998:407). Today there are four different viewpoints that will be distinguished later: (1) Eternal subordination, (2) eternal subordination in function, (3) temporarily subordination in function, (4) reciprocal subordination.

2.5.1 Augustine: The importance of substance

According to Meesters (2006:130,147) Augustine gives to the Father genetic priority although In Augustine’s book *De Trinitate*, subordination is excluded (VIII, 1). Augustines uses no metaphors that assume a genetic priority, and by emphasising the equality of the Sender and the Sent, Augustine confirms their

parity. (De Trinitate IV 32). The three persons indeed do everything together. The priority of the Father refers only to His relationship with the Son and the Holy Spirit, not subordination. Augustine's understanding of unity in substance shows that there can be no question of subordination - one person over the other.

Augustine explains using Philippians 2:6,7 that Jesus is equal to the Father. He acknowledges that there is subordination as Jesus on earth, but it is only economically and voluntary and is not found in the immanent Trinity. The Son of God is naturally equal to God the Father. Jesus was lesser than the Father when he adopted the roll of servanthood by becoming a human. But in the form of God, which He existed before He assumed the earthly form, He is equal to the Father (De Trinitate I,7). Augustine also cites 1 Corinthians 15:24 which says that Jesus will hand over the Kingdom to God the Father. At no time must this be seen that Jesus, by doing this act, places Himself in a state of subordination to the Father. (1 Corinthians 15:25) states that the Son will reign until He has put his foot on all his enemies (de Trinitate I,8). Augustine cites 1 Corinthians 3:16 and 6:19, which says that man is the temple of the Holy Spirit. God dwells in that temple and therefor this text points out that the Holy Spirit is fully God and should be worshipped as God. "God is love" (1 John 4:8), therefor the Holy Spirit is love like the Father and the Son, in essence are. It was never Augustine's intention to place the Holy Spirit in a subordinate role.

2.5.2 The Cappadocians: The priority of the Father.

Meesters (2006:37) states that for the Cappadocians there is no subordination in the Trinity. According to him there are hardly any clues to the priority of the Father (2006:110-112). The sequence corresponds to God's action in creation and inversely with the human path to self-knowledge. The Father has no

genetic priority and in that sense, He is no more than the Son or the Holy Spirit. In the logical concept of the Cappadocians, the person of God the father is prioritised but this has no reference to a hierarchical order (Meesters 2006:112,181). Concerning the immanent Trinity, they know no hierarchical structure in which the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are each arranged. They assume full symmetry between the Three, as can be seen in their talk about God as they do not use the traditional metaphors for the Trinity (i.e. the root, the stem, the fruit) (Meesters 2006:37,112). It is thus important that the prioritisation of the Father can not automatically assume to be hierarchical and the Cappadocians cannot be accused of subordination. Neither the Cappadocians nor Augustine gives any grounds to defend subordination in the Godhead, yet today they are widely cited to various forms of subordination (Leene 2012:86). With the views of the Cappadocians and Augustine as described, equality within the Trinity is used as an anchor in this dissertation to describe a non-hierarchical Relational Leadership.

2.5.3 Subordination today.

1. *Eternal subordination in essence* - According to Giles (2002:1) there is a group that believes that there is eternal subordination in the essence of the Trinity and that view is still growing. The present discussions it rely on historical sources. For Giles the main themes such as the “headship” of the Father, the importance of the subordination of the Son in the incarnation, and the differences between the three persons is grounded in different roles and functions. For him the Father is the first substance and the Son and Holy Spirit eternally subordinate in essence and in function (Giles 2002:72). As seen, the Cappadocians and Augustine recognise no subordination in essence, therefor the researcher does not agree with this theology as it does not seem to be supported by Scripture. By displaying the Trinity as a Unit, Augustine shows that subordination in essence would defeat the object

of total unity.

2. *Eternal subordination in function* - Where there is reasonable consensus that perpetual subordination does not correspond with Scripture, the idea of subordination in function, is becoming increasingly widespread and thus a distinction is made between essence and function. With the Father in the role of the sender, and the Son as the one being sent, subordination seems logic. This is based on the text in John 14:28 where Jesus says: “The Father is greater than I”. There is one who orders and one who obeys; there is one who reigns in glory and one who dies on the cross (see Leene 2012:88). This assumes equality in essence and a difference in function. Augustine has shown that the Three persons in their actions, are also a unit. However, the equality in the Trinity was not compromised. John writes in his gospel that the Word was God, and everything was created by God (1:1-3, 10). The Father is not the only creator, this was a Trinitarian act and after Jesus’s ascension, the Son had as much authority as the Father (Matthew 28:18, John 5:21-27, 17:2).
3. *Temporarily subordination in function* – This view claims that subordination must be understood in terms of temporality and is based on the time that Jesus walked on earth - equal to man. Philippians 2:6,7 states that Jesus “did not consider his equality with God something to be used to His own advantage; rather, He made Himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness”. On the basis of scripture, creeds and traditions, many theologians have shown that the relations between the Trinitarian persons must be understood in light of this text (Giles 2002:89).
4. Reciprocal subordination - Barth (KD 3 / I) felt that the temporary subordination of the Son perhaps says something about the nature of God. Not only on the nature of the Son of God but the entire Trinitarian being. Something of the essence of the Trinity is revealed in what Jesus does. The Father and the Spirit, the whole Trinity introduce themselves submissive to

each other. This also reflects in the Bible for example: Matthew begins in 28:19 with the Father, but 2 Corinthians 13:13 with the Son, and 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 with the Holy Spirit which indicates that there is no fixed order of hierarchy. In love and community, no hierarchy is needed (Leene 2012:90).

"In the beginning" God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit was three but one: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters" (Genesis 1:1, 2). The New Testament confirms this in the Gospel according to John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning".

When writing his letter to the Philippians, Paul taught them to include in their own spiritual lives the mind of Christ consisting of a spirit of humility and of self-abnegation and an interest in the welfare of others. In this teaching he tells them that although Christ had the same nature (*μορφή*) and equality (*ἴσος*) than the Father, He emptied himself (*κενωσας*) and became incarnate in humanity (Philippians 2:5-7).

The Son gave up His Trinitarian equality when He became the second Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45), but after Christ offered Himself as the "all time one sacrifice" for the sins of the world, He entered the "Most Holy Place" and "sat down at the right hand of God" (Hebrews 9:12 & 10:12) and was restored to his former "nature of God" and "equality with God" as described in Hebrews 2: "But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone".

The Christian Church – or a big part of it – has been confessing and declaring the Trinitarian equality for hundreds of years as stated in the Athanasian Creed:

- and in this Trinity is none afore or after another, none is greater or less than another (25),
- but the whole three persons are co-eternal, and co-equal (26),

And the Belgic Confession:

- The Father was never without his Son, nor without his Holy Spirit, since all these are equal from eternity, in one and the same essence.
- There is neither a first nor a last, for all three are one in truth and power, in goodness and mercy.

For some reason the hierarchical trinity, with the Father as the head and the Holy Spirit as the third person in the Trinity, is still being taught in some theological institutions. Although the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are accepted as one God, the Father is mostly shown as the one on the top of the "godly hierarchy" as can be seen in the following diagram (fig 2.1).

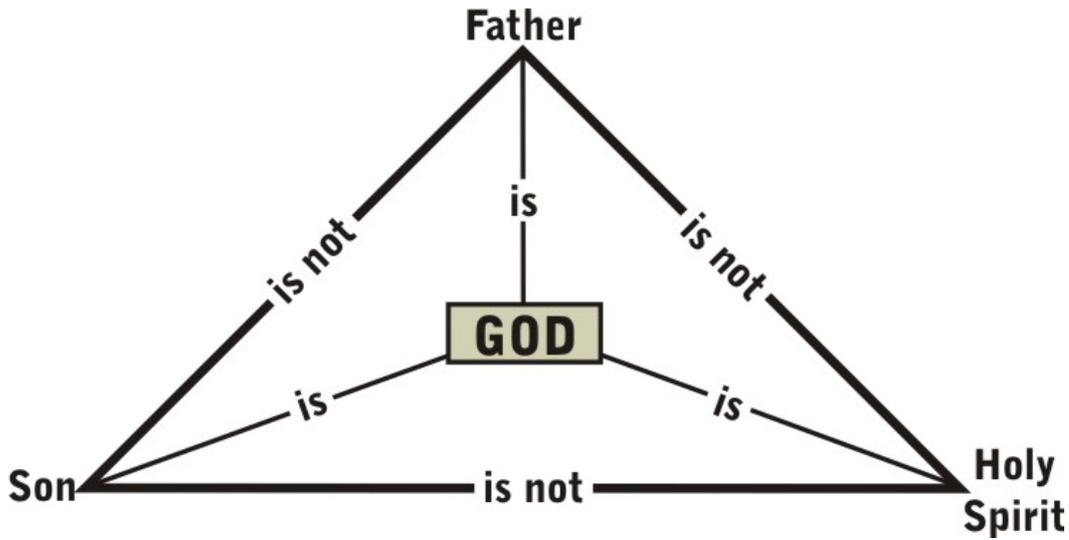
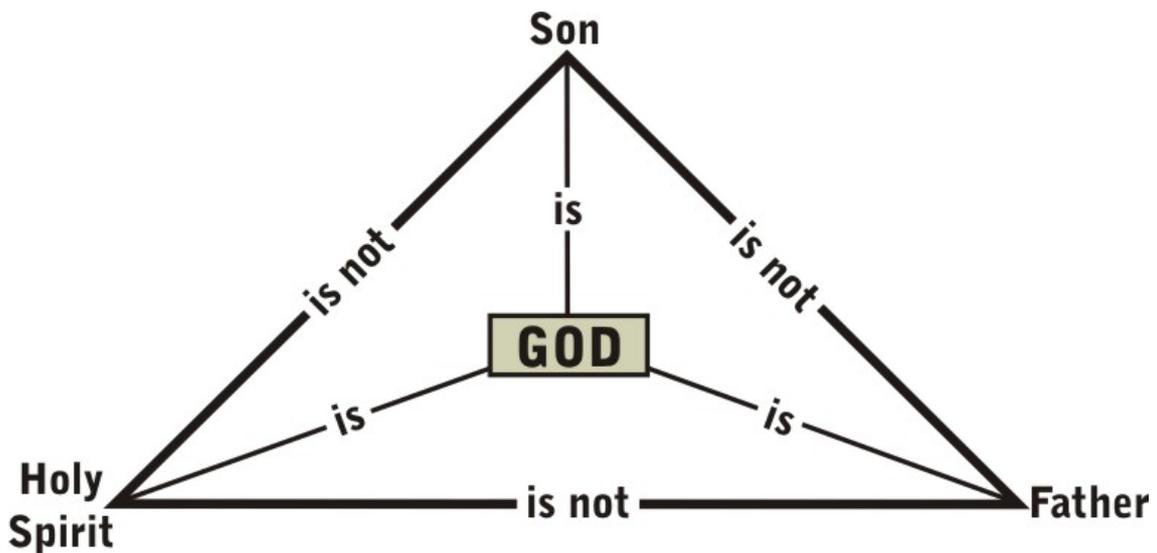
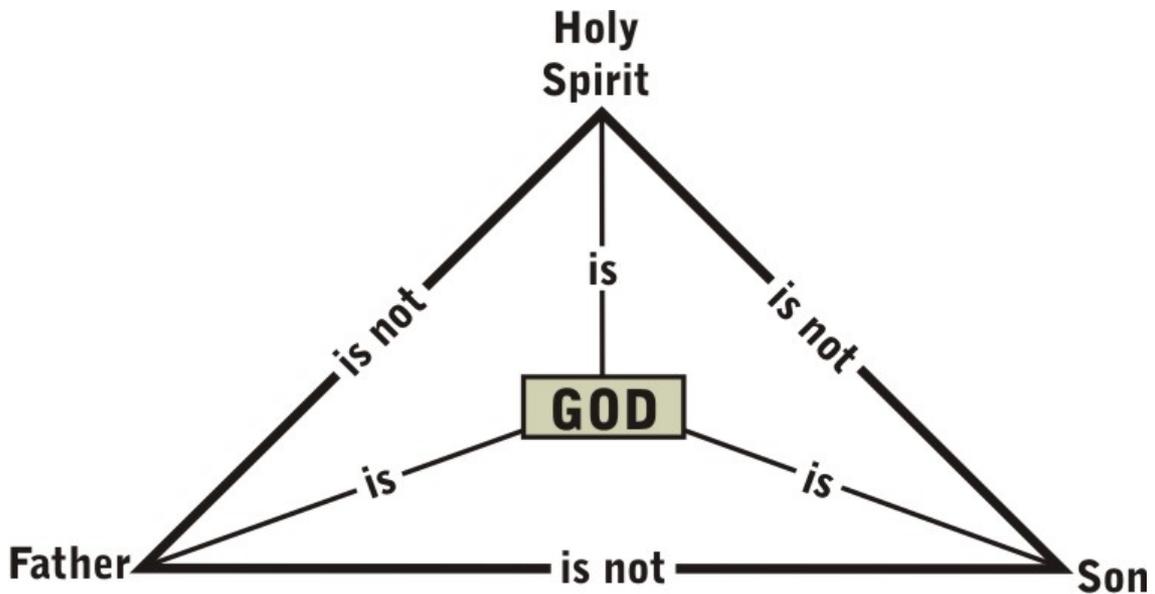


FIGURE 2.1 taken from <http://theresurgence.com/2009/11/23/biblical-doctrine-the-trinity> (2012.02.04).

This researcher is quite comfortable with the above representation of the Trinity while the Father is the centre of discussion, but because of the perfect unity and equality, the Trinity can also be portrayed with the Son or Holy Spirit on top when either the work of the Son (FIGURE 2.2),



or the work of the Holy Spirit is depicted (FIGURE 2.3).



When Canadian author William P. Young wrote his Christian novel *The Shack*, he never thought that it would become a USA Today bestseller. One of the radical statements that fuelled the interest and the love/hate reactions of theologians and other Christians is the one about the authoritative order in the Trinity. Although this was not meant to be a theological work, it tells the story of Mackenzie who wanted to confirm his idea of the hierarchical order in heaven. The answer from “Papa” was: “...we have no concept of final authority among us, only unity. We are in a circle of relationship; not a chain of command” (Young 2007:122).

The Son functions as the revealer of God, his equality, unity and His being part of the Trinity (Grenz 2000:67) and Jesus lived this fact in John 5:

Jesus said to them, My Father is always at work to this very day, and I, too, am working. For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his

own Father, making himself equal with God. Jesus gave them this answer: I tell you the truth, 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. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father. He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father, who sent him.

When Jesus called God his own (*ἰδιον*), it was rightly understood that he separated himself from his audience and that the Father was “His own” and that he was the Son. The Jews understood precisely what Jesus meant, “making himself equal with God”, and above all gives a powerful reasoned argument in defence of his claim to equality with the Father. “For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him” (:18) (Robertson 1997:Matt.5:17-23). 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”. There is thus “neither a first nor a last, for all three are one in truth and power, in goodness and mercy” (Volf and Welker 2006:10) which brings one to the conclusion that the Trinity is a total unity and equality. Volf and Welker agrees that the “one God is a communion of three persons in that each dwells in the other and is indwelled by them”. The Godhead is a perfect communion of love and they are one and equal (2006:10).

God is not just self-love but shared love. God is a tri-unity of persons loving each other and in that shared love the persons are totally “oned” without thereby losing their personal individuality. The one God is a communion of three persons in that each dwells in the others and is indwelled by them. Volf &

Welker (2006:11) describe the love sharing as if gifts of love are given and shared among each other: “Because the Godhead is a perfect communion of love, divine persons exchange gifts – the gifts of themselves and the gift of the others’ glorification, they are called a divine communion of love”. The diversity and the oneness in diversity can also be seen in the way Paul explains that the gifts, services and workings are given by the “same Spirit”, the “same Lord” and “same God” in 1 Corinthians 12: "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work".

This is a unity in diversity and diversity in unity revealing the Trinitarian persons acting out their godly mission. Acting together in the diverse gifts, services and powers in this way makes this a godly community in action and a community of love being together as one (Moltmann 2010:24).

Sweet calls these relationships elaborate and the discovery of Augustine’s “the meaning of being is self-communicating love”, a revolutionary discovery in the history of humanity: “The Jesus notion that no one is ‘other than me’ but only ‘the other of me’ changes everything” (2009:95).

God is not just personal but interpersonal, not just a unit but a union. There is within Him a timeless dialogue. In Mark 1:11 the Father addresses the Son with a word of encouragement, “You are my Son”. John 17 continues with the conversation and the Son pray to his Father. From all eternity the Son replies to the Father, “Abba Father; Abba, Father” (Gal. 4:6) and from all eternity the Holy Spirit who “descended on Him” sets the seal upon this interchange of love. The fact that the first is the Father and the second is the Son is no hierarchy but a relationship and no overlay of power is found. This is the Triune God revealing Himself in the Son as the second Adam here on earth who stands in perfect relationship with his Father in heaven. When Jesus says, “not my will,

but yours be done” (Luke 22:42), he doesn’t say this because of a divine hierarchy, but because of a divine relationship where he will not do anything without his Father (John 5:19). He went to the cross to save the world and to fulfil the Triune God’s plan to fix the broken relationship between God and his creation knowing that the Father will be with Him.

Going back to Moltmann's patristic approach to *perichoresis* that describes the Trinitarian unity with the Father that fully occupies the Son and fully occupies the Holy Spirit, the son that fully occupies the Father and fully occupies the Son, no hierarchy in the Trinity is possible. While passively occupying and actively indwelling each other, none of them takes precedence of the other. No one ever takes control but the Three always move together in total agreement. No one precedes the other in eternity and it is impossible to number them and call the Holy Spirit the third person. The Trinity is a non-hierarchical community (Moltmann 2010:154-156).

2.6 RELATIONAL TRINITARIAN ECCLESIOLOGY

2.6.1 The Church in Relationship with the Trinity

"God is Mission" and "Mission found a Church" (Bevans and Schroeder 2011:10,13). Mission is God's because the initiation and action comes from Him. Mission is also what God is in His deepest self: perfect love and affection, creating, healing and redeeming. He gave his Son without holding back and keeps pouring out His divine goodness on the world. The Son was the incarnation of mission that conveyed the lifestyle to the disciples and through the disciples to the world. "The mission began to have a Church" (Bevans and Schroeder 2011:13) and the Church is the extension of who God is. If this is not the case, the Church fails to express its core being and the proclamation to

be founded by God himself, then becomes a claim without essence or substance. The Church is incarnational and as the body of Christ represents the *missio Dei* in any community and culture it finds itself in. According to Sweet (2009:27), incarnation is how the Church lives, a lifestyle. "The Church does what it is and then organises what it does" (Van Gelder 2007:Kindle181). Niemandt emphasises the above by stating that the Church have to be incarnational instead of attractional because the presence of God dwells within His Church and is physically brought into places and situations where it otherwise is not to be found (Niemandt 2012:3-4).

The journey of discovering the community and relationship in the Trinity as well as the community and relationship of the Trinity to the creation sets the example and standard of who and what the Church should be. God is love and there is a missional relationship from the Godhead to the creation. The essence of being Church is the notion of *missio Dei*: God is missional, the Church is missional, and "the Church has no mission but the 'mission of God'" (McKnight 2007:135). With this comes the recollection of Bosch's saying that "Our mission has no life of its own: only in the hands of the sending God can it truly be called mission" (Bosch 2005:390). The life of Christ brings the revelation of the relationality, community and the missionality of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to us and the Church should act accordingly. The "Lifeblood" of the Church comes from the being and character of the triune God. If God loves the world, then the Church must love the world. If God engages the world in a loving and caring relationship through the Son, then that is the only way the Church should engage the world.

The *missio Dei* as the act of God to save the world involves a Triune God with the "grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit" (2 Corinthians 13:14) in its fullness. The same perfect, pure and complete love of the Trinity overflows to all of humanity and the world. Church-life is a missional and relational life within the activity of the triune God

in the world. The Father is the providential source, goal and initiative of all missions. He sent his Son and the Church becomes the ongoing reflection of the Trinity in the world. The Son brought the redemptive embodiment of God's mission and come to demonstrate to the Church how to engage an unbelieving world with love, grace and truth. The Holy Spirit is God living within the Church to teach, guide and empower them with the presence of the risen Lord to live the *missio Dei* (Tennent 2010:Kindle5580-5607). "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

As God sent his Son, the Son sends the Church with the promise of the involvement, fellowship, guidance and empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. The scriptures like John 20:21-22, Acts 1:8, Matthew 28:19-20 and John 14:16 shows that God does not only send the Church but involves himself relationally through the Holy Spirit with the Church to be missional and a community of hope. "The Church is commissioned to celebrate life, and to resist and transform all life-destroying forces, in the power of the Holy Spirit" (WCC 2012).

In a document recently published by the World Council of Churches, it stated that they see the *missio Dei* as a restatement of Trinitarian theology: "that God in God's own self is a life of communion and that God's involvement in history aims at drawing humanity and creation in general into this communion with God's very life". This fellowship (*koinonia*) and love within the Godhead is the example and model for the Church and given to the Church as a communion of love. This promised empowerment by the Holy Spirit results in a Christian witness (Acts 1) that promotes the salvific power of God through Jesus Christ and affirms God's involvement in the world (WCC 2012).

Coming from a Pentecostal background, the writer grew up in a Christocentric Church life where the participation and guidance of the Holy Spirit is very important. Salvation, the Gifts and the Fruit of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12,

Galatians 5), were and still are the most important themes of preaching and teaching in the Pentecostal movement. Whatever the teachings and experiences of the Holy Spirit might be through the eyes of different doctrines, the writer wants to confirm Kärkkäinen's statement: "Wherever the spirit of God is, there is church" and the "Christology and pneumatology must be seen as simultaneous rather than exclusive" (2002:Kindle218). The Holy Spirit's involvement in human life establishes a relationship between God and creation. This communication to humans within the Church brings a participation of God within the Church and a human participation within the life of the triune God; thus a divine relationship.

Koinonia with the Father, through Christ, made possible by the Holy Spirit, makes the Church a community of brothers and sisters who are all equal and Paul's letter to the Galatians said that this is how it should be because everyone in Christ is a child of God.

In Galatians 3 it is clear that when God reached out to the world through Christ, He made it possible for humanity to engage with God as part of His family, children and heirs. "So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ". Freedom, equality and one-ness are only to be found in Christ, and if we belong to Christ, we are the seed of Abraham, and heirs according to the promise of God.

The Church is a community of family members who are all free and equal. There is no hierarchy for the hierarchy is replaced by a covenant. In Christ no one has a higher or lower position; in His Church, no one is above the other, and every one is a witness bringing to the community what they received from the Holy Spirit. The hierarchical division between clergy and laity does not represent the spirit and relationship of the Trinity (Moltmann 2010:22-24).

The Church is the earthly “body of Christ” empowered by the Holy Spirit, which gives it a dynamic character and message of hope and life. As Christ and the Holy Spirit were sent to redeem and to restore the relationship between God and creation, so the Church is sent to the world as a dynamic, living organism to live the message of restoration. The life of the Church is a relational love-life within and outwards as a missional existence and this can be seen in the scriptures: “This is my command: Love each other” (John 15:17). “He answered, ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘love your neighbour as yourself’” (Luke 10:27).

Love is all about a relationship, a relationship with the Triune God, a relationship within the church and a relationship with the world.

Sweet's suggestion is that the Church starts to flex faith's "relational muscles", "build up a relational theology" and get back into the people business (Sweet 2009:99). Christianity is relational and conversion is "more than a change in direction; it's a change in connection" (Sweet 2009:128), a connection where God and human, Creator and creation connects in a restored relationship.

2.7 THE TRINITY AND RELATIONAL LEADERSHIP

"The Church is. The Church does what it is. The Church organises what it does" (van Gelder 2007:Kindle181). With this van Gelder describes the nature of the Church and provides the framework and foundation for understanding the essential character of the Church, the direction and scope of the ministry and the need for leadership and development that functions in support of the missional purpose and nature of the ministry. The researcher agrees with most of this statement from van Gelder, but questions the church's organising of

everything which in turn becomes a program that constantly needs to be promoted and maintained instead of developing leadership, responsibility and accountability through acknowledging each individual's special gifts and talents as received from the Holy Spirit.

With the Church being a relational and missional community, there is no doubt that the leadership must have the same focus. The understanding of missional leadership must be rooted in the understanding of the Trinity. Here, the Western understanding introduced by Augustine and reintroduced by Karl Barth into the twentieth-century, focuses on God as the missionary God who sent his Son who then sent the Church into the world. This can only be seen as part of the Trinitarian example. From the Eastern Church, and by way of the Cappadocian fathers and then the twenty-first-century conversation via John Zizioulas, comes the focus on "the social reality of God and the in-relation aspect of the three persons of the Godhead" (Van Gelder 2007:Kindle501-504). Leadership that models the incarnated characteristics of the Trinity of relationality and missionality will influence and lead the Church to fulfil their calling.

In a report brought before the REC (Reformed Ecumenical Council) of 2005, the importance of discussing the Trinitarian orientation regarding leadership in a postmodern world where relationships are dominant, the following were recognised:

The recent Trinitarian renaissance has wrought several advances and, despite nuances, wide consensus exists that the Trinitarian confession identifies the Christian understanding of God, who has revealed himself as being-in-relation. Apart from re-visioning all major doctrines in a Trinitarian way, the trinity is utilized imaginatively to address heuristically fundamental problems, e.g. social and gender relations, religious plurality (Niemandt 2008:19).

The study committee's report responds to these challenges with a Trinitarian orientation regarding leadership being:

1. Leadership orientated on God the Father as Creator is ecologically sensitive, non-dichotomous and non-sectarian.
2. Leadership grounded in Christ as Messiah means emptying oneself and not shying away from sacrificial service.
3. Leadership based on the Spirit is dynamic, charismatic and creative.
4. Leadership is missionally directed and grounded in the *Missio Trinitatis*.
5. Leadership is eschatologically motivated by the vision of the Kingdom of God.

(REC 2005:28)

Leadership and the associated relations are thus conceived from the Trinity – the relationship between the persons in the Holy Trinity (Gibbs 2005a:117). Church life and leadership must show something of the life within the Trinity. The Trinity is the most comprehensive and integrative framework that we have for understanding and working in Christian life. As the Triune God exists in relationship, it is impossible to think about church leadership without thinking about relationships (Niemandt 2008:20). Cole (2005:123-128) describes supportive relationships as part of the DNA of the Church. There is new appreciation for the early church's description of God as a holy community. It points to the fact that Jesus Christ never acted alone, but that He always worked in communion and obedience with the Father, by the power of the Holy Spirit. "If God is defined in relationships, then so is the Church" (Taylor 2005:Kindle1632).

Seeing God as the King of kings and Leader among leaders, the Trinity sets the example for leadership, and this especially in the Church. The equality, missionality and relationality sets the example and model on which the Church should function (Volf & Welker 2006:226, Grenz 2004:125, 132, 162). The loving relationship shared amongst the Persons of the Trinity and the Trinitarian relationship with the world, offers a model for human relationships and leadership. These relationships are living in loving relationships with the Father who acts with justice and compassion, with the Son who loves and reconciled the world with God and the Spirit, strengthening creation to live a life in relationship with the Triune God.

The REC confirmed the importance of looking at the Godhead for the template of leadership with the statement that “leadership is missionally directed and grounded in the *Missio Trinitatis*” (2005:28). Church is truly Church when it takes part in the one mission of God (*missio Dei*), the fellowship (*koinonia*) within the Church that is characterised by a mutual cooperation, relationship and unity based on the mission and example of the Triune God (*Missio Trinitatis*). This is the essence and core of relational leadership that functions within God-given relationships and not with hierarchical authority.

Missionality is only possible if the missionary is willing to be in a meaningful relationship with the other and the world. The writer agrees with Wiles that “leadership is first relational” and that leadership is effective when relationships are open and strong between leader and follower (1998:Kindle649). As missionality has no life of its own (Bosch 2005:390), humans didn’t initiate relationships, but instead as a godly characteristic, relationship flows from the centre of who God is (Saccone 2009:14). Saccone continues to say that God exists as a relational being and His desire for us is to enjoy the same community that He experiences within Himself (Father, Son and Holy spirit) (Saccone 2009:14).

The missionality of the Trinity starts with a relationship between the Godhead and the created as seen in John 3: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son" (16-18).

From John 3:16 the relationship expands in a missional way from those who are in a relationship with God to those who are in enmity with God and his church. This is clear when Jesus addressed the fact that neighbours and enemies should be loved and persecutors should be prayed for, thus modelling God's perfect love and forgiveness to the world (Matthew 5:43-45).

These scriptures describe a relational missionality according to the *Misso Trinitatis*.

2.8 CONCLUSION

The submission of the researcher is that missionality starts with a relationship. "God is love" (1 John 4:8) is the core and essence of God. It is because of this *ἀγάπη* that is shared within the Trinity and with his creation that God sent His Son as redeemer to a lost world so that the relationship can be restored: "For God so loved the world (relationship) that he gave His one and only son (missional), that whoever believes in him (relationship) shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Because of the relational importance in missionality, Saccone is correct when saying: "God will continue to push humanity towards the transformation of our

relational worlds, toward expanding our capacity to internalize His love so that we can externalize it to others” (Saccone 2009:19). God’s relationship with the world belongs to his eternal being (Flett 2010:34) and that relationship finds its expression constantly through the workings of the Holy Spirit by encouraging, helping, supporting, teaching (*παράκλητος*) (John 14:16, 26; 16:7) and empowering (Act 1:8) his Church. The Christian community is, as such, a relational and missionary community, or it cannot be seen as a community that lives in fellowship with the triune God that gave His life to save the world.

God desires to restore human relationship with Him and the community with one another. Leaders who seek to build a relational community must endeavour to exemplarise through their own lives, the unconditional love and relationality in their ecclesiology and leadership as is clearly modelled by the Triune God, while relying on the support and assistance of God through the Holy Spirit. Imaging God, can only mean being in loving community and relationship with all other humans and God's creation.

"The Church does what it is" (Sweet 2009:27), suggests that our ecclesiology is determined by our theology, and the credibility of our theology is found in a verb and not in a mere undeniable statement. When we understand the Trinity as a relational Trinity, our relational lifestyle will be a practical expression of our faith.

Being in relationship with others, we live our understanding of the Trinity as a divine relationship between Father, Son and Spirit. It reminds us that there is no hierarchical leadership structures, as in the Trinity the three Persons communicate on an interactive, open and inviting manner. Leadership built on this foundation and model, will develop a healthy missional Church.

The real story of Vincent J. Donovan and the Masai as told by Sweet (2009:211) summarises this chapter better than any person trying to describe the love of a living God reaching out to His creation:

Donovan “rediscovered” Christianity himself from his experience of “taking the gospel” to the Masai in Tanzania. A Masai elder assured him that it was not the Masai who had searched for God, but God who had searched for the Masai: “He has searched us out and found us.” God did this himself, coming and following them, in the words of the elder, “into the bush, into the plains, into the steppes where our cattle are, into the hills where we take our cattle for water, into our villages, into our homes. You told us of the High God and how we must search for him, even leave our land and our people to find him. But we have not done this. We have not left our land. We have not searched for him”. Donovan came to the shocking realisation that God had spoken to these people in their own language and through their own culture before he ever arrived, and that they recognised God’s presence through Donovan’s ministry to them.

God did not wait for the world to draw near to Him, but He reached out to the world by clothing himself with frail humanity. God did not wait for the world to cry out to Him, yet He let the world hear His calling voice through the coming of Jesus Christ and His reconciling death on the cross, His burial and resurrection. This act of God to reach out to the whole world without exception, a world so lost it didn’t even had an idea how to cry out to God, is the only manner in which the Church should reach out to the world.